

# Things to look for when purchasing an electric guitar.

One element of selling equipment that is critical to me is educating students and parents about instruments. Many people are under the impression that a guitar is a guitar. Yes, they all have six strings and make noise, but this is where the similarities end. Here are a few key components I suggest players (especially beginner/intermediate guitarists) keep in mind when purchasing an instrument:

1) **Ergonomics** – To me, comfort is the single most important element when picking out a guitar. If the instrument is not comfortable to play, it can be very difficult to develop proper playing technique. Here are a few things that I believe are required when purchasing an electric guitar (all of the electrics I have hanging in the studio have these components):

- First and foremost, I believe an electric guitar should have a forearm body contour (usually seen on Stratocaster-style guitars). This contour allows for comfortable hand positioning of the picking hand over the strings. Les Paul or Telecaster-style instruments tend to push the picking arm up, changing the angle of the picking hand and making for less comfortable playing.
- I believe a guitar should also have a contour on the back of the body. While not as important, this also allows for more comfortable playing position.
- Always use a strap when playing electric guitar. Without one, the guitar tends to get away. Try not to set it too low! Set the strap at the same level standing as when you are sitting down.

2) **Pickup Type** – The next factor for me is pickup type. I generally prefer **humbucking pickups** for the type of music I play. If you like Metallica, AC/DC, or any distortion-driven band, these will get you close to that sound. They are quiet and provide more output (creating a fuller distortion). **Single coil pickups** are fine as well. They do hum, but provide a little cleaner tone and sound. These pickups are great for country, blues, and classic rock. If you like Stevie Ray or Hendrix, these may be the pickups for you.

Aside from these two elements, the sky is the limit. There are numerous body styles, finishes, and models out there to accommodate most player's tastes. There are also countless aftermarket parts that you can add on later (one of my favorites being locking tuners). One thing I always encourage: put functionality first and finish second. 90% of what comes out of your guitar is how you play it, not the guitar itself.