

# GREY • BRUCE KIDS

A **FREE** MAGAZINE FOR  
PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

FALL 2013 • [greybrucekids.com](http://greybrucekids.com)

## Preventing youth suicide

Grieving family takes  
action after son's death

## Teach kids about cash

**FREE!**



A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a light purple cardigan over a white top, looking down at a sheet of music. To her right, a young boy with brown hair, wearing a dark blue sweater over a striped shirt, is playing a white recorder. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting.

# Buying their first instrument

By Richard Popiez

Now that school is back in, it's time for music lessons to start up.

Music lessons mean musical instruments, but many parents aren't sure what they're supposed to buy. What do instruments come with? Where do I go to get the right instrument? How much will I need to spend?

Choosing your child's first instrument can be very confusing. There are many factors to consider. The instrument needs to fit both the child's lifestyle and ability. It also needs to be appropriate for the type of lessons, the size of the child and their skill level. Do you have room for a Baby Grand piano in the living room or would an electronic keyboard in your child's bedroom be more appropriate? Can your child's arms fit more comfortably around a three-quarter or full-size guitar? As a parent or consumer, you're looking for an instrument that is a quality product, built by a reputable manufacturer, has a decent sound for a beginner and will not break the bank.

First, talk with your child and see what instrument interests them. Maybe Suzie talks about her friend down the street who is playing the piano like their favourite pop star on the radio or maybe Johnny wants to be a rock star and play the electric guitar like his buddy's older brother whose band practices every Saturday morning. It is important to agree on an instrument they are interested in. Just like any hobby or sport, if it's something they like, it will be something they'll want to continue.

The hardest part comes next – choosing the first instrument and figuring out where to get it. Generally, your child's new instrument should be the right size, feel comfortable to play and have enough room to accommodate their growth, both physically and in skill level.

## GUITAR

Most children start with an acoustic guitar although some want to learn on an electric. A good starter guitar can cost between \$150 and \$300. Soft carry bags or hard shell cases are usually

extra. Consider your child's height and length of arms. Guitars come in half, three-quarter and full size.

## KEYBOARD/PIANO

If your space is limited or you want something portable, a full-size, 88-key electronic keyboard costs between \$500 and \$1,500. The stand and bench are usually extra. Smaller versions with fewer keys are also available. Electronic keyboards are easy to move around, have a variety of sound effects and can be connected to an amplifier, headphones or a computer. Upright pianos can come in a natural wood, black or ivory finish and are an attractive piece of furniture for the living room or den. They have either plastic or ivory keys and a beautiful true piano sound. A good used or reconditioned instrument can start around \$2,000. Previously owned pianos should be thoroughly checked by a qualified piano technician to make sure it is in good condition and holds a tuning.

## DRUMS

A basic starter drum kit can be around \$500. It usually comes with a bass drum, two or three toms, two cymbals and a snare. Complete kits may include some stands, bass pedal, seat (throne) and some sticks. It should have quality steel hardware, uncracked skins with good rebound, and be in good overall condition. If you don't have the room or a separate area for your child to practice, electronic drum kits take up very little space, are portable and foldable, offer a range of sound effects and can be plugged into headphones so only the drummer hears what they are playing. A new kit starts at about \$700.

## OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Wind instruments, such as flutes or trumpets, can cost between \$500 and \$1,000. The metal should be straight and the keys should push easily. Beginner violins start around \$200 to \$500 and come in sizes from half to full size. Check for cracks, loose string pins and good overall condition.

Keep in mind that if you are going to be spending money on lessons each week, you can get your money's worth by investing in a reasonable quality instrument that your child enjoys playing. Do your research and spend your money wisely. Be cautious if purchasing your child's musical instrument from big box stores and catalogues – they are often made with substandard materials that easily warp and break. Even worse, once broken, they are often beyond repair. You may decide to purchase online, from a yard sale or from a reputable music store. Use common sense when looking at the condition and price of an instrument. Look for cracks, discolouration, signs of repairs, loose strings or parts that don't work.

Whether your child wants a red drum kit, a pink ukulele or an Eddie Van Halen style guitar, be sure to involve your child in the purchase of their musical instrument. Helping to choose something they love the look and feel of will keep them practicing and playing for years to come. **GBK**

*RICHARD POPIEZ lives in Walkerton and owns A&R Music at 401 Durham St., E, Walkerton. Contact him at [www.armusic.ca](http://www.armusic.ca) or on Facebook.*



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