



How to Choose a Trumpet

Buying an instrument can be intimidating. With all the measurements, materials, and variations, it can be a chore just to keep up with it all. Here at Mozingo Music, our goal is to assist you in finding the right instrument for you. That means helping you understand the differences between the models and figuring out which instrument will give YOU the best chance for success. That said, let's take a look at some considerations to look for when purchasing a trumpet.

The first consideration for most players is the brand. This is not to say there's a "best" brand, but companies with a strong history of quality instruments are easy to get behind. Because of this, we carry primarily Bach and Yamaha professional trumpets and also offer student and intermediate trumpets from Bach, Yamaha, and Jupiter. All of these brands stand behind their workmanship and offer a warranty on any manufacturing defects. Many "budget" brands that are available only online (some of which even have ".com" stamped on the instrument) have no such warranty and will have to be replaced if and when something breaks.



The next consideration should be the level of the instrument. Student instruments are constructed in a manner that makes it easier to produce a characteristic tone. For this reason it is recommended for beginners to start on a student instrument. Getting a good sound early encourages the player to stick with it. For an experience player looking to improve their sound and expand their abilities, stepping up to an intermediate or professional instrument is a good way to go. Immediately some aspects of playing will be easier (most professional instruments have a more open feeling) and the tonal characteristics will have a broader spectrum, allowing for new possibilities in tone. The only caution is that stepping up is like losing a crutch. Bad habits that may have been developed and were covered or compensated for by the student instrument will be noticeable and sometimes accentuated by the professional model. This makes a great time to get into private lessons if you haven't yet; as a teacher will be able to hear these issues and will know how to help you correct them.

Construction of the trumpet can vary widely, so it can be beneficial to consider a few aspects of how the instrument was made.

- Was it made entirely by hand or was it machine pressed and pieced together in an assembly line? Most hand made instruments get more attention to detail and are extensively play tested to ensure quality.
- What is the bore size? Bore size (the diameter of the inside of the leadpipe) can vary by thousandths of an inch, but even as small a measurement as this can have a large impact on playability. Most B-flat trumpets will be medium-large bore, and C trumpets are typically large bore. Both of these are also available in the opposing size as well as medium and extra large bores. The size will, to a point, limit the size of your sound. Orchestral players often need the openness of a large bore to produce a bigger sound, where a wind ensemble setting is more suited to a medium-large bore.

- What materials are used? This is important because different metals will produce different tones. Most trumpets will be made of brass, but the content of certain minerals can change giving us variations such as yellow brass and rose brass. The rose brass has a higher copper content, making it slightly heavier which lends to a dark warm tone, and yellow brass is lighter and more vibrant. Additionally, some companies develop their own alloys and some use other metals entirely.
- What is the difference between the bells? The biggest difference in most bells is whether it is one or two-piece. A one or two-piece bell is made of either one or two cuts of metal that are then formed into a bell. Two-piece bells are easier and less expensive to build, so they constitute a large percentage of student instruments. Higher levels typically contain a one-piece bell, which vibrates more freely, improving sound quality. Cost on these bells goes up primarily because they more difficult and time consuming to produce, but in my opinion, the difference in sound outweighs the difference in price. The other primary difference between bells is the taper or flare. A quicker flare will produce a more brilliant tone, where a slower flare results in a darker, more mellow tone.

Another thing to think about is how you intend to use the instrument. If you're going to be playing with a big band, a chamber orchestra, wind ensemble, or marching band, you'll need different sounds and capabilities. Fortunately, some trumpets can accommodate all of these with a slight change of equipment (usually changing mouthpieces). Whether you're only playing it for fun or playing as a profession, knowing the purpose of the instrument will allow you to narrow the focus of what to look for.

Last, but certainly not least (far from it!), is trying the trumpet out. If you don't play it, you won't know how it's going to play for YOU. Since every person is different, a single trumpet will play slightly differently for each person, and everybody will prefer a different feel. The specifications of the instrument can only tell you so much. To really know if it will work for you, you should play it yourself.