

## **Your first guitar**

Stanley A Lucero, August 2020

I can't stress how important it is to have a good guitar when you decide to learn how to play the guitar. My first guitar was a cheap Stella guitar that was defective. The strings buzzed no matter what I tried. It took a lot of strength to press the strings against the guitar fretboard. No matter what I did, I couldn't get the guitar to sound right. I had several friends who played guitar and their instruments sounded beautiful. I figured something was wrong with me.

One day I played someone else's guitar and was surprised that I could play, and the guitar sounded good. I found out that my guitar had a warped neck and that the strings were too close to the fretboard. There was no way for that guitar to sound good.

Over the years, I have given many guitar lessons and the first thing I do is inspect their instrument. Since many of the students come from poor families, they don't have the money to go shopping for a good instrument. Their parents found a cheap guitar at the swap meet, a relative gave them a used guitar, and in some cases, they bought the cheapest guitar they could find at a large local store. Their parents couldn't afford to go to a music store.

Cheap guitars have many things in common. They are made out of green wood or wood that was not intended to be used for an instrument. The guitar necks are warped – that means they are not straight, and either are bowed down or bowed up. The strings are usually spaced too far away from the fretboard. The metal fret bars are too high and cause the strings to rattle. The bridge where the strings are attached to the guitar body by the sound hole is bowed up and becoming detached from the guitar. In the most severe cases, cheap glue was used on the guitar and the guitar is starting to come apart. Then, the strings are usually old and all need to be replaced.

In some cases, I recommend that their parents take the guitar to a music store and see if it can be repaired at a reasonable cost. Sometimes the repair bill is more expensive than buying a new guitar. Many music stores allow you to rent a guitar for six months and then trade the guitar in for a better instrument with the rental costs as a down payment. Be sure to buy a case or gig bag to protect your guitar. Never buy a guitar without playing it first or take someone with you who has been playing guitar for several years to help you select a good guitar.

I have purchased used guitars at music stores and pawn shops and found I had purchased a treasure. First, I inspect the guitar to look for any defects. Second, I play the guitar to hear how it sounds, to feel how hard or easy it is to play, and to feel the vibrations of the strings against my stomach. I bought an excellent used Martin guitar at a pawn shop that was spotted with white paint because someone painted the ceiling and forgot to move the guitar from the floor. The white paint didn't affect the sound of the Martin. I purchased a Godin electric classical guitar that had a little punched in dent for half price. The dent didn't affect the sound of the Godin.

When I finally had enough money to buy a good guitar, I went to a guitar store in Albuquerque, Nw Mexico that specialized in classical guitars. I sat on the floor and played at least 20 different guitars until I had decided on three possible selections. Then I closed my eyes and played each of the three guitars. I think the guitar chose me. To my surprise, the guitar that sounded best and

was the easiest to play was not the most expensive guitar. This guitar didn't have the gold tuning pegs, the ivory dots on the fretboard or the inlaid adornments, but it sounded better. I still have that guitar.

I did the same thing when I purchased my first good ukulele. I went to an ukulele store in Hawaii. I just wanted to see and was like a kid in a candy store. The ukuleles ranged from \$50.00 to \$5000.00. The store owner kept bringing me different ukuleles to try out. I had already learned that I can't afford to buy an instrument based on its physical beauty. I rejected every ukulele he brought to me. In the process I told him I had been playing the guitar for over 30 years and had recorded three cds of children's songs in Spanish. I pulled out my phone and let him listen to my recordings. He went to the back of the store and brought another ukulele that he said he hadn't been able to sell. It looked like a miniature classical guitar. It played beautifully. I loved it. I didn't have money to buy the Mele ukulele for \$700.00. He said he would reduce the price to \$600.00 with tax included and give me a good solid case. I just had enough money left on my credit card, so I walked out with a new instrument. I used the Mele Ukulele on the Turquoise cd and still use it today.

You don't need an expensive, beautiful guitar to learn how to play guitar, but you do need a good, easy to play guitar. You need a case to protect your guitar any time you are not playing the guitar. You need to change all six strings every 4-5 months. You need to keep your guitar away from extreme heat and extreme cold. An inexpensive guitar strap will let you stand up while you play the guitar.

At today's prices, you can get a good classical guitar with a case for about \$200.00 at most music stores. You might be able to rent the classical guitar with case for about \$15.00 a month. In six month you can decide if you want to buy the guitar and continue making music all of your life.