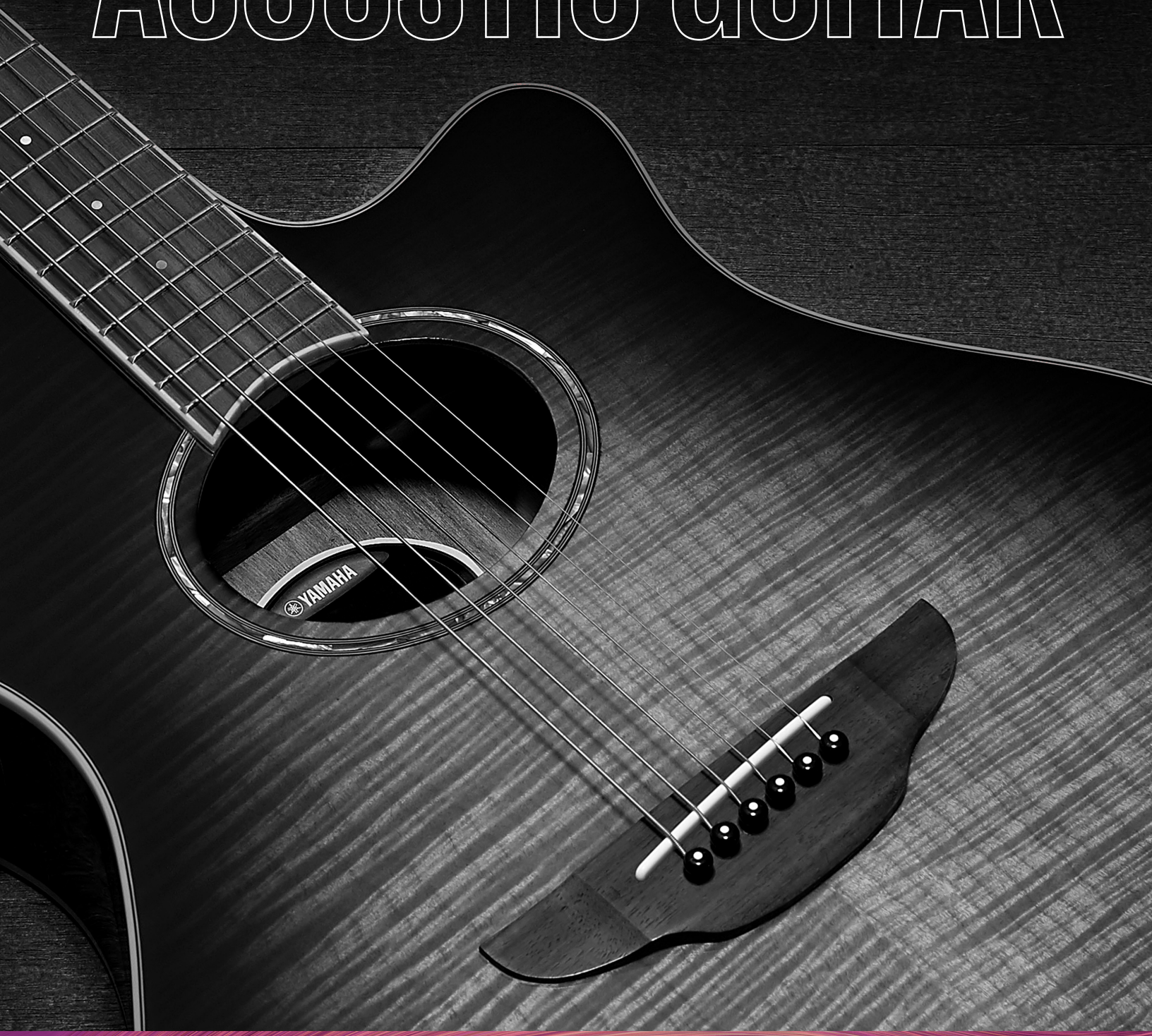
YAMAHA

Make Waves

THE YAMAHA GUIDE TO CHOOSING AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR



CHOOSING AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR can be a daunting process, so Yamaha would like to help make the selection process easier and less overwhelming. The first step to take is to decide how you really intend to use the instrument. Are you a player or the leader in the worship band? Are you just learning how to play the guitar? The way you plan to use your guitar will help narrow your choices. Yamaha offers an extensive lineup of acoustic and acoustic-electric guitars from which you can choose. Use this guide to help you select the best guitar for your needs.

GETTING STARTED

There are four primary areas you need to consider and/or know about before you start shopping for an acoustic guitar:

- Purpose and Budget
- Skill Level — Beginner to Advanced
- Construction and Design
- Styles and Sounds

PURPOSE AND BUDGET

Before you think about which guitar you want, consider what you are going to use the guitar for and the amount you want to spend.

The value of an acoustic guitar depends on different factors including construction type, wood and even where the guitar was built. If a guitar is handcrafted in America or Japan — as opposed to China or Indonesia — you are likely to pay a higher price. The quality of imported guitars today allows the beginning guitarist to buy a better guitar for their first or second instrument. Yamaha currently manufactures acoustic guitars in four factories around the world, including the Yamaha Custom Shop in Southern California, and every guitar is made by a Yamaha employee.

Wood choice greatly influences the cost of a guitar. Manufacturers often set aside "choice" pieces of wood when they receive shipments and then use these pieces to craft limited-edition instruments. Yamaha artisans hand-select wood for every guitar they make. The rarity of the wood, the amount of figuring or detail in its grain, and even the style of finish affects an instrument's price.

Lower-priced guitar tops are made with laminated wood, which is a series of layers instead of one solid piece. Laminate wood doesn't tend to vibrate or have the same sound characteristics as a solid top; however, there are players who prefer laminate for its reliability in environments with changing climate and temperature.

Realizing the superior tone quality produced by a solid piece of wood, Yamaha builds every entry-level FG and FS Series guitar, as well as our A Series acoustic-electrics, with a solid Sitka spruce top. You don't have to spend a fortune to find a great-sounding, highly playable acoustic guitar. In fact, Yamaha acoustic and acoustic-electric guitars are in the $200-$400 price range. For the beginner on a

tight budget, Yamaha offers acoustic guitar packages that include everything you need to start playing: the guitar, a strap, extra strings and a tuner.

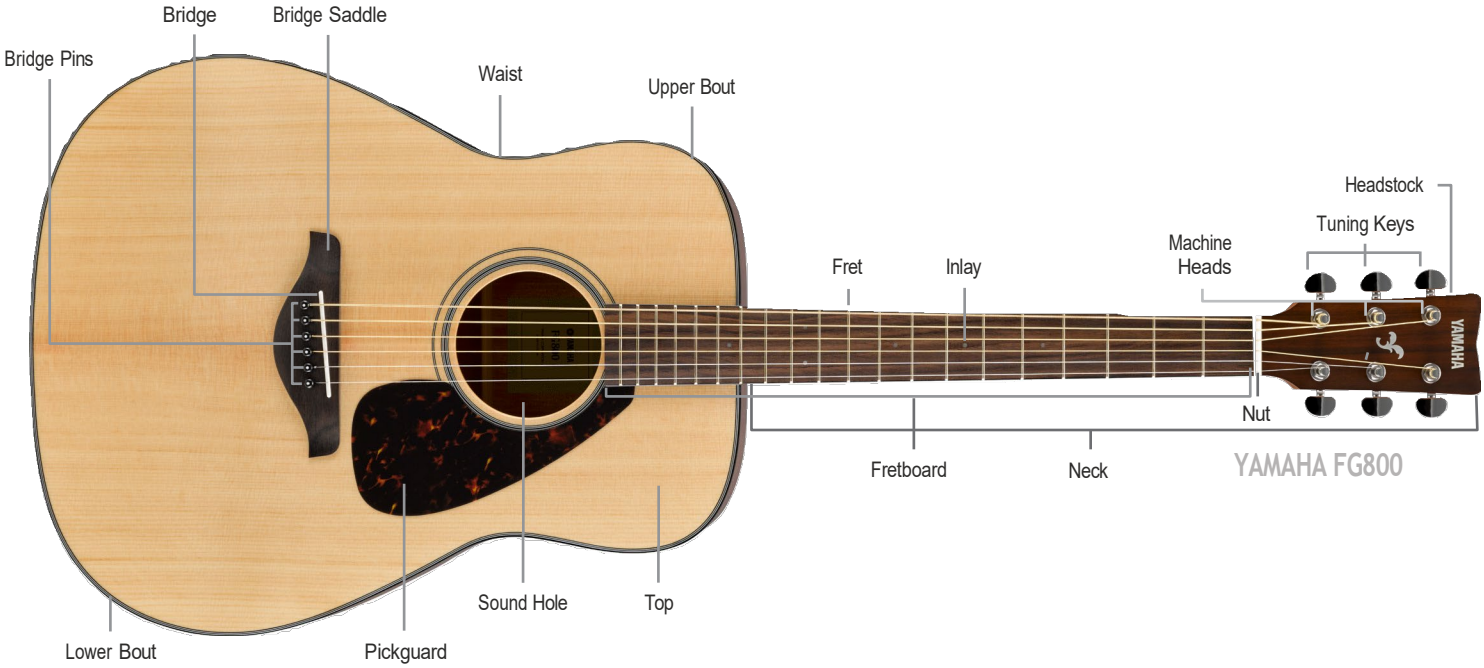
SKILL LEVEL – BEGINNER OR ADVANCED

If you're a beginner, you may not want to spend big for a high-end acoustic guitar. Thanks to modern manufacturing techniques and "vertical integration," the techniques used in building top-of-the-line Yamaha guitars that can cost up to $3,000 are applied to our lower-priced instruments. Yamaha is committed to producing quality instruments for all skill levels, giving you the largest selection of well-built and great sounding acoustic guitars available.

Perhaps you're an experienced player who's ready to upgrade to a better, higher quality guitar. If that's the case, you need to know the difference between various tonewoods and how they affect the resonance of the instrument.

CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

Once you understand the basics of how an acoustic guitar is designed and built, you'll be able to see and hear the subtle differences that will help you choose the best guitar for your needs.



NECK

The neck of an acoustic guitar is joined to the guitar body and ends at the headstock. The fretboard is mounted to the neck's top, and its back is shaped to accommodate the player's fretting hand.

Yamaha uses a “set-neck” construction, where the neck is glued onto the body of the guitar instead of being bolted on, which is more commonly used with electric guitars. A heel gives added support at the back of the neck, where it meets the body of the guitar.

The neck will have a metal truss rod that prevents it from bowing and twisting due to string tension and environmental factors. The truss rod can be adjusted either at the headstock or just inside the body of the guitar, at the base of the neck. Adjusting the truss rod can correct intonation issues that prevent the instrument from being tuned properly. The Yamaha L Series acoustic guitars use a 5-ply mahogany and rosewood neck for tuning stability and tone.

The fretboard, or fingerboard, is found on the top side of the neck and is usually a separate piece of wood that is glued to the neck. Fretboards for acoustic guitars are typically constructed from rosewood or ebony.

Thin strips of metal called frets are embedded in the wood at half-step increments along the 12-tone scale to show where different notes are played. Most guitar fretboards have inlaid dots or symbols on the odd-numbered frets, starting with the third and excluding the eleventh and thirteenth in favor of the twelfth fret, or the octave.

The headstock is found at the end of the neck opposite the guitar body. It’s fitted with tuning keys — also known as tuners, tuning pegs or machine heads. These keys adjust the tension of each string, changing their pitches. The nut is a small strip of plastic or bone that is found where the headstock meets the neck and is grooved to guide the strings onto the fretboard.

BODY

The acoustic guitar body is composed of the top wood, or the soundboard. The soundboard is supported underneath by internal bracing and along with the sides and back. It forms a hollow chamber where the guitar’s sound is developed. The upper body curves are referred to as the upper bout, while the usually larger lower body curves are called the lower bout. The area between them is called the waist.

The size and shape of the body influence both the sound and playability of the instrument. To select the right acoustic guitar, you must find a body shape that matches your physical and musical needs. While Yamaha manufactures a variety of body shapes, the ones we’ll look at here are the FG (Western Body) and the FS Red Label styles. The FG series has a larger lower bout and slightly wider waist, which gives it a rich and deeper tone. The smaller FS body style is easier to hold for younger players or beginners, however, there are who professionals prefer the more focused and detailed tone the smaller body shape provides.

The sound hole through which sound projects is aligned with the waist at the base of the fretboard and is often fitted with a protective pickguard made of plastic or other materials.

The guitar's strings are inserted at the bridge, found below the sound hole. Bridge pins are then used to anchor each string. The thin strip of bone or plastic that spaces out the strings on the bridge is called a saddle. The bridge transmits string vibrations to the guitar's top resulting in the instrument's sound output, also referred to as projection.

STYLES AND SOUND

While all acoustic guitars share the same basic construction and design elements, there are important differences that affect sound and playability. These include:

- Nylon vs Steel Strings
- Body Styles
- Tops – Soundboards
- Neck Width
- Tonewoods

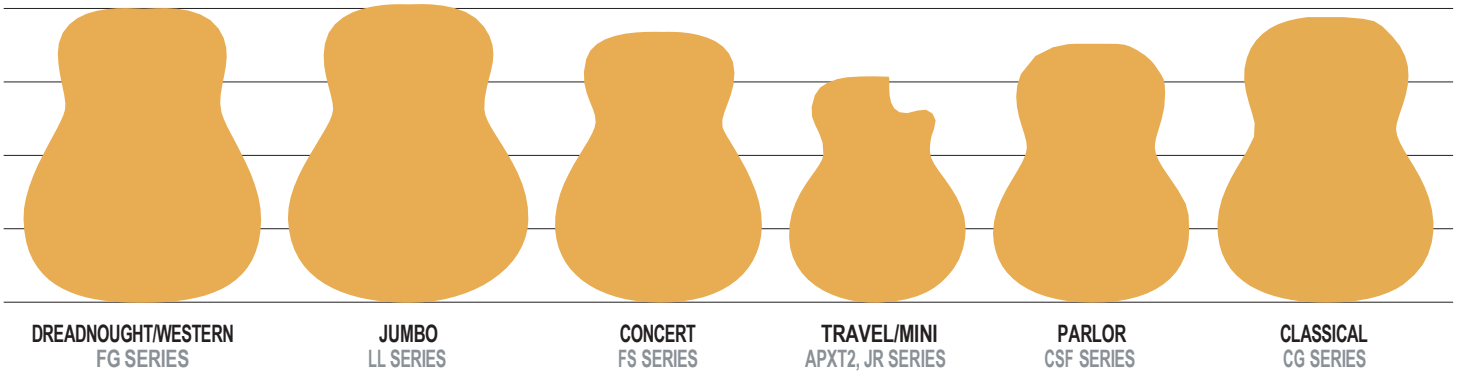
Understanding your options in these categories will help you make the best decision as you shop for an acoustic guitar.

NYLON vs STEEL STRINGS

A common misconception is that a new guitar player should start with nylon strings because they're easier on fingers or easier to play. Please note that nylon and steel strings are not interchangeable on the same guitar, so it's not a matter of progressing from one kind of string to another with experience. What should drive your decision is what kind of music you want to play and the sound you want.

Nylon strings produce a softer, mellow tone. They're often used in classical and flamenco-style guitar playing, as well as folk music. Steel strings are more common and are usually used by rock, country, worship and pop musicians. Steel-string guitars create a louder, brighter tone that's commonly associated with that classic acoustic guitar sound.

BODY STYLES



Acoustic guitars come in a variety of sizes and shapes, from smaller travel sizes and the familiar “dreadnought” body shape to the jumbo size. The body style decides its sound projection and tonal emphasis. Acoustic guitar bodies also come in a single cutaway design, which removes a part of the body on the lower bout to give easier access to the upper frets.

Because there are nuances to the style of an acoustic guitar body, it’s important to choose an instrument that not only produces the sound you want, but one that is comfortable to play whether you are sitting or standing.

Dreadnought or Western Body

The dreadnought or Western body shape is the most common and familiar type of acoustic guitar, with a large body that gives deep and strong bass notes. Larger than the concert body, dreadnoughts can be difficult to hold and may not be ideal for smaller people. Due to their volume and projection, the dreadnought is ideal for players who prefer to strum and flat-pick; it may be less suitable for fingerstyle playing. Dreadnoughts are great for playing bluegrass and country gospel. They have a high-volume ceiling, so they can be played hard, which translates to playing loud. However, if you play with a softer touch, it can be harder to get a good sound out of the dreadnought.

The Yamaha FG/FS Red Label Series takes the dreadnought shape and improves it by tapering the body depth and scalloping the interior bracing for an even richer tone. The A Series, FG/FS Red Label and LL Series give experienced players all the features and refinement they want at easily accessible price points.

Jumbo

As its name implies, the jumbo guitar is the largest guitar size and has a very loud and powerful sound that is ideal for players with a strong strumming style. Due to their large body size, jumbo guitars might not fit every guitarist. Yamaha makes a variety of larger-body acoustic-electric guitars such as the best-selling CPX Series.

Concert Guitar

A concert-body guitar is part of the six-string family of acoustic guitars that combine a smaller and slightly thinner body with steel strings. The smaller body produces a more focused and softer tone compared to the bigger dreadnought body. And it's easier to sit and hold, making it ideal for smaller adults and children because the neck is easier to reach. Yamaha manufactures concert-body guitars at several price points and feature sets, including the best-selling models that make up the A Series, as well as the FG/FS Red Label and LS Series.

Mini And Travel Guitars

These 1/2- and 3/4-sized guitars were designed specifically for children. They are smaller, quieter, less full sounding and cheaper than full-sized guitars. They're perfect for kids who are learning to play guitar, and they're also good travel guitars. Adults often return to their mini guitars for their ease of playability. If you don't need volume and a full tone, and just want an instrument that's easy to travel with, then a travel guitar might be good choice. The Yamaha JR Series and APXT2 are smaller, high-quality guitars with big sound. Yamaha also manufactures 1/2- and 3/4-sized classical guitars.

Parlor

This is the smallest steel-string guitar, apart from travel and mini guitars. Its old-style size and shape have gained a following and resurgence with guitarists looking for a traditional or unique sound.

Parlor guitars are usually 12-fret models, where the neck joins the body at the twelfth fret. Yamaha CSF Series models join the body at the fourteenth fret and feature a solid spruce top, scalloped interior bracing for a richer sound, and a passive pickup for when you need amplification. A soft gig bag is included with the guitar.

Classical Guitars

Also known as a Spanish guitar and used mostly to play classical and Spanish-style music, this guitar uses nylon strings as opposed to steel strings. Although the body is smaller, the neck is wider to provide more space between the strings to help with the proper finger-picking style that's characteristic of classical guitars. The wider neck may be tougher for smaller hands to move around on. The sound quality is soft and warm. There are different types and sizes of classical guitars, but they're generally smaller than concert guitars and larger than mini guitars.

Hand-built Yamaha CG/CGX Series classical guitars include a wide selection of features and price points. The CG102 model is perfect for the beginner, combining the tone and quality of our concert-level guitars while staying affordable.

TOPS/SOUNDBOARDS

The soundboard is the top part of the body of the guitar that rests just behind the bridge. In general, the larger the soundboard, the deeper and louder the sound. The guitar top's wood has the greatest impact on tone quality. The sound generated by the guitar's strings is transmitted by the bridge to the top where it is amplified.

SOLID VS LAMINATE

Acoustic guitar tops are made of either a solid piece of wood or a laminated top. A solid top is usually made of two, single-ply pieces of wood with their grains matched down the middle of the guitar top, which is called book matching. Yamaha uses solid Sitka spruce wood on the tops of the FG and A Series guitar, and European Engelmann spruce on the L Series.

A laminate top is made of layers of wood, usually with a high-grade wood on top and generic layers beneath, which are pressed and glued together.

Laminates do not vibrate as much as solid wood guitars, so they do not produce as rich a sound at higher volumes. However, laminate top guitars are a good choice for beginners looking to save money on their first acoustic guitar. Yamaha APX600 and CPX600 guitars have laminate tops that have been modified internally to give the richest tone possible.

NECK WIDTH

The thickness and width of guitar necks vary depending on the size of the guitar body. While this doesn't affect the guitar's sound, it can affect your comfort when playing the instrument. Steel-string acoustic guitars generally have a narrower neck compared to classical or nylon-string instruments. If you have small hands, this might be the best choice for you. Classical guitar necks are wider to make the fingering requirements of classical music easier.

TONEWOODS

When selecting an acoustic guitar, research the woods it's made from because different woods produce different tones. Most guitar makers, including Yamaha, believe that the top is the most important part of the instrument for creating tonal quality. Spruce is the standard wood used for tops with Sitka spruce being the most common. Mahogany and rosewood are the most common woods used for the back and sides of the guitar. The cost of an acoustic guitar increases dramatically based on the rarity of its tonewoods. Due to decreasing supplies of certain tonewoods, guitar makers are finding alternative materials to make great sounding instruments.

The right tonewoods for you depend on what sounds you want and how you play the guitar. A fingerstyle player, for example, will choose rosewood because it responds to the delicate playing style. Mahogany is a little softer in its response to picking or fingering.

The back, sides and neck are the next most important factors in overall tonality. The wood used for the bracing, binding, bridge and fretboard also enhance or constrain the tonal effects of an acoustic guitar, but they generally don't define the overall sound of the instrument.

It's important to keep in mind that wood species impact only certain aspects of any guitar's tone. Equally important are the instrument's design, the skill of the craftsperson and the quality of each individual piece of wood; combined, these elements help in the creation of incredibly special guitars or instruments designed for a specific purpose. Yamaha takes great pride in our wood curation, cultivation, and global responsibilities.

Here's an overview of the most common woods, how they're used, and the tonal characteristics they're known for.

Cedar: Cedar is a soft wood that produces a bright tone. It has a quick response that favors a light playing technique and is a common top wood for classical or flamenco guitars. It's also used for sides and backs. Western red cedar is a popular top wood for its balanced warm sound. It's particularly favored by fingerstyle players for its signature quick, rich response to a lighter playing style.

Cocobolo: This tropical Mexican hardwood is used for sides and backs. It's fast, responsive and produces a bright sound.

Ebony: Ebony is strong with a slick feel, which makes it an ideal fretboard material.

Granadillo: Granadillo is a scarce wood that's considered a type of rosewood, but it's denser. It's traditionally used for marimba bars. When used for the sides and backs of acoustic guitars, it produces a similar clear, ringing tone.

Koa: This Hawaiian wood has a distinct golden color that emphasizes mid-range tones. It's used for all parts of an acoustic guitar body but is generally found on more expensive guitars due to its scarcity.

Mahogany: Mahogany is a dense wood, which gives it a slower response rate. When used as a top wood, mahogany produces a strong sound that emphasizes high-end tones. It's often associated with country or blues playing. It's more often used for sides and backs to add snap, boost mid-range tones, and reduce boominess in certain styles. It's also used in necks and bridges.

Maple: Maple is often used for sides and backs because its low response rate and internal damping does not add coloration to the natural tone of the top wood. It produces a "dry" sound that emphasizes high-end tones. Maple's lower resonance makes it great for live settings, especially with a band because it can still be heard through a mix of instruments with less feedback. Different species of maple — such as big leaf, sugar, and bear claw — tend to be more acoustically transparent due to their lower response rate and high degree of internal damping. This allows the tonal characteristic of the top to be heard without the addition of significant tonal coloration.

Ovangkol: Ovangkol is a sustainable African wood that's similar in tone to rosewood. It's usually used for backs and sides because it emphasizes mid-tones and produces a well-rounded sound. Ovangkol's tone offers the warmth of rosewood with the sparkling midrange of mahogany or koa.

Rosewood: The diminishing supply of Brazilian rosewood has led to Indian rosewood replacing it in most markets. While the two woods look different, the tonal quality is virtually identical. One of the most popular and traditional woods for acoustic guitar, rosewood is recognized for its rich, complex overtones that stay distinct even during bass-heavy passages. Its cutting attack and ringing tones make for highly articulate sound and a great deal of projection. Rosewood is known for its high response rate and broad range of overtones and is also characterized by strength and complexity in the bottom end and an overall darkness of tone in the rest of the range. Strong midrange and high frequencies also contribute a richness of tone to the upper registers. Rosewood is also a popular choice for fingerboards and bridges.

Sapele: Sapele is another highly sustainable African wood that's used for sides and backs to add midrange and added resonance. Tonally, it's like mahogany but sapele offers a little more treble boost.

Spruce: Spruce is a standard material for tops, and Sitka is the most used species. Its high rigidity, combined with the lightweight characteristics of most softwoods, makes spruce a natural for the high velocity of sound. Sitka spruce also has a powerful direct tone capable of keeping its clarity when played forcefully. In addition to Sitka, there are spruce species used in guitar tops, such as Engelmann, Adirondack, and European spruce. They each have subtly distinct tonal characteristics and colors.

Walnut: Walnut is an alternative to mahogany in bodies. It emphasizes midrange tones and enhances the projection of the top wood's tone. It has a similar density and stiffness as koa with similarly bright high-end tones. Its low-end tones start deeper but fill out after being played in.

OTHER THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR

INTONATION

Proper intonation is whether the notes play in tune as you move up the neck. If the distance between the frets (usually above the twelfth fret) is off, the guitar will be incapable of playing in tune, making it useless for recording or performance.

TUNING MACHINES

The type of tuning machine your guitar has is particularly important because it allows you to fine tune the instrument and hold pitch. Enclosed machine heads resist rust and airborne corrosives, so they don't need maintenance as often or replacement like open tuning machines.

BRIDGE AND FINGERBOARD

The materials used for the bridge and fingerboard minimally influence sound. Put simply, the effects of bridge and fingerboard materials don't make or break a guitar's sound. The most common woods used for these two components are rosewood and walnut.

FINISH

Different types of finish can affect the way the wood vibrates but there's nothing you can do about this. These decisions are made by the guitar manufacturers, and you must trust that they have chosen wisely.

SHOULD I BUY ACOUSTIC OR ACOUSTIC ELECTRIC?

Acoustic guitars come with pickups and preamplifiers to plug into a PA or amplifier when your acoustic sound needs to fill a room. They have preamps mounted in a hole cut in the side of the instrument, while others are mounted inside the sound hole. There are systems that combine preamplifier, microphone, piezo pickups, EQ and tuners. Yamaha makes some of the best-sounding electronics in the guitar industry, including the award-winning TransAcoustic guitars that give you built-in reverb and chorusing sound effects.

Choosing between an acoustic and an acoustic-electric guitar is an important decision, and it depends on how you plan to use your instrument. The difference between the two is that an acoustic-electric guitar has an electronic "pickup" system, so that you can plug into an amplifier or PA system and hear your acoustic sound reproduced.

So how does an acoustic-electric guitar work? These guitars have a pickup system inside the body that turns the vibrations of the soundboard into electronic signals. These signals can be weak, so most acoustic-electric guitars use a preamp to make them stronger. The Yamaha Atmosfeel System uses three different transducers to reproduce the acoustic guitar tone.

The preamp is typically found on the side of the guitar that faces up while playing and usually includes volume and tone controls, and sometimes a built-in chromatic tuner.

The built-in pickup and preamp allow the guitar to be plugged into an amplifier or sound system without distorting its rich, acoustic sound and without limiting mobility while playing. When not plugged in, acoustic-electric guitars play and sound just like other acoustic guitars.

Even if you don't plan to play live music, there are other benefits to choosing an acoustic-electric guitar. For example, musicians enjoy being able to plug their guitar directly into an audio interface to record their songs. This allows you to record song ideas quickly and easily without having to set up microphones. Direct recording also avoids ambient room noise in your recordings.

Remember, buying a guitar with the electronics already installed is a more affordable solution than adding a pickup/preamp system after you buy an acoustic guitar. While you may not plug the guitar in every time you play, there will be times when you need to plug in to amplify your acoustic guitar.

THE 12-STRING GUITAR

Twelve-string guitars are a standard variation that's commonly used by players who specialize in folk and blues music. They have six string courses, each with two strings that are tuned to produce a chiming, chorus effect. Usually, the string pairs in the bass courses are tuned an octave apart while all treble strings are tuned in unison. There are guitarists who prefer tuning the second string in the third course (G) in unison while others opt to tune it an octave higher for bell-like ringing tones. The Yamaha FG820-12 is an affordable way to add a 12-string sound to your collection.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE

It may seem that there's a seemingly endless list of features you must consider before buying an acoustic guitar, but don't lose sight of the most important factor: YOU. Choose an instrument that feels comfortable to you, whether you are sitting or standing. Make sure you pick a guitar that responds to the way you play, and never settle on what someone else may consider a "good" guitar if you don't like the way it feels and sounds.

Be prepared and define your expectations before jumping in. Have a good sense of how you plan to use your guitar and a basic understanding of how acoustic guitars work, as well as how different woods and components affect their sound. But regardless of the features or the price tag, the guitar that fits you and your style will be the one you will enjoy for years to come.

LEARN MORE

Please visit our website to see the full lineup of Yamaha guitars. If you have any questions or would like more information on Yamaha products in worship, please visit our worship site and select Contact Us from the top menu. We look forward to hearing from you.

GLOSSARY

Abalone: The hard internal lining of the giant sea snail's shell that's used for decorative and ornamental purposes on acoustic guitars, such as fretboard and headstock inlays.

Action: The distance between the frets and the strings of an acoustic guitar.

Attack: The first sound a note makes when struck, between silence and when the note reaches maximum volume.

Binding: A protective and decorative strip of wood or plastic that's placed along the outermost edges of the top, back, neck, fingerboard and sometimes headstock. This is a cap used to seal and protect joints. Sometimes binding is incorrectly called purfling, which are inlays alongside the binding and not part of the binding.

Bolt-On Neck: Refers to an instrument that has its neck attached by bolts rather than being glued in place.

Bout: The curved areas above and below the narrow waist of a guitar are known as bouts. The curves above the waist are called the upper bout and those below are called the lower bout.

Brace: The internal wooden support structure inside a guitar gives the instrument integrity and affects tone quality. An "X" brace is a popular pattern used in hollow-body guitars. Other bracing patterns include "ladder," "fan" and "scalloped."

Bridge: On most acoustic guitars, this is the piece of wood placed below the sound hole that's used to anchor the strings and transfer their vibrations to the soundboard.

Bridge Pins: Pins that fit into the holes on the bridge where the strings go in. Their job is to anchor the strings in place. The pins are usually made of plastic but can be made of ebony as well.

Capo: A device used to raise the overall pitch of an acoustic guitar. A capo attaches to the neck at a chosen fret and barres all the strings. It allows guitarists to play songs in different keys without changing chord structures.

Cutaway: A guitar with a contoured upper body that allows the player to reach the upper frets of the guitar more easily (called "single cut"). Guitars that have both sides cut away (called "double cut").

Decay: The level of volume loss from a note's maximum volume to silence.

Dovetail: A type of interlocking joint used in guitar-making, most often to attach the neck to the body.

Dreadnought: A large-body acoustic guitar originally designed by Martin Guitars in the early 20th century. It's named after the large battleships of the day.

Figuring: The pattern of a piece of wood's natural grain.

Fretboard (aka Fingerboard): The playing surface of a guitar neck. Typically, a thin piece of wood that's glued onto the neck, it has thin metal strips called frets placed at intervals that divide the neck into half-step increments.

Finish: A protective coating covering the guitar, often paint or lacquer.

Flame: A characteristic of certain woods that appears to shimmer and move as light strikes it from different angles; or, a dramatic grain pattern that resembles flames. Sometimes called "flame top."

Frets: Thin metal strips placed at intervals on the fretboard to divide it into half-step increments.

Fret Markers: Fretboard inlays on an acoustic guitar that serves as a visual reference of the player's position.

Gig Bag: A lightweight, soft, padded case used as a more convenient, temporary way to transport an acoustic guitar than a hard-shell case.

Headstock: The uppermost part of a guitar neck, where the tuning keys are placed. Also called a "peghead."

Heel: The lowest point of the neck, where it widens to attach to the body.

Inlay: Designs on the fretboard, headstock or body of a guitar for purely aesthetic purposes. Typically, the inlay design is carved into the wood, then filled with one of many materials such as mother-of-pearl, metal, abalone or plastic.

Intonation: The relationship of tones on different parts of the fretboard. The note of each string on the twelfth fret should match the note of the twelfth fret harmonic on the same string. If not, the guitar's intonation should be adjusted.

Laminated: As opposed to a solid piece of wood, a laminated surface is created by gluing thin plies of wood together.

Luthier: A woodworker who specializes in making stringed instruments.

Machine Heads: Also known as tuners or tuning machines, machine heads allow string tension to be adjusted, changing the pitch of the strings.

Marbling: Often used to describe the natural patterns and color variations of ebony.

Mother-of-Pearl: The inside lining of certain mollusks' shells that is typically used for inlays and other decorative enhancements.

Moustache Bridge: A bridge whose shape is reminiscent of a handlebar moustache.

Neck Joint: The point where an acoustic guitar's neck joins the body.

Nut: Found at the top of the fretboard, the nut serves to evenly space the strings as they approach the tuners and transfer vibrations to the neck of the guitar.

Pearloid: A synthetic alternative to mother-of-pearl.

Pick (aka Plectrum): A thin piece of (typically) plastic used to strike the strings.

Pickguard: A thin plate found below the sound hole that protects the guitar's top from scratches that may occur because of picking or strumming the strings. Also called a scratch-plate.

Pickup: An electronic device that senses the vibrations of the strings and converts them to an electrical signal for amplification.

Piezo Pickup: A crystalline structure (often placed under an acoustic guitar's saddle) that senses changes in compression when the strings vibrate and converts them to an electrical signal. This is the most common pickup used in acoustic-electric guitars.

Quilted: A visual characteristic of certain tonewoods that gives a wavy or folded appearance. Generally, it refers to maple and is called "maple quilting" or "maple quilted."

Rosette: A decorative inlay around the sound hole of an acoustic guitar.

Saddle (aka Bridge Nut): Like the nut, the saddle spaces the strings at the bridge and, along with the bridge, transfers the vibration of the strings to the top.

Scale Length: The total length of the vibrating part of a string, usually from nut to saddle or twice the distance from the nut to the twelfth fret.

Set Neck: A guitar neck that's glued to the body.

Soundboard (aka Top): The piece of wood on the front of an acoustic guitar that's largely responsible for an acoustic guitar's tone and projection.

Sound Hole: The hole in a guitar's top that aids in projecting the sound.

Sustain: Length of time a string vibrates.

Truss Rod: A thin, internal rod, usually metal, which runs the length of the neck. It's used to adjust the curve of the neck depending on the tension of the strings.

Waist: The narrowest part of a guitar's body.