

BRASS INSTRUMENT PURCHASE & HIRE

Families requiring a trumpet or trombone have three avenues to consider:

1. Purchasing a new instrument,
2. Purchasing a used instrument, or
3. Hiring from an external provider (i.e. not IMSS, as we only own enough trumpets and trombones for one cohort of beginner students).

Determining which option is best for your budget can be a daunting process. Brass instruments are inherently expensive due to the materials and highly precise manufacturing required to produce a functional, sonorous and hardy instrument. As such, students on the more expensive brass instruments listed below are able to continue hiring from IMSS for the duration of their primary and secondary studies while they are attending a government school:

- Baritone (\$2,500+)
- Euphonium (\$3,500+)
- French Horn (\$3,500+)
- Tuba (\$5,000+)

The cost of a new trumpet or trombone is low compared to the instruments above, but still much more than a beginner guitar pack or drum kit. The good news is that well-made brass instruments:

- Are more motivating to play due to superior tone and feel,
- Are readily available from local retailers,
- Come with a decent warranty (up to 3 or 5 years in some cases),
- Last for decades,
- Require infrequent servicing,
- Can be repaired,
- Retain a much higher resale value.

So now with that information in mind, let's examine the three avenues for sourcing your child's next brass instrument.

1. Purchase a new instrument

IMSS staff are unable to dictate which brand or model of instrument our students should buy. We also can't recommend a particular retailer over others. I can however tell you that I have played student model trumpets and trombones made by the following manufacturers and that they provide all those benefits listed above:

- Yamaha
- Conn
- King
- Bach
- Jupiter
- Blessing
- Holton
- Suzuki

At the other end of the spectrum there are numerous manufacturers being distributed online and in stores that are definitely not built to the same standard. I have seen trumpets with valves that get stuck within days of being serviced for the third time that year, trombones that were built to the wrong scale and couldn't be held by child's hands (or played in tune for that matter), and trombone slides whose plating wore off within months and could not be repaired.

Plastic Trumpets & Trombones

Plastic instruments such as the excitingly-coloured *pTrumpet*, *pCornet* and *pBone* are available brand new for around \$200. I've personally played the plastic trombones a few times and have been impressed. They feel similar to a metal trombone and can play all the notes a young player needs, just with a less focused tone. The upsides are that they are relatively cheap, lightweight and come in a rainbow of colours. The downsides are:

- If you break a part that can't be superglued then you could be up for a new instrument,
- They often come in a soft case (nylon bag) that makes safe transportation more difficult, and
- If your child joins a school band in Year 7 then they may be required to source a metal trumpet/trombone so that their sound blends with the rest of their instrument section.

I recommend that you seek your teacher's opinion prior to purchasing one of these as it may save you hundreds.

The recommended brands from the previous page will provide you with a brand new student trumpet for somewhere between \$600 - \$900 or a trombone for \$800 - \$1100. The inexpensive, lower quality instruments may only cost you \$200 - \$400 outright, but you run the significant risk of needing to repair then replace it in the near future. For that same kind of price you could...

2. Purchase a used instrument

It is not uncommon to see moderately or lightly used instruments from the recommended manufacturers list going on Gumtree for \$300 - \$600. There will be more available and lower asking prices towards the middle of each school year when demand is lowest. Even if you're paying closer to that \$600 mark for a fully functional instrument - that *isn't* going to lose much more value - then that's a win for everyone who wants their noisy trumpet or trombone student to improve rapidly.

The key things to check in person before buying the used instrument are:

- Do the main moving parts move easily when lubricated? Beginner students will know how to oil trumpet valves and grease or oil trombone slides so your child should be able to check this themselves.
- Do the tuning slides move? Ideally they would move when greased, but this one's less of a priority because the expert repairers at IMSS can service your instrument for \$50 or so and they're experts at freeing up tuning slides. They'll also smooth out any obvious dents so don't worry about them either.
- Is there a serial number engraved on the instrument? Genuine instruments from those manufacturers listed above will all feature a model code and serial number.

And that's it! Scratches and little dents around the instrument don't effect how it plays so if you're getting a mechanically sound, high quality instrument for a fraction of the cost then go for it.

3. Hire from an external provider

There are a range of music shops and instrument hire specialists in Western Australia that offer brass instrument hire services. Their rates and terms will vary so feel free to do some research or ask your teacher for further advice.

If financing any of these three main options will not be possible due to unexpected financial difficulties please get in touch with your child's instrumental teacher as there may be a way to make instrument hire possible with your school administration's assistance.

Technical Terms For Brass Instruments

Researching a brass instrument can be tricky if you don't know exactly what to search for. The type of **trumpet** used by beginners across Australia is called a 'Bb trumpet' (pronounced "B Flat Trumpet"). Professional orchestral trumpeters might also own C or Eb trumpets, but beginners should be looking for the Bb variant. If a website doesn't specify what key the trumpet is in (Bb, C or Eb) it is *probably* in Bb, but that could also be a cause for concern if the dealers don't know that information themselves.

Beginner **trombonists** require a 'tenor trombone'. They come in 'straight' (no added tubing) and 'trigger' (added tubing activated by a thumb trigger) versions. The straight tenor trombone is always in Bb ("B Flat") and the trigger trombones are referred to as a Bb/F (pronounced "B Flat F"). Your child won't need a trigger trombone until mid-to-late high school and then only if they have high aspirations for studying music at the ATAR and tertiary level. There is one other very rare variant of the trigger trombone called a Bb/C trombone that is designed for young beginners with short arms, but you are unlikely to come across these. IMSS trombone students are selected with arm length in mind so you won't need to look for one of these. Finally, do not buy an 'alto' or 'bass' trombone!

IN SUMMARY

Trumpeters – look for a 'Bb Trumpet'
Trombonists – look for a 'tenor trombone' with no extra tubing

PLEASE NOTE: Your child will need a functional instrument when their lessons recommence at the start of their second year of study. Good luck!