

Choosing the Right Acoustic Guitar

Have you ever looked up at that “wall of guitars” at the local music store and wondered which guitar was right for you? Picking out a new instrument is exciting but it can also be a bit intimidating when choosing between different types of guitars, body shapes, and a host of other important factors.

This lesson covers some practical tips, from a player’s perspective, on choosing the right guitar for you. You and your guitar are in for a long-term relationship. Somewhere on that “wall of guitars” may be “your” guitar. It’s your job to find it.

Types of Acoustic Guitars

There are numerous factors to consider when choosing an acoustic guitar. Here are some things to think about.

Small Body Acoustic Guitars

- Names like “Parlor,” “Auditorium,” “Orchestra,” “Grand Concert,” or “Blues Acoustics”
- Easier to hold and play for smaller players
- Balanced and clear tone with not too much bottom end
- Examples would be the Gibson Blues King

Medium Body Acoustic Guitars

- Names like “Dreadnought” or “Grand Auditorium”
- Traditional, standard-size guitars, like the Gibson J-45 or Gibson Hummingbird

Large Body Acoustic Guitars

- Names like “Jumbo” or “Super Jumbo”
- Larger, wider body which produces a lot of bass low end in the tone
- Slightly louder in volume than a smaller sized guitar

Guitar Size

- Choose a guitar that fits your body size.
- Try out many sizes of instruments to determine which body size works for you.

Cutaway Guitars

- Variation in the body that allows the player to reach the higher areas of the neck
- Great for fingerstyle guitarists

Types of Woods Used

- Different woods create different tonal characteristics
- Spruce and cedar tops are great for fingerstyle.
- Mahogany and maple tops are great for flat-picking.

Acoustic Guitar Pickups

- Guitars with pickups can be plugged into an amp or sound system.

Choosing the Right Guitar

Here are a few tips for choosing the right guitar for you.

- 1. Try out as many guitars as possible.** Develop preferences in sound, size, and body style.
- 2. Pay attention to the size of the guitar.** Does it feel comfortable and balanced in your lap or does it feel big and bulky?
- 3. Listen to someone else play the guitar.** Step back and focus, from a listener's perspective, on how the guitar sounds. Listen carefully to the tone and how the guitar sounds.
- 4. Choose a guitar that feels good to you as you play.** If you don't feel comfortable with an instrument then you will be less likely to play it and make music with it.

Here are some final words of advice. Don't buy a guitar because a friend or a salesman says it's great. Don't buy a guitar because of how many ads you've seen for it in guitar magazines.

Choose your guitar because it speaks to you—because it inspires you to make music. This will be the guitar you will be playing for years to come—on good days and bad.

Next time you find yourself looking up at that "wall of guitars," don't look for the most expensive guitar, or the prettiest guitar. Look for YOUR guitar. It could be up on that wall. You just need to find it.

For step-by-step quality guitar instruction check out the award-winning Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar course at www.LearnAndMaster.com and the lessons section at www.gibson.com for all the help you need to become the player you want to be!



Steve Krenz

*As an educator, Steve is best known for the top-selling guitar instruction course, **Gibson's Learn & Master Guitar** that received the 2011 Acoustic Guitar Magazine Player's Choice Award for Best Instructional Material. As a professional guitarist in Nashville, Steve's broad playing experience includes playing guitar with a symphony orchestra, to jazz big bands, to performing with numerous Grammy-winning artists like Donna Summer, Michael W. Smith, Bryan White, The Fifth Dimension, Israel Houghton, and Tommy Sims.*

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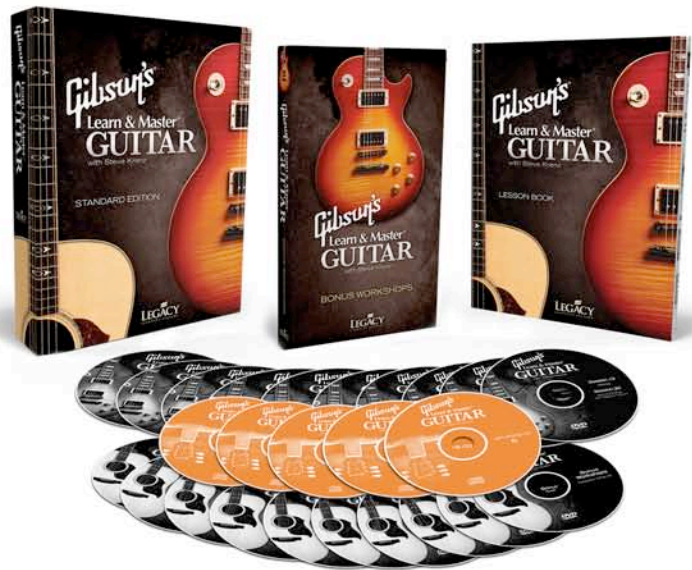
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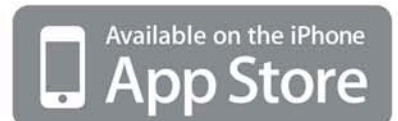
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