In today's market, there are many styles of guitars to choose from. With so many choices, it can get very confusing in a hurry. What you end up with can effect your learning experience, so choosing the 'right' guitar is a very important step.

## Types of Guitars

Believe it or not there are really only two guitar categories: acoustic guitars and electric guitars. From these two categories we can create sub categories to explain the many choices available.

## Acoustic Guitars

Acoustic guitars are guitars that do not need electronics to be heard. The body of these guitars are constructed of a top (also called the table or soundboard), the sides, and a back. The body contributes to the overall sound and volume of the instrument.

There are two types of acoustic guitars: the Acoustic or Steel String guitar and the Classical or Nylon String guitar.

The Acoustic Guitar or Steel String comes in a variety of shapes. One of the most popular shapes is the dreadnought guitar. Dreadnoughts are large bodied guitars built to project a lot of sound. Other body styles include the Jumbo, the Concert, and many other brand specific body styles.

The Acoustic uses steel strings, meaning all of the strings are some sort of metal as apposed to nylon.

The Classical Guitar is also an acoustic guitar because it does not need electronics to be heard. The Classical has a specific body style which is smaller and more curved than the dreadnought. It uses nylon strings instead of steel.

So to be clear, both the Acoustic and Classical guitars are acoustic by design but we call the steel string guitar the Acoustic and the nylon string guitar the Classical.

Acoustic guitars can come equipped with electronics but are still considered acoustic because the electronic part is not necessary for the instrument to be heard.

## Acoustic or Classical?

Both are good choices to start out on. There are pros and cons to each one.

The nylon strings are softer on the fingers but can go out of tune more often, The body size is more manageable with the Classical but this guitar is designed for fingerstyle playing.

The Acoustic, especially the dreadnought style can be awkward but can be played fingerstyle or with a pick. More often than not, the ultimate choice comes down to cost and availability

## Electric Guitars

Electric guitars are guitars that depend on electronics to be heard. These guitars have at least one pickup that picks up the string sound and outputs it to an amplifier. Pickups also contribute to the tone of the sound.

Electric bodies constructed from a solid piece of wood are called solid body electrics. One of the most popular solid body guitars is the Stratocaster, originally designed by Leo Fender in the 1950's.

Another popular solid body electric is the Les Paul. These guitars are heavier than the Stratocaster but are very popular especially among rock players.

There are many types of solid body guitars on the market but many guitar manufacturers have adapted these body styles making them two of the most recognizable guitars of all time.

Hollow or semi hollow body electrics are also available. These guitars are usually more spendy than solid body guitars so you won't find these at entry level prices.

## Electric or Acoustic?

I prefer to start my students on acoustic guitars when possible. There is less to fuss with or get distracted with. They are simple, easy to transport, and you don't have to strap yourself to a power outlet. I also prefer them because the body is deeper and this provides for a better playing position.

## Cost and Quality

Box stores, music stores and the internet all offer guitars for sale. But all guitars, even the same brand, are not created equal. Manufacturers create different models of guitars just like a car manufacturer creates different car models.

Personally, I have never seen a guitar coming from a box store that I would really consider a serious instrument. My experience with these instruments has been that they have a hard time staying in tune, the components making up the guitar are very venerable, and they are hard to play. I have had guitars of this nature fall apart right in my hands just trying to tune it!

Internet sales can be fine if you know what you're getting. The drawback here is you can't try before you buy. Even if you try the same model at a music store it doesn't mean that online guitar will be set up and ready to play. If you go this route do your homework and buy from a reputable and established online business.

Music stores can be a great place to buy. You can try out guitars to see what sounds good and fits well. They are also handy to have nearby when you break a string and need to replace it. But just like internet businesses, you want to find a store that is reputable and interested in your success, not just there to take your money.

Many guitars look alike but the quality can vary greatly, so beware. Ask a lot of questions and if possible have the sales person play the instrument. Do your homework so you get a feel of what is too inexpensive to really be considered a playable instrument.