

Should My Child Study Flute?

Whether you know the theme to “The Pink Panther”, the “William Tell Overture” or “Peter and the Wolf”, you have probably heard and loved the sound of the flute. The flute is a wonderful instrument to learn. Its beautiful sound, wonderful repertoire and potential for playing in school bands and orchestras make it a great second instrument for young pianists as well.

Our flute instructor, Lisa DiTiberio, answers some questions for parents and students considering studying the flute.

FAQs

How is playing the flute different from other instruments?

As a wind instrument, the first thing to remember is that it takes lots and lots of air! I tell my beginning students, “If you get dizzy, you are doing something right!” While it takes years to master how to use the breath, the blowing aspect of playing does get easier. The other main difference, certainly from piano, is the complexity of tasks. There is the blowing of air, the embouchure (the shape the lips must make to produce a good tone), holding the flute and pressing down keys, and using the tongue to articulate the notes. So, while all this is challenging, the end result is the beautiful and unique sound of the flute.

What can I do to prepare my son or daughter who wants to play the flute?

I always encourage families to listen to CDs featuring the flute. The student can learn what a good flute sound is, and also become excited about being able to play some of music’s great music. Attending concerts is another way to expose to the world of classical music.

If your child’s school offers instrumental music instruction, get them involved in that as well. The flute is an ensemble instrument as well as a solo instrument – meant to be played with other instruments. If they already play the piano, they are at an automatic advantage too.

At what age can my child start flute lessons?

Every student is different, but generally age 9 or 10 is a good age to begin flute. But it’s great for older students too because of their more developed motor skills.

How do I choose what flute to buy?

I generally recommend beginners rent an instrument at first. Most music stores provide rental instruments at very low cost. After a year or so, I can recommend some good instruments for students to buy.

Are there other additional costs?

Flute players go through our method books relatively slowly so that helps with cost. I usually recommend two to three books at a time (a method book, solo book and duet book). Of course the student needs a music stand for practicing and a metronome (for keeping the beat). Music stores carry these items as well.

How much should my child practice?

Daily practice is essential for everyone. The amount of time required depends on the individual student's playing level and goals. I usually discuss this with the student and parent.

How can you help my middle school/high school flute player?

I help students prepare for auditions, chair challenges and concert music. While my primary goal is always the techniques of playing the flute, I also help a student learn how to practice efficiently, and play more musically and with a beautiful, full flute sound.
