

# 3 Simple Tips to Choosing a Guitar

by Ty Morgan

Whether you're buying a guitar for yourself or a loved one, the process of choosing and buying a guitar can be a big source of frustration.

However, having a game plan before heading to the music shop can make the experience much more enjoyable while providing great results.

Here are 3 quick and simple things to consider before choosing and buying a new guitar.

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## Tip 1 - Type of Guitar to Buy

Don't start with the traditional question of "Which kind of guitar should I buy, acoustic or electric?" Everybody has their own opinion of why one is better than the other. Unfortunately, if you ask somebody why they would choose an acoustic over an electric or vice-versa they can't give any definitive reasons.

That said, here's my two cents:

Simply start by asking "What type of music would I (or the person you're buying the instrument for) like to play?"

This one question sets you up for a much greater chance of success.

For instance, if the goal is to play heavy metal, an acoustic is probably not the best choice. If the goal is to play bluegrass, an electric will definitely disappoint. . .

Playing guitar is all about having fun, making music and experiencing pleasing results. If the guitar you're playing isn't fun and doesn't fit the end result you're after, progress will most likely stop and the chance of quitting becomes much greater.

### Quick style breakdown:

- Pop, Rock, Metal or Alternative: Electric
- Folk, Country, Bluegrass or Campfire Entertainment: Acoustic
- Jazz or Blues: Electric
- Classical or Fingerstyle: Acoustic

### Pros and cons of an acoustic and electric guitar

#### Acoustic

Pros:

- Doesn't need an amplifier to be heard
- Suits many grassroots musical styles like folk, bluegrass, blues, etc.
- Easy to learn open chords and strumming on
- Easy to perform in front of others without extra equipment

Cons:

- Can't be turned down or listened to through headphones
- Doesn't suit most rock and metal styles
- Very difficult to play bar chords on
- Hard to learn lead guitar techniques such as bending and sliding on
- Can be painful on the fingers when first learning

## **Electric**

Pros:

- Is much quieter when played without an amp
- Can be listened to through headphones and is less disruptive in close quarters
- Suits most rock, blues and metal musical styles
- Easier to learn power chords and barre chords on
- Easier to learn lead and techniques such as bending and sliding on
- Easier on fingers when first learning

Cons:

- Can get loud if restraint is not exercised when using an amp
- Doesn't suit folk, bluegrass or other acoustic based music
- Requires more equipment to perform in front of others

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## **Tip 2 - Determine a Budget**

More expensive is NOT necessarily better. However, the cheapest is usually NOT the best way to go either.

Clear as mud, right?

The best advice I can give anyone is buy the best instrument you can afford . . . even if you have to wait a little while to purchase it.

This answer always causes controversy, and rightly so . . . At first glance. However, by staying away from the cheapo package deals all music stores and some retail stores offer and buying a higher quality instrument, you kill several birds with one stone.

First, the higher quality instrument will be much easier to play, keep in tune, and get a pleasing sound out of. This really encourages new players to continue on the path to success by removing a great deal of struggle to play that a low-cost instrument tends to add to the situation.

Second, if guitar just isn't the instrument for you or the person you purchased the guitar for, you have a much better chance of selling a higher-grade guitar. You may even be able to trade a higher-grade guitar back to the music store you purchased it from towards another type of instrument that better suits the tastes of the player (maybe a keyboard, set of drums or a bass)

**The best advice I can offer regarding budget is:**

- Determine the highest price you're willing to pay for the guitar and needed accessories
- Determine the cheapest package set price
- Start looking at guitars that are priced right in the middle of the highest price you've set and the lowest priced package deal. Finding the median price point gives you wiggle room when shopping.

Knowing this number before you go shopping will really help you control the situation at the store. Which leads us to . . .

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## Tip 3 - Going Shopping

So far we've decided what kind of guitar we want and have a ballpark idea of how much we want to invest in the guitar and accessories. . .

To the music store we go . . . This is usually when people get nervous. Walking into a music store and seeing what seems like a million different guitars staring back at you can be intimidating. That's where the homework we did in tips 1 and 2 begins to pay off!

By knowing what type of guitar (acoustic or electric) and what price range we are starting at (middle of the road between highest and lowest prices), we have already won 75% of the battle!

We can walk right up to a salesperson and confidently state:

"I'm in the market for a (Acoustic or Electric) guitar that's roughly priced around \$XXX (median price). Can you show me what you have in stock?"

You have just let the salesperson know you mean business and totally leveraged the situation in your favor. He can't sell you something way over your price range or try to pawn off a cheap starter package on you.

Now comes the fun part.

**Literally try every guitar in the specified price range and make note of the following items as you play each instrument:**

- How does the guitar feel? (Solid and well crafted or cheap and flimsy? Correct size?)
- How does the guitar sound? (Is there is nice ring or is it muffled? Hear any buzzes or rattles?)
- How does the guitar make you feel? (Like a rockstar or does it squash your cool vibe?)

These 3 questions will really help you bypass all the namebrand hype and friendly advice you get from family, neighbors, etc. and find the right guitar for you. You may discover that Les Pauls and Stratocasters aren't for you. However, by investing the time to play as many different instruments as possible you will find the perfect fit and greatly increase your chance for playing success exponentially.

Of course, if you can have someone you trust, who knows about guitars, to go with you that would be great - but that's not always a necessity. The store personnel should have a good handle on how to properly size the guitar and make sure everything is in order and working as expected.

**If you have any hesitation before buying you have a couple of options:**

- Make sure the store has a good return policy. This enables you to purchase the instrument and have it checked out by a local luthier or guitar repairman. If something isn't quite right you can then return the instrument.
- Postpone the purchase until you can have someone you trust who knows about guitars come back to the store with you.

## Wrapup

Hopefully this info has removed a bit of the mystery surrounding choosing and purchasing a guitar.

**Here's a quick recap:**

- Decide what kind of music you'd like to play and choose the best corresponding type of guitar (Electric or Acoustic)
- Discard all guitars out of your price range along with the cheap package deals to find your median budget (Buy the best instrument you can afford)
- Play EVERY guitar within your decided budget to find the best fit for YOU (Forget about name brands and go by feel)
- Happy shopping! Have fun and enjoy the journey:-)