

How To Get The Most Out Of Music Lessons

A Consumer's Guide on What You Need to Know to Help Make
"Learning to Play an Instrument" a Successful, Rewarding, Experience.

1. What Age is Appropriate?

Adults can start any instrument at any time. Their success rate is based on how willing and determined an adult is to commit to the instrument and to practicing. We currently teach many adults well into their 60's and 70's.

For children, starting at the right age is the key element to their success and outcome of their musical experience. Although every child is different (some more mature than others), the following age guide will give you the appropriate information you will need to make a proper decision on what will work best for you as well as your child.

6 months – 3 years of age

Children within this age bracket work very well in group music and dance groups. A preschool or parent/child interaction class is taught with group participation. Private lessons generally do not work well at this age because the child has not yet experienced the formal learning environment of kindergarten or school and learns more effectively through the game oriented preschool environment.

4 years of age and up

a. Piano/Keyboard

The Music Center of North Haven LLC. suggests starting students as young as 4 in private piano lessons. At this age, they have started to develop longer attention spans and can retain material with ease. Basics are taught in the beginning which would include note recognition as well as ear training.

b. Guitar-Acoustic, Electric, and Bass

We generally start guitar students between the ages of 6 & 7 due to the physical nature of the instrument. Guitar playing requires some dexterity and causes a fair amount pressure on the fingertips from pressing on the strings. Children under 6 generally have smaller hands and may find playing uncomfortable. Again, this is only a guide. You know your child better than anyone and should make your decision for lessons based on that.

c. Voice Lessons

It is recommended that vocal training start at age 8 due to the physical nature of vocal lessons (proper breathing techniques and the development of the vocal chords and lung capacity), the younger body is generally not ready for the rigors of vocal techniques. We offer a children's choir (ages 6-9) and a pre-school singing program (ages 3-5) that will teach the child how to use their voices properly, in a fun more relaxed environment.

d. Drums

A good starting age for drum lessons is 4 years of age. While most instructors like their students older, the drum set tends to be very stimulating and promotes our already innate ability to keep time and produce a beat. This ability allows student's of all ages a sort of "instant gratification" by playing them. Due to the physical requirements of the drums, younger students just love to produce sounds and tend to enjoy practicing this particular instrument more because it is energy based.

e. Violin

We accept violin students from the age of 5 on up. Some teachers will start students as young as 3, which is available using the Suzuki Method™ and encompasses more ear training and memorization than note reading, but experience has shown us that the most productive learning occurs when the beginner is 5 and older and starts reading notes from the onset.

f. Flute, Clarinet, Sax (Woodwinds)

Due to the lung capacity (and in the case of the sax the size of the instrument), we recommend that most woodwind beginners should be at least 8 years old.

g. Trumpet, Trombone (Brass Instruments)

The brass instruments require physical exertion and lung power to properly admit sound as well as the handling of the size of the instrument, we recommend that student be at least 8 years old.

2. Insist on Private Lessons when Learning a Specific Instrument

Group lessons work well for preschool music programs and theory lessons. However, when actually learning how to play a specific instrument, private lessons are far superior to the development and ability of mastering an instrument. Group lessons just can't give the student the one on one attention that private lessons can. In private lessons, the format is designed so that the student works at a pace that's good for them. The teacher has the time to focus on working with the student's strengths and weaknesses and can enable the student to be the best they can be.

3. Take Lessons in a Professional Teaching Environment

Learning to play an instrument is not just a matter of having a great teacher. Having an environment that is conducive to learning strengthens the overall goal. In a professional school a student is not distracted by TV, pets, phones, siblings etc. With a designated, uninterrupted private teaching room, we can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students in a school setting are also more motivated by the surroundings in and around the different teaching rooms because they can hear other students who are at different playing levels than themselves.

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