

The Best Guitar Brands for Beginners

Your no-BS guide to finding the right first guitar—without overspending

■ Why Brand Matters When You're Starting Out

Your first guitar sets the tone—literally and figuratively. A great beginner guitar: - Feels good in your hands - Stays in tune - Inspires you to keep playing But here's the thing: a lot of cheap guitars are just that—cheap. And not everyone can afford a high-end Gibson or Fender out of the gate. This guide helps you find the best guitar brands that balance quality, price, and reputation, so you can start strong without wasting money.

■ What Should a Beginner Guitar Cost?

You don't need to spend thousands. But you do want to avoid bargain-bin junk. Sweet spot for beginners: \$200–\$400 This range gets you something playable, reliable, and potentially good enough to gig with later on.

■ What to Look For

Before diving into brand names, here's what actually matters: - Playability: Is it comfortable? Can you press down the strings without a fight? - Build Quality: Does it feel solid? Will it last through practice, travel, and a few bumps? - Sound: It doesn't need to sound like a vintage Strat—but it shouldn't sound like a tin can either. - Brand Reputation: Go with proven names. You want quality control and solid support if something goes wrong.

■ Top Beginner Guitar Brands (2024)

■ Yamaha

Why it's great: Reliable, consistent, well-built. Yamaha guitars are no-frills, but always solid. - Best Models: Pacifica 012 / 112V (electric), FG800 (acoustic) - Price Range: \$200–\$350 - Best For: Players who want something that just works and lasts ■ The Toyota of guitars. Affordable, dependable, and surprisingly good.

■ Squier (by Fender)

Why it's great: Want that Fender Strat or Tele vibe without the Fender price tag? Squier delivers. - Best Models: Affinity Series, Classic Vibe Series - Price Range: \$250–\$450 - Best For: Rock, blues, funk, pop—Fender tones on a budget ■ Classic look, classic feel, beginner-friendly price.

■ Epiphone (by Gibson)

Why it's great: Gibson-style guitars at starter prices. Perfect if you want heavier rock tones. - Best Models: Les Paul Studio, SG Special - Price Range: \$250–\$450 - Best For: Fans of Les Pauls and SGs, rock and heavier genres ■ A legit path into the Gibson world without needing a second mortgage.

■ Ibanez

Why it's great: Known for slim necks, fast playability, and modern tones. Great for metal and beyond. - Best Models: GRX70QA, RG Series - Price Range: \$200–\$350 - Best For: Shredders, fast players, modern rockers ■ If your playlist leans heavier, this is a strong first choice.

■ Donner / Harley Benton

Why they're worth a look: Online brands that have shocked players with how good their cheap guitars can be. - Best Models: Donner DST-100, Harley Benton ST/TE Series - Price Range: \$120–\$250 - Best For: Total beginners, small budgets, second guitars ■ You'll be surprised what \$150 can get you these days—but don't skip a proper setup.

■ Final Tips Before You Buy

- Try before you buy if you can—feel matters more than looks. - Invest in a setup. A \$50 pro setup can make a \$200 guitar feel like a \$500 one. - Stick with well-known brands to avoid quality issues and resale headaches.

■ BONUS: Starter Gear Checklist

■ Decent beginner guitar (from the brands above) ■ Clip-on tuner ■ Guitar strap ■ Picks (buy a pack, they vanish) ■ Cable (for electrics) ■ Practice amp (Fender Frontman, Yamaha THR, etc.) ■ Guitar stand or wall hanger ■ Soft case or gig bag ■ Access to lessons (YouTube, apps, teacher, etc.)

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