

I've tried to be thorough with my thoughts... maybe too thorough, but hopefully this will be helpful (I did my best to keep everything categorized below!)

If this is a step-up horn (something you want to take all the way through high school) my first suggestion would be to go with a professional model instead of an intermediate model. Three reasons for this. One, the difference in price typically isn't too substantial, especially if you buy used. Two, you'll have a **much** easier time selling a used pro horn than a used intermediate horn if you no longer need the horn. And three, a pro horn will keep you set for a long time, likely through college!

If this will be a beginner horn, be sure you're buying from a reputable brand. I have several listed below. All of the same information will apply!

You'll want to make sure you're getting a horn that will be able to play in as many settings as possible so I would avoid any horn marketed specifically for jazz or "lead" playing for now. I would also suggest avoiding lightweight horns and probably anything with a "reverse lead pipe" for now... those are typically for more niche situations.

As far as instrument brands, Bach, Yamaha, most of the Jupiters, some of the older Kings, and most Getzens are all great! Jupiter has some really nice horns now as well. The Bach Stradivarius and Yamaha Xeno are the standard pro horns, but there are tons of other options out there. If you find a Selmer K-Modified, that's a great horn that won't cost nearly as much. Unfortunately, there are many brands that I would suggest you avoid. Off the top of my head, Mendini, Glory, Eastrock, Eking... I'm sure there are others I'm forgetting, but if you see a new horn for under \$250, it's probably junk. If you find anything else you aren't sure about, I'm more than happy to answer questions about specific horns!

If you can try out the horn before buying it, the most important things will be feel and sound. If it doesn't feel comfortable to play it, then it won't be a good horn. Do some scales, tonguing, and lip slurs. Does it feel comfortable to play low, high, middle? If the sound and feel are good, check it with a tuner as well. Play middle C first and get it in tune. After that, you would ideally check each note to see how well in tune it is, but **definitely** check low C# and D (these will be sharp, it's just a question of how much.) You should also check high D, Eb, and E (these will be flat... just a question of how much.) It would also be good to check high G (which will be sharp) and all the notes below low C (which will be flat.) Lastly, it would be great to play a small part of a familiar song to get the real feeling of it. It could just be a song from band right now!

As far as looking at used horns, you'll obviously want to check for dents. The placement of the dent has a large impact on how it affects the sound. Generally, the closer to the mouthpiece, the worse the effect will be. For what it's worth, the horn I play on now was purchased used and still has two small dents in it that I probably won't bother repairing because I like the sound it has now. You'll also want to look out for red rot which is a sign the metal has begun corroding from the inside of the horn. Just search google images for "red rot trumpet" and you'll see what it looks like. Dents can be repaired, but the sound is never fully restored to its original. Check that all the valves and slides are working appropriately. You may want to have valve oil and slide grease with you depending on the shop you're visiting.