SO I'M INTERESTED IN MUSIC LESSONS FOR ME OR MY CHILD

Which instrument?

Find an instrument that you or our child will enjoy playing. Go to live performances and talk about the instruments. Most music stores will let you hold and play some of the instruments. Parents, if you can’t stand the sound of particular instruments, let your child know that before you commit to lessons. Remember, your child will be playing the instrument but you’ll be the one listening.

Time?

Are you or your children able to commit a block of time to lessons and practice? Beginning students usually start at 30 minute lessons and work their way up based on the recommendation of the teacher. Appropriate amounts of practice time should also be allocated daily.

How long does it take to learn an instrument?

This depends on the student- being physically able to play the instrument, their aptitude and attitude towards the instrument and the amount of time practicing at home each week.

Cost?

Some lessons, like voice and choir, don’t require instruments. The more exotic or uncommon the instrument or more materials needed to create it, the more expensive it will be. Check to see if a local music store has a rental program. Some organizations also have scholarships that help pay for lessons and instrument purchases. Some instruments require constant replacement of parts (e.g. reeds and pads for woodwinds)

The body?

Can you or your child physically play the instrument that you are thinking of? Some instruments are big, heavy and cumbersome to hold and carry for smaller people. Some instruments require appropriate strength especially in the hands; hand span; lip strength for blowing, or even permanent teeth to properly play the instrument. Private lessons in voice are inappropriate for pre-pubescent students. The voice box is in a state of major development and using adult teaching techniques with a young child could cause irreparable damage. Singing in a children’s choir will probably be best.

How to select a teacher

- Look for someone who has or is undergoing training in the instrument. UDCMS has three levels of faculty. Our Junior level staff are majors in the department and are overseen directly by their principal instrument teacher. Professional and Artist faculty have degrees and/or certifications in their field. All of them have performance experience.
- If you are looking to enroll younger children in private lessons, find out if a particular teacher has experience working with a younger age group.
- Make sure the teacher specializes in the instrument or style you or your child wants to study.
To buy or to rent?

- Not all brands are equal. A good instrument will retain a good deal of its value, stand up to student use (and abuse) and make a good sound. Also, replacement parts should be readily available. Check with your teacher before investing in renting or purchasing an instrument.
- Check to see if you can get the instrument for free or cheap- attics, basements, relatives, friends, Craigslist, garage sales etc.
- If you are not sure of your find, ask your child's teacher for assistance.
- Ask your teacher how long you or your child will need a student instrument.

Tips for parents

- Talk with your child’s teacher about expectations before beginning lessons.
- Make sure that you and your child are comfortable and compatible with your teacher. This may take a lesson or two. If you or your child is uncomfortable with your teacher after this 'trial period' then it may be worth switching to someone else.
- We have an open door policy here at the UDCMS. Parents are welcome to observe lessons, and in some classes, are required to be present and participating in the lesson.
- Don’t be afraid to talk to your teacher about any concerns. This is an investment for you, your child and the teacher.
- Unless in a method based program, find out from you teacher which method, books or teaching style they use.

Accessories- depending on your instrument, you or your child will need-

- A music stand
- Instrument specific accessories (e.g. oil, reeds, strings, mallets, sticks, rosin, footrests etc.)
- Pencils (we don’t mark our music in pen or marker)
- Metronome
- Instrument stand

Other Resources

- Suzuki Association of the Americas- [www.suzukiassociation.org](http://www.suzukiassociation.org)
- The Gordon Institute of Music Learning (GiML) [www.giml.org](http://www.giml.org)