

Brent Mead

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Recommended Trombone Upgrades

If you're looking to upgrade from a student model trombone to an intermediate or professional level trombone, use this sheet to help guide your purchase. Before I describe details, it's important to have a private instructor or teacher help you choose an instrument. Beware that there are tons of instrument makers that suggest they offer professional quality for insanely low prices. "If it's too good to be true, it probably is."

That said, I always recommend my students to buy a used trombone. Usually, you can find quality instruments on the used market for a fraction of the cost of a new trombone. I also recommend that you budget an extra \$200 for possible repairs. The slide is one of the most delicate parts of any band instrument and, when you're buying a used trombone, this is often the part of the instrument that might need repairs. Last but not least, if at all possible, it's best to be able to playtest a horn before you buy. Some sellers will offer a trial period – ask about this before you buy.

Specifications

- If you're looking for a new trombone, it's usually for two reasons: F-attachment and a larger bore size
- The F-attachment is a set of tubing on the bell that adds an extra length of tubing to the instrument that lowers the pitch of the instrument when the valve is engaged.
 - There are several different valve types but I recommend a **rotor** valve for high school students. The different valve types all have their differences, strengths and weaknesses.
 - I also prefer metal linkages – not string linkages. To look for this, find a photo behind the valve next to the bell and see if there is any string.
 - Hagemann valves and Thayer valves are great but I generally recommend those for students who are planning on studying music after high school. This is not a deal breaker, but just a general consideration.
- The bore size is the diameter of the inside of the trombone slide. The bore size of most student horns are .408-.508". When considering an upgrade, look for instruments with 'medium-bore' or .525" or 'large-bore' or .547".
- When buying a larger trombone, it's possible you may need a new mouthpiece to accommodate the large bore size. Instrument makers designate this difference with two terms: small shank or large shank. Most small bore and medium bore trombones use small shank mouthpieces and most large bore trombones use large shank mouthpieces. Double check the shank of the trombone you're considering buying to know if you'll need a new mouthpiece.
- You may see specs on the bell size, bell or slide material, one-piece or two-piece bells, lacquer, wrap style, and leadpipes. All of these have affects on how the horn plays but discuss these details with your private instructor.
 - Some considerations to avoid are:
 - Silver bells for medium or large bore trombones
 - Detachable bells for student horns
 - Dual-bore slides unless you've play tested this with a private instructor present

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Brands and Models I Suggest

- Antoine-Courtois
 - Tenor
 - 421
 - 420
 - 440
 - 280
 - 260
 - Bass
 - 502
 - 550
 - 551
- Bach
 - Tenor
 - 42
 - 36
 - Bass
 - 50
- Conn
 - Tenor
 - 88
 - 52
 - Bass
 - 62
 - 112
- Edwards
 - Tenor
 - 350
 - Bass
 - 454
 - 502
- Getzen
 - Any Eterna, Custom Series, or Custom Reserve Trombones
 - Eterna
 - Tenor
 - 1036
 - 1047
 - Bass
 - 1052
 - 1062
 - Tenor 3047
 - Bass 3062
- S.E. Shires
 - Any Custom Series, Artist Series, or Q Series models
- Yamaha
 - Any Xeno line instrument
 - Tenor
 - 620/640
 - 446/448
 - Bass
 - 620

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Other Brand Considerations:

There are tons of other instrument makers that make good trombones. Benge, Rath, John Packer, XO, Adams, Greenhoe, Jupiter, and more make trombones that I've played that play well. Some of these brands have quality inconsistencies, some of them have widely mixed opinions. While I cannot fully recommend these, they might make the horn just for you! As always, consult any purchase you make with a private instructor.

Details to look out for:

One very specific indicator that you should look for when buying a used horn is a small red circle with a dot in the middle. This is commonly referred to by 'red rot'. Red rot is de-zincification, or corrosion, of a metal alloy that leaves behind mostly copper on the spot that is corroding. Over time, this spot will continue to corrode and eventually, a whole will form. There are tons of articles online if you'd like to learn more that describe what causes this, but please take a moment to do a Google image search of '[red rot brass instruments](#).' You'll see the red circles with dots in them. More importantly, you'll see tons of people asking "is this red rot?"

A red discoloration on an instrument is **not** red rot. Large swaths of red patches on an instrument is usually not red rot. On a used instrument, you may see parts of the lacquer or plating wearing off usually on the bell. This is usually not concerning. You should look for the small red circles with a white center on the end of the slide, along the gooseneck (part that touches the neck while playing), or on the inner slide tubes. If you see any of these red circles on these places, do not buy that instrument.