

# Master Class

## By Richard Best

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### *Your First Drum Set*

Truth is, your first drum set probably won't be your last. And unfortunately it may not even be suitable. A musical instrument is a very personal item, and the chance of latching on to the ideal kit on the first go is somewhat remote.

On the plus side, drums from a decent maker these days will be good instruments, and whether new or used, upscale or entry level, they will deliver good performance and hold their value fairly well compared to 'cheap' sets.

So the first question is, should you buy new or used?

It's a personal choice really. Some people simply want something that's new. New instruments have the latest features and quality enhancements. They always carry a warranty, and may even come with a guarantee from the seller. Many stores have a 'satisfaction guarantee' that gives up to 30 days to return an item if it's not suitable. Buying new also means you get exactly what you want. So, new is good. And if you can't find the brand and/or configuration you want in the used market, new might be your only option.

Used drums, on the other hand, can be a great bargain, and they let you instantly trade up in quality. A drum set sheds up to half its value once it leaves the shop, and if the original buyer loses interest and decides to sell, that's good news for the bargain hunter. On the down side, you won't know how the drums have been treated. Some drummers are quite abusive. Drums are very rugged, but they have limits. Cymbals, even more so. Still, you'll get more for your money and also lessen the financial blow with used stuff.

What about budget? One savvy musician gave this advice: "Save up a lot of money and buy the best equipment you can find. Then save up a lot of money and buy the best equipment you can find. Then save up a lot of money ...." (I believe it was John Entwistle.)

The message here is to buy the highest quality instruments you can afford at the time, and then start saving for your next upgrade. Keep in mind that a bargain isn't a bargain if the item is hard to tune, hard to play, falls apart, or you just don't like it — so quality is a prime issue. And while you're enjoying your quality set, you should be already thinking about enhancements and/or improvements.

As your playing develops, it's likely that your tastes will change. So will your needs and your style of playing. That may force a decision: try to adapt your current set or look for something else. There's nothing wrong with having two (or more) contrasting setups, if budget and floor space permit.

As for choosing cymbals, well that's an entirely different topic.