

Selling a Woodwind instrument (July 2019)

There are four options:

- Private sale – where you advertise the instrument at a fixed price in various publications (but more often online) and deal with the transaction yourself.
- Auction – where potential buyers place bids – mostly done on-line through ebay
- 'Commission' sale – where a music shop or on-line site sells the instrument on your behalf in return for a fee.
- Direct Sale to music dealer / music shop

Of these options the one that will raise the most money from the sale is if you sell it by private sale - but it requires more effort than the other options.

Don't forget - if you are selling an instrument in order to raise money to upgrade to a better or different instrument it is worth investigating part-exchange. A shop will never match the full second-hand value of the instrument but it could save you a lot of hassle.

Identifying the instrument

It is obviously essential to identify the manufacture and model of the instrument, and sometimes the serial number can be useful to assess the age of the instrument (there are many websites cataloguing instrument serial numbers). Usually the manufacturer, the model, and a serial number (and sometimes the place the instrument was made) will be stamped on an instrument somewhere (refer to Info sheet General 6 in the information page on this website).

Valuing the instrument

Whether you part-exchange or sell the instrument you need to have a rough idea of the value of the instrument.

If the model of the instrument is still currently available as new then find out the current Recommended Retail Price (RRP) (this is also known as the Manufacturer's suggested retail price – MSRP or Supplier's suggested retail price - SSRP). Retail Websites usually state the RRP (or MSRP or SSRP) and then a 'discount' price that the instrument is available for. If your instrument plays throughout and looks in good condition then value it at approximately one half the RRP/MSRP/SSRP.

If the instrument you are trying to sell is not currently available then type in the manufacturer and model details into your search engine and find out what price other advertisers have placed on the same model of instrument.

The second-hand market has been under-mined in recent years from the point of view of the seller. This is for three reasons: firstly, because so many second-hand instruments are available on-line the competition has forced the second-hand value down; secondly, many businesses have set up as purely on-line music instrument discount stores and have driven the new prices (and therefore second-hand prices) down; and thirdly, there has been a flood of poor quality Chinese and Indian budget student instruments which are much cheaper than even second-hand student instruments.

Unfortunately, this means you might find it takes time to sell your instrument and you probably will not achieve its true value when you do sell it.

Private sale

Whatever instrument you are selling, it is important that the instrument at least plays throughout its compass – that means every note can be sounded. If the instrument does not play throughout its compass it is usually best to have it repaired because otherwise it will be very difficult to sell and you certainly will not get the full value of the instrument. The exceptions to this are Saxophones and Flutes for beginners – these instruments only need to play down to Low D because a beginner will not need notes lower than this for quite some time – however the fact it does not play throughout its entire compass may still be off-putting for a purchaser.

Assuming the instrument is working acceptably it is worth giving it a quick clean yourself; use a small paint brush (10-20mm width) to remove dust, and buff the metal keys with an appropriate cleaning cloth.

The best time of year to sell an instrument is early September because that is the beginning of the academic year and many players will be looking for instruments. It can take a long time to sell an instrument at other times of the year and with that in mind it is best to either play the instrument occasionally (every fortnight or so) or store it with the open pads clamped down (by means of cork wedges) until it sells; this helps retain the pad seatings. If the instrument is left (un-played or with the pads un-clamped) for a few weeks then the pads can swell and stop seating properly – and so when you finally find a purchaser it is possible that the instrument will not be working properly.

Before trying to sell the instrument decide who the potential buyer might be. This will depend on what type of instrument you are trying to sell and whether it is a student, graduate, professional, or vintage instrument. The majority of people are looking for common student instruments such as Flutes; these people will probably be the parents of children who are starting the instrument and they will look close to home at first, perhaps in the local paper; at the opposite extreme will be players of such instruments as vintage Saxophones who will look nationally through dedicated websites.

If you are selling a student Flute, Clarinet or Saxophone I recommend trying the following:

1. Talk to your music teacher if you have one – they might know somebody interested.
2. Place adverts on local school and college notice boards if possible.
3. Advertise in the local paper (if one exists and if there are other instruments advertised)
4. Advertise in regional printed publications (if sold locally and it has a dedicated music section) such as Friday Ads
5. Advertise on-line either on a general classified Ads websites with a music section or on a dedicated second-hand musical instruments (in both cases where the buyer makes direct contact with you either by phone or email).

If you are selling a student Oboe, Bassoon, or Piccolo this is a more specialist item and a slightly different approach might be needed.

1. Talk to the music teacher – they might know somebody interested.
2. Place adverts on local school and college notice boards (Secondary schools only).
3. Advertise in regional printed publications (if sold locally and has a dedicated music section) such as Friday Ads
4. Advertise on-line either on a general classified Ads websites with a music section or on a dedicated second-hand musical instruments (in both cases where the buyer makes direct contact with you either by phone or email).
5. Sell through ebay

If you are selling a graduate, professional or vintage instrument this is also a specialist item and yet another slightly different approach might be needed.

1. Advertise in specialist Music magazines appropriate to the instrument you are selling.
2. Advertise on dedicated music websites that have a section advertising second-hand instruments (where the buyer makes direct contact with you either by phone or email).
3. Contact directly (email) various types of musical establishments (such as music colleges) to see if they have a notice board for second-hand instruments.
4. Sell through ebay.

Commission Sales

If you do not want to deal directly with the purchaser then you could sell through a music shop (or a website that sells on commission).

Select a shop that regularly deals with the type of instrument you are selling (possibly the shop where you bought the instrument in the first place). The shop must have an effective website that lists its second-hand stock and ideally the website should appear on the first page of a search. The shop need not be local to you – you could post or deliver the instrument to the shop that you want to act on your behalf.

Different shops have different policies on how they deal with second-hand instruments. Usually any shop will want to inspect the instrument first to assess its condition and value it. Some shops do not offer a warranty on their second-hand instruments and sell them to customers 'as seen'. Some shops offer a warranty on their second-hand instruments and therefore require the instrument to be in saleable condition (as they judge it) – this might mean that you have to pay them to repair it before they will put it up for sale.

When a shop or website does sell the instrument a commission (anywhere between 10% and 20% depending on the value of the instrument) will be deducted from the sale price. Note that it can take a long time for an instrument to sell.

Direct sale

If you do not want to deal directly with the purchaser and you want to sell your instrument quickly then you could sell directly to a dealer. You will not get a good return this way because the dealer needs to make a profit (and will also be absorbing the cost of potential repairs plus the dealer's cash will be tied up in the instrument until it sells).

One such on-line dealer is www.musical-money.co.uk.

Finding relevant websites for private Ads or commission sales

There are dozens of websites selling second-hand instruments either by private ad or on commission – simply search for the instrument that you are trying to sell (e.g. if you are trying to sell a Yamaha 26 clarinet then type into the search engine : second-hand Yamaha 26 clarinet and see what comes up).

Three well known general sites are www.gumtree.com ; www.preloved.co.uk; and www.freeads.co.uk.

Two well established dedicated musical instrument sites are the online site www.musicalinstrumentsales.co.uk/ and on instagram <https://www.instagram.com/musicalads>.

To return to home page click: www.stevetadd.co.uk