



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CHOOSING A HARMONIUM

by Daisy Bowman

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consider**



General

Types

It can be daunting not knowing where to start.

The first thing to know is that there are some different types of harmonium altogether.

This is often based on the mechanism inside - e.g number of reeds per note. Usually there are 2 reed or 3 reed.

Here I would advise you go for a 2 reed instrument. 3 reed gets complicated.

Where to Buy

If you live in London - I recommend going to the **Bina Store in Southall, London!** Go and try a few out. They will also give you advice - and you can also get the harmonium serviced there too.

If you are located in Europe - then I can recommend a german company called **Bhakti Harmoniums**. The sound, build quality, appearance is excellent. Harmoniums in Europe are generally more expensive.

If you are in the U.S - then I have heard good things about **Ragamala harmoniums**, however they may be expensive.

In general - it is risky to buy from ebay, but you may get lucky! Always ask for a video of the harmonium being played and check that that you really like the sound it makes.

Price

Unfortunately - unless you live in India, then a new harmonium is going to set you back between £300-500. This seems to be because recently import tariffs have greatly increased.

Sometimes you may be fortunate to come across a good quality second hand one - go for it if it feels good! I have bought great harmoniums for less than £200.

All harmoniums are different. Even the same model - made one after the other may be different.

It is also often the case that the sound sweetens with use - therefore don't rule out a secondhand option!

Some questions to ask yourself

01. Size

DO I NEED TO TRANSPORT IT? IS SPACE AN ISSUE?

If the answer is yes to either/both of these questions, even a little yes then my first recommendation would be to buy a small sized folding harmonium like this Bina 23B Deluxe Harmonium, 2.5 Octaves, Folding, Small. Bhakti harmoniums also do a model in this size.



A second option would be a mini - non folding harmonium (good for small apartments)

or

A folding normal sized harmonium. good for popping in the car but still heavy and too big for plane rides generally!

(folding just means it can pop down into a handy suitcase.) but sometimes this can still be a very large suitcase!



02.

DO I NEED STOPPERS ON THE FRONT?

Actually - I much prefer minimal models. Its very rare that I make use of the stoppers which are useful for regulating volume (a bit) creating a drone (there are other ways to do this, and mostly you wont need to)



03.

DO I NEED A COUPLER?

"what's a coupler?" I hear you ask...

That is the lever found on the right hand side of some harmoniums.

It offers the opportunity to double the sound by playing the octave of the note you are playing simultaneously. As a beginner it is unlikely that you will want to make the harmonium any louder - to fill a huge hall. Chances are you'll want to make the harmonium quieter most of the time. So don't worry about this feature too much!

HOW DOES IT SOUND?

THE MOST **IMPORTANT THING**

Honestly, it makes MUCH more difference than how it looks. So where possible try it out.

Take your time - if possible learn one or two chords before going to the shop - so that you can play them and really hear if the sound is good.

Watch out for it being too loud, or harsh sounding.

But remember, the tone can improve with playing.

If there are buzzing notes - this is not necessarily something

to worry about as often they can be fairly easily fixed. But still if you don't know how then its best to make sure the harmonium is fully functioning before purchasing.



Would you like to help me improve this guide? Send me your questions and I will do my best to answer them :)

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