

University of Montana
Clarinet Studio
CLARINET **O**UT**R**EACH and **E**DUICATION

Equipment Recommendations

Clarinets:

The most popular brands of clarinets are Buffet, Yamaha and Selmer.

Beginner: (around \$400-500)

- Plastic clarinets are ideal for beginners because they can withstand some mistreatment and will be *absolutely necessary* for marching band participation later. “Plastic” has become more of a misnomer in recent years as most of these instruments are now made of ABS resin. ANY of these recognizable brand names listed above are fine for a first plastic clarinet. I personally would suggest a Buffet B-12, Buffet B-10, or a Yamaha YCL250.

Intermediate: (anywhere up to \$1500)

- At some point in a student’s development they might wish to upgrade to a wood clarinet. This usually occurs in high school. Wood clarinets are much more temperamental and **CANNOT BE USED OUTDOORS FOR MARCHING BAND**. It is vital to instruct the student in proper care of these instruments! There are many great intermediate models from the makers listed above. Some of the more popular would be the Buffet E-11 and the Yamaha YCL-450.

Professional: (from \$2000 and up)

- Some parents might wish to skip over the intermediate step and spend a couple extra hundred on a professional model. Buffet R-13’s are the most popular, but at this point in a student’s development it might be wise to contact a professional clarinetist to aid in the selection of these instruments. It is unadvisable to select these instruments without doing a proper play test for intonation, evenness across registers, or inspection for cracks or deep surface grains, etc. I would recommend sticking to the models made by Buffet, Yamaha and Selmer.

Mouthpieces:

There are a myriad of options for clarinet mouthpieces. It can be very overwhelming.

Beginner: (included, or \$30 and up)

- Most beginner packages come with a stock mouthpiece. You can ask that their instruments be sold with other mouthpieces included, though. If you decide to do that I recommend the following: David Hite "Premier" (around \$30), or a Vandoren mouthpiece M-30 (around \$90). If you choose to go the Vandoren route the student won't ever have to upgrade but might face a costly replacement cost if one is dropped at any point. Many professional players play on these mouthpieces. Do make sure that they are a "13 Series" Vandoren, as these are pitched in the American tuning system (A 440).

Intermediate/Professional: (\$90 and up)

- I would recommend asking the private teachers at your school what they prefer before advising students on purchasing. Some common brands/makers are Vandoren, D'Addario Reserve, Richard Hawkins and David McClune.
- For **bass clarinet** I recommend a Vandoren B40 or B50.

Ligatures:

Ligatures are made out of many materials in order to color the tone. Each material has slightly difference characteristics in terms of response. Most common are metal, silver, gold, string, plastic, or a combination of these materials.

Beginner:

- The basic metal ligatures provided will be fine for beginners. If you seek an improvement on these go for the Bonade metal ligatures (around \$20) or a Luyben (\$12 at <http://www.luybenmusic.com/ligature.htm>).

Intermediate/Professional:

- Rovner (I prefer the Legacy at \$25), Vandoren (I prefer the Optimum at \$70), Silverstein Prelude (\$70)

Reeds:

Without a reed, your clarinet is simply a conduit for wind. Select reeds carefully as they play an integral role in producing sound. A reed's hardness or stiffness is ranked by numbers, starting at 1.5 (soft) and ending at 5 (hard).

Beginner:

- While beginners may not have the embouchure strength or endurance to play very stiff reeds, be careful not to go too soft. Younger players are also more likely to break or chip their reed. Make sure to periodically check your young player's reeds. Common, inexpensive reeds are D'Addario Royal and Mitchell Lurie. Vandoren Juno reeds are designed with beginners in mind. Start with 2.5 hardness, and move on to a 3 as the student begins to learn the clarion notes.

Intermediate:

- Look for a 3 to 3.5 hardness.

Advanced:

- Look for a 3.5 to 4 hardness. Common brands include D'Addario Reserve Classic (\$28-40) and Vandoren Blue Box (\$20-35) or V12 (\$24-40). Prices listed are per box. There are ten reeds in a box.
- Most **bass clarinetists** use a reed strength of 3 to 3.5 hardness.