



So, you want to learn to play the drums? Signing up for private lessons — and finding a qualified teacher to guide you along the way — is key to your success. Here, Los Angeles Studio Musician and Teacher [Paul L. Kush](#) shares a few things you should keep your eye out for as you look for a teacher for either you or your child...

Looking for a qualified and engaging drum teacher isn't always easy. If this is your first time looking for a drum instructor, you may be asking yourself, "Where do I start?" How do I find the perfect person to help me or my child learn to play the drums? The following guide will help you identify the unique qualities to look for in a drum teacher.

1. You like the way they play, and their students play

You or your child should enjoy listening to the way your teacher plays. Even though a good teacher doesn't try to impart his or her style into students, as an artist their fundamental playing style needs to be approachable, enjoyable, and engaging. Look for someone who sounds like a professional. Take a listen to some of my work. Visit <http://drum4u.com/recordings.html>. My Students recording are at <http://www.drum4u.com/student-performances.html>.

2. Performance experience

Music is a communal experience. As such, the ability to play complicated patterns, mind-blowing fills, and crunching beats doesn't mean much if the drummer can't work with a band or an ensemble. Try to find an instructor who knows what it means to be part of a larger musical experience. You can see my biography here <http://drum4u.com/biography.html>. Especially for a beginner, there is no more fun way to learn how to play the drums than by playing with others, especially play-along songs with the guidance of your teacher. If possible, you should get a recording of each song you complete for distribution to your friends and relatives.

3. Patience

Learning any new skill is a journey. You need an instructor who is willing to have your back for the long haul. As your instructor develops a learning relationship with you and/or your child, expect there to be ebbs and flows. There will be weeks when life gets in the way of practice. There will also be weeks when it may seem like progress is stalling. A good instructor is one who can go with the flow and find ways to make the most out of every session. Patience is the key to taking the time and effort to understanding the needs and abilities of his or her student.

4. Other musical interests

Music doesn't exist in a vacuum. Drums are but one part of the rich spectrum of ways to experience music in our lives. Expect your teacher to have other interests than playing their drum set. The best instructors are often those who also know fundamental music theory, another instrument, or are songwriters. Having that additional skill set affords the instructor the ability to expose you to what being a well-versed musician means. I have a degree in Music and Business.

5. Ability to infuse excitement

You should always walk away from a lesson thinking, “I can DO this!” Good teachers infuse excitement into their students’ every session, encouraging them to work on their skills and providing positive feedback that promotes practice and dedication. Keeping the fire alive is a critical element to sustained improvement (and happier students).

6. Makes practice fun

Ah, the classic dreaded practice time. Who likes to sit alone in a room and work on hand and feet patterns? MY students! The ability to make practice fun is an especially vital skill for teachers with young students. Look for an instructor that implements games and reward systems into the weekly ‘homework.’ Finding ways to make practice fun guarantees your child will actually want to work on his or her improvement.

7. Knows current trends

Forward thinking drum teachers are here in the now. They are aware of the current trends in music, what artist is #1 on the charts, and who their students admire. Any genuinely tuned-in musician is **interested in all music**; your teacher should be tuned in to what gets their student excited. They should be able to demonstrate how what they are teaching sounds like songs on the radio or from years past.

8. Responsibility

The student-teacher relationship is a social contract. As a student, you will put in the work: you’ll show up for lessons, practice at home, and apply what you’ve learned. As your teacher, I will always be on time, I will provide a safe and clean studio, and I will dedicate my effort to ensure you are reaching your goals. Your drum teacher should have excellent communication, organization, and people skills. You are their client — expect a professional.

9. Flexibility

Flexibility is nothing more than listening to the student to understand their goals and dreams. Too many drum teachers follow a method book with blinders on, leading to bored students who aren’t understanding how learning ‘paradiddles’ leads to rocking grooves. **A great drum teacher follows a method but tailors it for each student’s unique needs and wants.**

10. Shows you the path

How many times have we wondered in school, “WHY am I learning this?” It’s asked so many times by frustrated students because, well, it’s a GREAT question! The WHY is as important as the HOW. I always show my students the path — why are we learning ‘flams’ on the snare drum today? Because in a month I’ll show you how to translate that into some complicated fills on the toms. Give the student a map to their learning, and they’ll want to follow.

Look for these essential qualities in a teacher and you’ll learn to play the drums quicker than you can imagine.
