

## Clarinet upgrade guide

### Why a step up instrument?

You may be wondering, “why buy a step up instrument?” “ What makes it different or better than the instrument my student already owns?” Well, student and beginner model instruments are made to be durable and sturdy and to have certain playing characteristics that help young players get started on the instrument. This is great for beginners, but as students become better players they outgrow these instruments.

Step up instruments are made to sound better, to be more resonant and to allow the player more freedom to play louder or softer. These instruments are made out of higher quality materials and have much more hand-crafting in them. These instruments are more fun to play and allow your student more artistic freedom to craft the music as opposed to a student model instrument.

### What instruments should I look for?

There are two types of step up instruments, “intermediate” and “professional” level. I recommend skipping the intermediate level instruments as they are (usually) just a slightly nicer made student model instrument. Professional instruments are the top of the line instruments that will last your student a lifetime of music making. There is usually a steep cost increase to a professional instrument, but it is worth it in the long term lifespan of the instrument and the enjoyment the student gets from playing on such a high quality instrument.

### Where can I find these instruments?

These types of instruments can be purchased all over. You can go try them out at local music stores like Separk Music in Clemmons, Moore Music or Music and Arts in Greensboro and Jackson’s Music in Winston Salem. You can buy them new online from WoodwindBrasswind.com or buy them used on ebay, though you have a great risk of getting a defective, old or broken instrument on auction sites.

Dillon Music in Woodbridge, N.J. has an extensive online store and is well known for being an honest and trustworthy store. Their inventory of used clarinets can be found here:

<https://www.dillonmusic.com/woodwinds/clarinets/clarinets/bb-clarinets/>

### What does Mr. Shoemaker Recommend?

The Buffet R-13. This is “the standard” professional clarinet and the vast majority of collegiate and professional players use this clarinet. Available at Jackson Music.

<https://www.wbw.com/Buffer-R13-Professional-Bb-Clarinet-with-Nickel-Plated-Keys-462799.wbw>

The Buffet E-11, E12 or E-13. These play just a little under the R-13 in terms of how well they play. This is another very common instrument to see advanced players using, especially at the upper high school and collegiate level. Available at Jackson Music.

<https://www.wwbw.com/Bufet-E12-France-Intermediate-Bb-Clarinet-H93033.wwbw>

Backun Clarinets are well made instruments that rival the Buffet instruments and are a little more affordable, just make sure to get an instrument in their "Protege" line, or higher. Available at Separk Music

<https://www.wwbw.com/Backun-Protege-Bb-Grenadilla-Clarinet-J56440.wwbw>

What accessories could I get for my student?

Mouthpieces make a huge difference for how an instrument plays! Clarinets are especially affected by mouthpiece choice and a student can sound much better by just upgrading their mouthpiece.

I recommend:

Vandoren B45 mouthpiece or other upgraded Vandoren mouthpiece.

<https://www.wwbw.com/Vandoren-B45-Series-Bb-Clarinet-Mouthpiece-483747.wwbw>

Rovner Dark cloth ligature

<https://www.wwbw.com/Rovner-Dark-Bb-Clarinet-Ligature-and-Cap-540295.wwbw>