

# FAQs on Buying Your First Drum Set



## **Q. What comes with a drum set?**

**A.** Generally, a drum set consists of five drums and a set of hardware. A bass, snare, and three tom-toms make up the drums, and the hardware typically consists of a bass drum pedal, hit-hat cymbal stand, snare drum stand, one (or two) cymbal floor stands, and the tom-tom holders. Drum sets are normally priced to include this hardware, but may be offered as a “shell pack” without most or all of the hardware, at a lower price. Unless a drummer already owns compatible hardware, though, it is better to buy it with the drums, as stands are generally more expensive when purchased “a la carte”. A drum stool or “throne” is usually not included in a drum set’s hardware pack, but available separately in a wide range of cost and quality. Even a bargain-priced throne is better than a typical household chair because of its height adjustability.

## **Q. How do I compare drum sets in terms of quality?**

**A.** Most drum sets look very similar at first glance. Some of the things that determine the quality and value of a given set include:

### **1. Type of Wood:**

Bass drum, tom-tom and some snare drum shells are fashioned from wood plies. While the quality of construction of these cylinders is most important, the specific wood used contributes to the sound quality as well. In general, inexpensive sets use unspecified plywood. Intermediate sets use a combination of a premium wood (such as maple or birch) and cheaper wood together. And, highest quality sets use 100% premium wood.

### **2. Exterior Finish:**

A colored plastic wrap is the least expensive exterior finish for drums. Stain and/or lacquer paint finishes are more expensive but enhanced both sound and appearance.

### **3. Hardware Quality:**

The stands and other metal parts of a drum set become more durable as the price increases. This increased durability is one of the best arguments for choosing an intermediate, “semi-pro” drum set over a less expensive model; better hardware simply lasts longer and is far less likely to need repair or replacement over time.

## **Q. What about cymbals?**

**A.** Every drum set needs cymbals to be complete, but most sets do not come with cymbals. This is because drum manufacturers don’t make cymbals (and vice versa)! Cymbals are a specialty product and available from a small group of competing companies. While many hundreds of models are available, your salesperson can easily help you find a cymbal set appropriate for the quality of your chosen drum set. A standard cymbal configuration (regardless of price level) consists of a matched pair of “hi-hat” cymbals, a “ride” (or timekeeping) cymbal, and a “crash” (accent) cymbal. Most drum sets come with enough stands to hold all of these cymbals, but some sets may require the addition of one or more floor stands. For beginners, a single

“crash/ride” cymbal can cut cost by combining two cymbal functions in one cymbal, but it will likely be necessary to purchase a separate ride cymbal later on as the drummer’s skill and sophistication improves. Buyers should note that, like drums, higher quality cymbals are a good long-term investment, as their sound actually improves with age, and (barring abuse) they can often last a lifetime.

**Q. What if I already own a snare drum?**

A. In Most cases, drum sets can be purchased without the snare drum, thus lowering the price. If the new drum is of higher quality or a better cosmetic match with the rest of the set, many buyers choose to trade in their old snare or keep and use it as a spare.

**Q. Should I consider a used drum set?**

A. Good deals can sometimes be found in used sets, but buyers should be cautious. Many used sets are sold incomplete compared to what a new set provides. Having to purchase stands, mounts, brackets, heads, etc. can be expensive as repair or replacement parts can add up quickly! Because of this, used drum sets are usually a better value for experienced drummers who may already own missing pieces and are able to do their own repair labor where needed.

**Q. Is there any way to make a drum set quieter?**

A. Yes! Sound mufflers are available for the various drums and cymbals of the set. They allow a natural feel for practicing while drastically reducing the sound level and minimizing disturbance to others.

**Q. Do I need protective cases for my drums?**

A. It depends on your situation. A drum set, which is used strictly at home, doesn’t need cases. However, if a set is even occasionally transported (to school, rehearsals, concerts, etc.), some form of protection is highly recommended. For the drums and cymbals, both soft carrying bags and hard-shell cases are available; the latter providing the best protection against dents and other damage. Soft shoulder bags are also available for hardware, but hard-shell wheeled cases are recommended due to the weight of these items.

**Q. What else should I consider in purchasing a drum set?**

A. As an experienced drummer, your salesperson can help you consider all of your needs based on your specific circumstances. The main thing is to take your time and ask questions! The Drum Pad’s non-commission sales staff is dedicated to taking the guesswork and frustration out of drum shopping, helping you to make the right choices for your budget and needs. We’ll also be there for you after you purchase, with assistance and advice on maintenance, tuning, upgrades, or anything else relating to your drums. Remember, where you buy is just as important as what you buy!