

Drum Kits

Buying a Beginner Kit

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY A DRUM KIT

1 Look for five-piece, full-sized kit, most probably made in China. Many are virtually identical, just bearing the different names of the various importers/retailers. Based originally on the first Pearl Export of 1983, some still have the original Pearl-style double tom holder and oblong lugs, others have modern oval or small square lugs.

2 The number of tuning lugs on each drum is crucial. For accuracy and evenness of tuning, bass drums, snare drums and floor toms should ideally have eight per side rather than six, and small toms five or six rather than four or five.

3 Shells are usually nine-ply Philippines mahogany or similar.

Premier-Olympic has thinner, more resonant six-ply shells. Remo budget heads are preferable. Matching wood snare drums look good but are not necessarily better sounding than steel.

4 Kits arrive unassembled with a set-up instruction pamphlet. You have to put the heads on the drums and tune them. This is fairly straightforward, but it's worth buying from a good dealer who will give you sound advice.

5 Packages should include everything to get you started: stool, sticks, snare and hi-hat stands, bass drum pedal and at least one cymbal stand. Also basic 16" cymbal and 14" hi-hats. Cannon offers an extra 18" cymbal.

Drum Kit news

Ludwig has launched a new series called the Legacy Classic. The line is based on an improved version of Ludwig's reinforced, three-ply drumshells. The shells are made from 1/16" hand-selected inner and outer plies of North American Maple and a 1/8" cross-laminated North American Poplar core ply. The shells are then augmented by 1/4" maple reinforcement hoops and rounded, classic-cut vintage-style bearing edges (www.ludwig-drums.com).



Beginner Drum Kits under £350

1



CANNON ADDER £199

Astonishingly generous package, the only kit with 14" hats, 16" and 18" cymbals, plus two double-braced cymbal stands and full professional lug count. In addition to that, there's a complete set of carrying bags and drum/cymbal mute pads. Finally, you have cool finishes in black, chrome, red and even Bumblebee Yellow, all with black metal fittings.

Rating ★★★★★

www.birminghamdrumcentre.co.uk

2



PREMIER OLYMPIC £319

Premier resurrects its historic Olympic budget marque, distinguished by unique lug design, class leading and lightweight six-ply 6-mm basswood/poplar shells which deliver a punchier, more resonant sound. Matching 6 1/2" wood snare and just two wraps - wine red and black, fusion or rock formats. Slightly dearer, but there is that Premier-Olympic badge...

Rating ★★★★★

www.premierpercussion.com

For your first big hit



PERFORMANCE PERCUSSION PP300 £299.99

Bestseller from long-established British distributor J H Skewes, now includes Remo heads and deep 6½" metal snare. Second only to Cannon on lug count (with six on the floor tom instead of eight). Modern image with neat, small oval lugs, plus sturdy hardware including double-braced stool and calibrated bass drum spurs.

Rating ★★★★★

www.jhs.co.uk

Best of the Rest...

ARBITER CB £299.99

Strong-selling five-piece kit available in Rock or Fusion sizes, which include a matching wood shell snare and budget Remo heads. Standard nine-ply Philippines mahogany shells, Pearl Export-derived double tom mount and squared lugs. Unfortunately the kit falls down slightly on the lug count, with six on the snare (rather than the recommended eight).

Rating ★★★★★

www.arbiter.co.uk



LEEDY NRG £299

Similar to the PP300 with the same slightly glittery wraps and small, oval lugs, but with a 5½" wood shell snare rather than a 6½". The quality hardware package includes double-braced stands with attractive curved section housings and solid memory locks which notch into the housings. The hi-hat clutch has a smart non-slip rubber clamp.

Rating ★★★★★

www.activemusic.co.uk



Budget Drum Kits £351 - £600

Cracking kits at smashing prices

1

MAPEX VX £479-£519

The VX has eight-ply 7.2 mm basswood shells with a lacquered maple veneer. Choice of translucent satin or coloured 'plasma' finishes. Small toms have ITS isolation mounting brackets. Wide range of sizes available.

Rating ★★★★★

www.mapexdrums.com

2

GRETSCH CATALINA MAPLE £599

Gretsch's great 2007 deal: free 16" floor and 8"x7" toms with this all-maple six-piece and the Catalina Ash respectively. Includes GTS mounted tom suspension system and mini Gretsch lugs, plus UV gloss finishes.

Rating ★★★★★

www.gretschdrums.com

3

TAMA IMPERIALSTAR £479

The Imperialstar has five PVC wrap finishes and no isolation tom mounts, but you do get two cymbal stands and a great black nickel snare. The HP30 kick pedal has above average adjustability.

Rating ★★★★★

www.tama.com

Semi-Pro Drum Kits £601 - £1000

Three of the best below a grand

(prices quoted for typical five-piece shell pack with snare and some hardware)

1

PACIFIC MXR £819

From DW's budget arm, with American maple shells, DW-style minimal contact bearing edges, 24"x18" bass drum, and 14" and 16" floor toms, Pacific's single configuration matte lacquer MXR is loud and proud!

Rating ★★★★★

www.pacificdrums.com

2

YAMAHA TOUR CUSTOM £729

Now with all-maple shells. Unusual 60 degree, rounded bearing edges add a warmer dimension to the bright maple sound. 'Universal'-sized toms and 17" deep bass drums add to the versatility.

Rating ★★★★★

www.yamaha-europe.com

3

LUDWIG ACCENT CS CUSTOM ELITE £929

Top of the Accent range, with a choice of seven high gloss lacquer/glitter finishes. Eight-ply, 8 mm birch shells for a clear, focused sound. Remo heads, 20 lug bass drum, tom suspension mounts, responsive snare.

Rating ★★★★★

www.ludwig-drums.com

Pro Drum Kits £1001 - £2500

Bringing out the big guns

(prices quoted are for a typical 22/14/12/10 four-piece shell pack without snare drum)

1

TAMA STARCLASSIC MAPLE £1899

Obsessively designed for maximum shell vibration, with wafer thin shells (just 5 mm six-ply toms), maple air holes and stencilled badge. Stupendous range of shell options encompassing five different depths.

Rating ★★★★★

www.tama.com

2

YAMAHA CUSTOM ABSOLUTE NOUVEAU £1907

(four piece maple shell set)

Same finishes offered in maple, birch and beech. Detachable nodal point-mounted Nouveau lugs so you can change heads without altering tension.

Rating ★★★★★

www.yamaha-europe.com

3

PREMIER SERIES (CLASSIC AND ELITE) £2351

(four piece birch supported shell set, premium finish)

Traditional (supported) or Classic (straight-sided) shells in maple/birch, or Gen-X maple-birch sandwich. 3 mm under-sized shells for better head clearance.

Rating ★★★★★

www.premier-percussion.com