



## Purchasing a Student Flute

Whether renting or purchasing, budget will often dictate a limit on your instrument. Investing as much as you can will often get the best outcome, although availability when it comes to rental instruments will also need to be accounted for. Allowing £250-£500 for a purchase of a new instrument is a safe starting point.

Please do remember that instruments can be purchased VAT free, through your child's school, using the Assisted Instrument Purchased Scheme:

(<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/marketplace/assisted-instrument-purchase-scheme-aips/>)

Useful Information here:

<https://www.justflutes.com/content/flute-owners-guide/first-time-buyers-guide>

<https://www.flutes.com/7-tips-on-choosing-a-beginner-flute/>

### BEGINNER – ‘Curved Head’?

The first question to address is whether or not your child requires an adapted flute headjoint. This traditionally comes in the form of a ‘bent head’ and allows a younger / smaller beginner flautist to reach the keys comfortably. New designs now also include a ‘waveline’ headjoint (Jupiter) or a ‘donut headjoint’ (Nuvo plastic flutes). It is very obvious to a flute teacher whether your child needs one of these adaptations, as it prevents numerous bad habits from creeping in. Rental is possibly a better option if you do need a bent headjoint, as it won't be for very long - once your child grows they will progress to a standard flute headjoint. If you are purchasing a flute with a bent head, do ensure it also has the straight headjoint included as well. The only exception to this is the Jupiter Waveline which has a D-foot joint model for very young players. (<https://www.jupiter.info/en/aktionen/loop-concept.html>)

### ‘SPLIT E’ Mechanism and ‘Off-set G’?

The other terminology that you will encounter for flutes are the ‘split E’ mechanism and the ‘Off-set G’. Both of these adaptations are offered on some beginner flutes but also go right up to professional instruments. They are not ‘learner specific’, and instead tend to be down to personal preference of the flautist. The problem for a beginner flautist is that they just don't know what they prefer, yet!

The off set G simply describes the angle of the G key, played by the left hand. It can be spotted on a flute because the two keys either side of the ‘sticking out’ G# key are tilted rather than inline with the other keys. It is useful for smaller hands, so is more common on student flutes. I personally think it is mentioned in the same style as a Marks and Spencers advert: “This is not just a G key, it is a silver plated, OFF SET G key!”

The Split E mechanism is a bit more in-depth. It revolves around a similar place on the flute and reflects the description of whether two keys either move together or move independently. The French system that nearly all modern flutes are designed from included this little extra which, personally, I quite like. It is less relevant for a younger player with a smaller note range, as it affects the high E above the treble staff. Ultimately it makes a

trickier note a little nicer to play, although there is a trade off with the F# that can become troublesome instead! It is, from my experience, a nice extra but don't panic too much when purchasing a first instrument.

### 'Open Holed' Flutes and 'Foot joints'

Flutes have keys that cover the holes in order for the different pitches to sound. A nice extra, usually for more advanced players, is to play a flute with 'open holes' (ie. the keys have holes in the centre). This is not an option for a beginner flute and should be avoided for young players who will be frustrated by the extra frustration that it brings! Flautists choose open holed flutes due to the variation in tone, added incentive for good technique and also the flexibility to play dramatic modern repertoire using different effects when sliding flingers onto keys. None of this is useful for a young player! A standard 'C Foot Joint' is also preferable. A B foot joint is for a higher end flute to extend the range a semit-tone lower.

### Makes, Models and Budgets!

Pre-owned (depending on availability) is always an option for more expensive but good quality instruments! If buying privately from someone, please make sure a flautist has played the instrument first or a woodwind specialist has looked at its current condition! Replacing pads or double action of keys (when they don't co-ordinate with each other) can be expensive to put right! 'Silver' flutes may not be silver! The better quality material helps the tone of the flute, but silver plated flutes play really nicely! Nickel or other 'non-silver' flutes may tarnish and wear a little more quickly.

- Nuvo Flutes – plastic and lightweight. Very robust! Waterproof and adaptable but not to everyone's taste and not always as easy to blow. But very affordable! £130 approx.
- John Packer – JP011 very lower end of the range of beginner flutes so only appropriate for a very short time. JP flutes are not as well regarded as their brass counterparts but have a place when budgets are restricted.
- PEARL, TREVOR JAMES, JUPITER and YAMAHA are the makes that I would advise you to look for. There are different makes and models within these and your budget will determine which you purchase. Both Pearl and Yamaha have models that can be upgraded to intermediate + flutes by simply purchasing a better headjoint! So futureproofing your investment as well.

This is a great place to start:

[https://www.justflutes.com/category.php?category\\_id=1569&comp\\_letter=&page=1&order=name](https://www.justflutes.com/category.php?category_id=1569&comp_letter=&page=1&order=name)

However, locally in Cambridge, rental and purchase options are also easily viewable from:

WoodWind and Reed: <https://www.wwr.co.uk/>

Millers Music: <https://www.millersmusic.co.uk/woodwind-instruments-and-accessories>

For any more advice, please do ask! Good luck with your purchase ☺ Emma x