



How to Choose a Guitar That's Right for You

Welcome to the first in my series of articles about what has undoubtedly become the world's most favorite musical instrument, the guitar.

A question that I am most often asked is "What kind of guitar should I buy?" The answer to that is fairly simple, but requires you to think about another question, what type of music do you want to play? There are basically three types of guitar, classical guitar, acoustic steel string guitar and electric guitar.

Parents tell me their son or daughter would like to learn the electric guitar but say they want their child to learn "properly" on an acoustic guitar first. What they are really trying to say is that they would like their child to learn the basic fundamentals of playing the guitar. In reality, it does not matter what type of guitar is used, the fundamental skills required to play are basically the same.

Just about everyone who learns the guitar does so because want to learn to play the type of music that they like listening to. If they want to learn to play modern rock guitar and listens to bands like *Good Charlotte* or *Greenday*, it doesn't make sense to force them to learn on a classical guitar. Likewise someone wanting to play flamenco style guitar wouldn't want to purchase an electric or steel string acoustic guitar.

Having the right type of guitar for the style of music you want to play will inevitably work towards the ultimate goal of leaning to play.

So what should you look for when purchasing a guitar? Let's examine the three types mentioned earlier.

Classical Guitar: The Classical guitar shape has not changed much in the past 200 years. It is an acoustic instrument characterized by a smaller body, nylon strings, and holes in the guitar head where the strings meet the tuning pegs. Unfortunately, a lot of beginning guitarists are told to buy a classical guitar. The reasoning behind this is that a classical guitar has nylon strings and

should theoretically be easier to play as the strings are softer. However, a classical guitar also has a wider neck and usually the strings are a little higher off of the neck than steel string acoustic or electric guitars. This can actually make the guitar a little harder to play. I normally recommend that a student buy a classical style guitar only if they want to learn to play classical guitar music or flamenco guitar.

Acoustic Steel String. By far the most popular of the two types of acoustic guitar, the steel string guitar gives a brighter and also louder sound. Steel string acoustic guitars usually have a larger body than a classical style guitar and produce a full bodied tone. Steel string acoustic guitars lend themselves to all types of music from folk, and blues to country and rock and roll. Some people find that steel strings are a little bit uncomfortable at first, but with a few days practice the fingers start to have callouses and the 'pain' disappears. Students who begin playing classical style guitars as a way of avoiding the minor discomfort of steel strings will eventually still have to get used to steel strings if they ever change to a different type of guitar.

Electric Guitar. There are many types and shapes of electric guitar. There are also two main sub categories of electric guitar, semi-hollow body guitars, often used by jazz and some blues guitarists, or the more 'usual' solid body electric guitar as played by most rock, blues and country artists. Electric guitars are the easiest to play for two reasons, the main one being the strings are normally slightly softer than acoustic steel string guitars and are also usually closer to the neck so less finger pressure is required to get a clear sound. The sound of electric guitars can vary from clean to very distorted and can be processed with various effects to create a very wide range of sounds

Next time I will advise where best to buy guitars and how to select a guitar teacher, whether you wish to be self taught, learn on the net, get instructions from a friend or hire a professional tutor.