



If you plan to purchase an acoustic guitar any time soon you'll want to take the tips on this page into consideration! There are hundreds of brands, makes, and models out there and it's good idea to have a clue as to what you're looking for.

Folky Matt's Tips

→ Budget

Know how much you have to spend. This is very important. It is heart-breaking to find a great sounding and playing acoustic, just to discover that it is way out of your price-range. Also, shop around. Find a reputable store that may specialise in acoustics.

→ Vanity

You have to like the look of the guitar. This is like anything that you buy, if it doesn't quite "do it" for you then you are not going to get the best use out of it.

→ Style and size

Cut-away, dreadnaught, small body, jumbo, nylon string, steel string, classical to name a few. There are various models available.

If you are planning on playing some lead on the acoustic, maybe a cut-away would be more suitable, as this provides the ability to play up the neck. If it is mainly for strumming/accompaniment or singer/songwriting, then the dreadnaught is probably better.

The size of the guitar may be a factor depending on your physical build or playing style.

Also all these guitars have slightly different sounds, so depending on what sound you are after may influence the model you buy, especially if you are playing classical music.

→ Sound

Play the guitars that have taken your interest. Play them in the specially designed acoustic show-room that makes all acoustic guitars sound like a million dollars, then play them outside of this room to get a more real room sound. Ask a guitar salesman to play them for you so you can listen to them from a third person perspective. Play them in fingerstyle, play them with various plectrums. Do all this to feel confident that the guitar that you are interested in is the best one for you.

➔ **Electric/Acoustic vs Acoustic**

This depends on what you want to do. I feel it is always an advantage to have a pick-up in your acoustic guitar. However, there are plenty of options down the track if you don't want to spend the money initially.

➔ **Cost**

Find out the cost, then go home and consider all the options. By now you may have found the guitar of your dreams or narrowed it down to a couple. Return to the shop in a few days with fresh ears, walk up to the salesperson and say "I want to buy an acoustic guitar, I was in here the other day and I have narrowed it down to a couple. What can you do for me?" This maybe a little aggressive, but the sale-manager now knows that you are serious and he/she has a potential sale on his/her hands. Repeat step 4 and take the beauty home!

SlowBlues' Tips

➔ **Check for Buzzing**

Finger each fret and play the corresponding notes. You just need to make sure that each note sounds clearly (no buzzing) and that each note sounds correctly (i.e., correct pitch and no ghost notes - where two notes next to each other are the same).

➔ **Guitar "Speak"**

The guitar should "speak" to you. I have picked up a \$2,400 Martin that didn't do a thing for me - but I just loved the little, neglected, "on-sale", ugly looking <insert brand here> in the corner. Sure, the Martin is a WAAAYYYY better guitar - but that other guitar made me want to play. Capiche'?

➔ **Read Reviews**

Check out the review section of <http://www.harmony-central.com>. See what other folks say - in general. This is not always the best guide but it'll let you know if something is typically a gem or a lemon. (Who knows though - you might find the gem in a bin of lemons? Guitars are wierd that way).

➔ **Intonation**

Can you get the guitar in tune? Better yet - does the open and 12th fret register as the same note on the tuner (e.g., "E" open and "E" on the 12th fret)? They should - this is intonation. Sometimes a slight adjustment to the truss rod can fix this - so don't worry about it - just ask the shop to fix it before buying. Does it stay in tune?

➔ **Be Like Mike**

Lastly...once you buy it, be like Mike and just play! Imagine I'm playing a \$10,000 custom Taylor and Eric Clapton is playing my "all-plywood" \$120 Yamaha dreadnaught. Let's face facts - Eric is gonna whomp on me! Get what you can afford and then just play.

David Hayes' Tips

→ Homework

Do your homework on guitar shops. How long in business? Can he do set-up/repair? NEVER buy from shop who does off-site set-up/repair unless you can verify their skills and make sure they're not in some kid's basement somewhere. Ask anyone and everyone you know who plays for their feedback on customer service. I've had some surprising feedback on shops from players. Locally owned & operated usually come out on top.

→ Candy Store

You're a kid in a candy store. They all look good and sound/feel good. Don't buy same day.

→ Watch For Sharks

Be open and honest about your expectations to salesman (hopefully shop owner). If you can take an experienced player with you, so much the better. That might help keep honest salesman honest. A shark can smell blood a mile away. But an honest shop wants your repeat business and referrals.

→ Comparative Budgeting

Set a budget but buy all you can assuming above. There's a reason some cost more than others. No Johnson, Dean, Epiphone or Sigma compares to Gibson, Martin, Taylor, Larivee, etc. Not knocking these, but.....

→ Avoid E-Bay

Don't buy off e-Bay unless you must. It's like Aunt Bee when she bought the beef from discounter and had to take it to Mr. Foley's when her freezer broke. If you save a little elsewhere and then have to take it to a shop for service, where do you think you stand on his list of priorities? Most folks aren't like Mr. Foley.

→ Dreadnaught

Most all good players I know have a basic dreadnaught. This is not going to be your last guitar. You can always put a pickup on a decent one later. A cutaway is a great excuse for getting your next guitar!