

The Upper Line Edge

Greetings! At some point you or your student may have indicated an interest in purchasing a higher level instrument. A higher level or step up instrument can give your student the

“Upper Line Edge!”

- **What is the “Upper Line Edge?”** It is the distinct advantage students have when they play an upgraded or step-up instrument, one designed for improved tone, intonation and facility.
- **What is an upgraded or step-up instrument?** Most manufacturers produce student line instruments for beginners, which are intended to give your child a solid start in band. Most also produce instruments called “upper-line” or “step up” instruments – intermediate and professional-quality instruments that are geared to the more experienced student and allow the player to mature further and be more successful.
- **How do these instruments differ from what my student is playing now?** A student line instrument is designed for short-term use, yet should also contain the necessary quality and features to help your student have every chance to succeed in beginning band. Upper line instruments are designed differently – they are intended to help the maturing musician produce improved tone quality and intonation, and allow the student to be successful with more demanding music that advancing students play on a daily basis. For example, an upper-line flute will have a solid silver head and sometimes a solid silver body and foot as well. The springs will be white gold instead of the beryllium found on student line flutes. An upper-line clarinet will be made of granadilla wood and have silver-plated keys. It may also have added keys such as a left-hand Eb key. An upper-line trombone will have a bigger bore than a student trombone, for a fuller sound, and an F-attachment for added range and agility.
- **When is it time to purchase an upper line instrument?** Each student is different, but usually by the middle to the end of a student’s middle school band career, he or she will be ready for an upgrade.

Watch for these signs in your student:

- The desire to take private lessons
- The desire and ability to excel in music and the enjoyment of musical activities.
- The willingness to do assigned homework (practicing) on a regular basis/desire to practice more than assigned material.
- An increasing interest in participating in band or other musical activities outside the usual school schedule, such as Region Band, All-State Band, selection for top honors groups, and Solo and Ensemble.
- **“Upper Line Edge” may = \$.** Please keep in mind that many colleges and universities offer substantial scholarships to students who participate in their high school band programs regardless of their choice of major. An upgraded instrument is a worthwhile investment for your student.

Tips on Making a Purchase:

- Shop around! Get as much information as you can. Consult your band director. They usually already have a good relationship with select dealers.
- Do not buy instruments from places that are NOT reputable musical instrument dealers (no purchasing from stores that sell food and underwear). These instruments can be of extremely poor quality, and cannot be fixed in an instrument repair shop.
- PINK, RED, BLUE, PURPLE – these are NOT the colors of quality instruments and can be difficult to resale and/or trade back in. Stay away from instruments with nontraditional colorings.
- Be open minded to NEW and USED instruments.
- Try to stay away from purchasing online – unless they are a reputable company and have a good return policy.
- If now playing a beginner model instrument you want to ask for an intermediate or Pro model instrument.
- Remember to think about an instrument purchase as an investment. If you buy a GREAT quality instrument NOW you will be able to get even MORE money out of it if you every wish to sell it!

Tips for Buying Used: *A used step-up instrument is better than any beginner instrument.*

- Know the age of the instrument – however old is not necessarily bad
- History of the instrument – Can the dealer give you ALL the names of the previous owners? How long was it played? How long has it sat without being played?
- Repair history – Has the instrument had a Good playing condition check? – corks, wood, pads, valves, slides, other
- Appearance of the instrument – Are there many dings, dents, or tarnish?
- Most used instruments will need some kind of repair to help to get it in the best possible playing condition
- What type of instrument is it? Beginner, intermediate or Professional – What is the difference in price in the used model and new model?
- When purchasing used, you should always take the instrument to a repair person for a repair estimate and appraisal before completing the sale.

If a dealer has a problem with and of the requests above – BUYER BEWARE!

If a step up instrument purchase is financially out of the question, there are other ways to help your student be more successful to help give he/she the **“Upper Line Edge”** Please consider a step-up mouth piece, ligature, reeds, sticks, mallets, or other accessories.