

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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To the Teacher

A Student's Guide to Musical Instruments teaches students about the guitar, recorder, keyboards, and the instruments in the concert band and orchestra. Worksheets include a brief history of the instrument, an explanation of how sound is made, a note on what musical groups the instrument is played in, review questions, and some direct and practical advice to help students and parents choose the best musical instrument to study and play—one of the central purposes of this set.

You can use the reproducible pages as a unit on any of the families of instruments, or as a unit on the band or the orchestra. The pages on concert band and orchestral instruments should be very useful for band and orchestra conductors who are recruiting new members.

This set of worksheets is intended to supplement and reinforce live performances, instrument demonstrations, recordings, and videos that give students the opportunity to hear the instruments. The set is an excellent resource for anyone teaching an instrument exploratory class.

Learning about the instruments will enhance every child's musical education. Learning about the instruments will help those students going into band or orchestra to choose the best instrument for them.

Teaching Methods

This set of reproducible pages is presented in a flexible format to allow you many possibilities for use. Classroom teachers, music teachers, band directors, and orchestra conductors will all find this to be a valuable resource.

The majority of the masters consist of a page or two about each instrument, with review questions at the end of each one. In addition, there are masters on each of the musical families, on the concert band, on the orchestra, and on special considerations for students with particular needs who are considering joining the band or orchestra.

Many parents want to know the cost of renting or buying instruments. Since costs vary from area to area, a blank space is left for you to fill in with the appropriate amounts for your program.

Present the information pages to students in conjunction with a live instrument demonstration, a tryout, a performance, a video, or a recording. For example, in a thirty-minute fifth-grade music class, allow about five minutes to demonstrate the instrument, and about ten minutes to have students read the worksheet aloud. While the students are answering the questions individually, give each one a chance to try blowing the instrument. In many cases, you may wish to have students take their pages home to share with parents.

On the woodwind and brass pages, there is a place for students to note whether they were able to produce a sound. On the band and orchestra pages, there is a place for students

to note whether they liked the instrument. If you are using these pages as a unit of study for a general music class, you can omit these questions. If you are using these pages for recruiting, these notes will help students remember which instruments they liked and which instruments they produced sounds on.

Musical terminology can be difficult reading for children. Difficult words are highlighted in bold type. You may want students to make their own music dictionaries, using the highlighted words and any other words that they find difficult.

2. Which Band Instrument Should I Play?

Learning to play an instrument is easy, and it is fun! Can you play Nintendo®? The skills that you need to play an instrument are not harder than the skills that you use to play Super Mario® Brothers. (Your mom and dad would probably find it easier to play the instrument!) Learning to play an instrument will give you new skills and will help you to understand more about the music you hear every day.

Which instrument should you play? It is very important to go to concerts, listen to good recordings, or watch some instrument videos when you are trying to figure out which instrument you would like to play. The more you know about the instruments that you are choosing from, the better your choice will be.

You should try blowing the instruments. If you don't have the chance to blow the instruments at school, go to a music store and try out several instruments. If you can take an **exploratory class** where you try an instrument for a week, you will know if you've chosen the right instrument before your parents spend hundreds of dollars buying one.

You should also keep in mind that a band is kind of like a sports team. You can't have a baseball team with only pitchers—you need people to play lots of different positions. A band with fifty saxophones isn't going to sound very good. Some schools limit the number of students who can play each instrument. Your band director will help you choose an instrument that is needed in the band.

It's important to remember that both boys and girls can play every instrument. Some of the best flute players in the world are men, and some of the best trombone players in the world are women. Choose the instrument that *you* want to play—don't let peer pressure make the choice for you.

Read about each of the instruments on the following pages to learn how they work and where you can play them. Look for suggestions about who should play each of the instruments. If you have the opportunity to hear and to try blowing each of the instruments, keep notes on which instruments you got a good sound on and which you liked the sound of. You have a better chance of doing well in the school band if you've chosen the right instrument.

3. The Woodwind Family



The piccolo, flute, oboe, English horn, bassoon, clarinet, and saxophone are all instruments of the woodwind family. Except for the saxophone, all these instruments were once made of *wood*, and because they were played by blowing with air or *wind*, they were called *woodwind*.

All the woodwind instruments are made out of a tube. The tube has holes in it. When all the holes are covered, air goes all the way to the end of the tube and makes a low sound. When the holes are open, the air only goes a little way. This makes a high sound. Try this with a recorder. The highest sound is made by the piccolo, the woodwind with the shortest length of tubing.

The flute sound is made by air blowing across a tone hole. The clarinet and saxophone use a single reed, which vibrates to produce sound. The oboe, English horn, and bassoon use a double reed. Two pieces of cane vibrate against each other to make the sound.

(continued)

3. The Woodwind Family (*continued*)

Review Questions

1. How are all woodwind instruments alike? _____

2. Which length of tubing makes the highest sound? _____

3. Which length of tubing makes the lowest sound? _____

4. Name six members of the woodwind family:

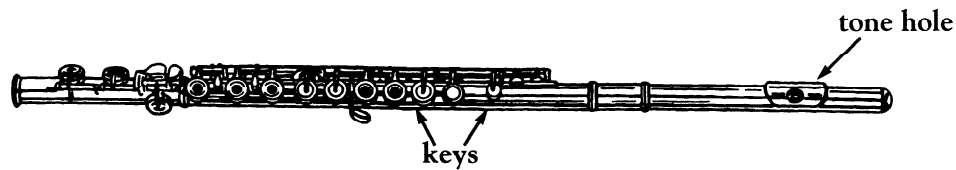
5. Why do you think these instruments are called woodwind?

6. Which of the woodwind instruments makes the highest sound?

Explain why: _____

7. Which woodwind instrument is your favorite? _____

4. The Flute and Piccolo



Flute

Any pipe with holes for fingers and a hole to blow across can be called a flute. Flutes have been played for hundreds of years. The modern flute with keys and pads was perfected about two hundred years ago by a famous German instrument maker named Theobald Boehm. The keys and pads made the flute easier to play and made it play more in tune.

The flute is made of silver or other metal, sometimes even gold or platinum. Some flutes are still made of wood, which produces a softer sound. If you have ever made a sound by blowing across the top of a bottle, you know how to make sound on a flute—you blow across the tone hole.

You can play the flute in both the concert band and orchestra. A small concert band has four to eight flutists. Many flutists like to play in **ensembles** (small groups) or with a choir. Some flutists play jazz solos.

The piccolo is a small flute that plays an **octave** (eight notes) higher than the flute. Most piccolo players start on the flute and, in their second or third year of playing, learn to play the piccolo as well as the flute. This is called **doubling**. The piccolo can be played in bands and sometimes in orchestras.

A lot of beginners want to play the flute. Almost anyone can make a sound on the flute. If you have an overbite or large front teeth, you might have trouble getting a good sound. If you are very small, you may need a special head joint that curves around.

Most music stores in this area charge _____ dollars per month to rent (to own) a flute. To buy a flute costs about _____ dollars.

(continued)

4. The Flute and Piccolo (*continued*)

Review Questions

1. How is sound made on the flute? _____

2. What is the flute made of? _____

3. What musical groups can the flute play in? _____

4. How can you play the flute if you have very small hands?

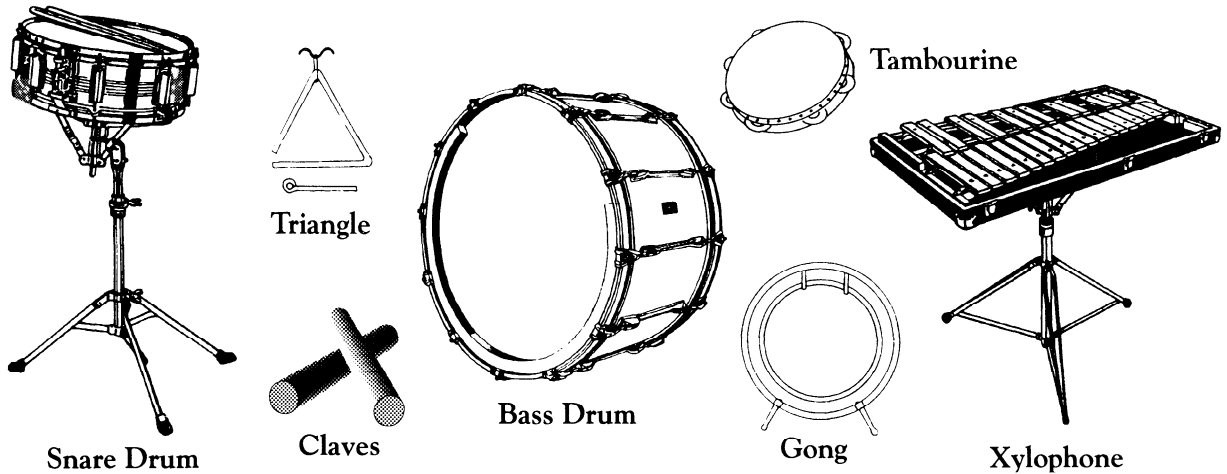
5. How is the sound on a wooden flute different from the sound on a metal flute?

Can you think of a reason why? _____

For Your Information

- I could produce a tone on the flute: Yes _____ No _____
- I like the sound of the flute: Yes _____ No _____

15. The Percussion Family



Lots of kids think that if they take percussion in band, they are going to be playing the drum set in a heavy metal band. The drum set is only one of about twenty instruments that you will be expected to play if you become a percussionist!

A percussion instrument is one that is shaken or hit to make a sound. There are many different percussion instruments used in the concert band, marching band, orchestra, and jazz band, and a good percussionist should be able to play them all.

Some percussion instruments can play melodies. These are called tuned percussion. The xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba, and timpani are tuned percussion instruments.

There are many kinds of drums in the percussion family. The snare drum, bass drum, drum set, and timpani are all percussion instruments.

There are many percussion instruments used for special effects, or color, in the concert band and in the orchestra. Some of these are the triangle, gong, castanets, rattle, cowbell, woodblock, tambourine, maracas, claves, and whistles.

You need to have a good sense of rhythm to become a good percussionist. Several years of piano lessons are a big help when you are learning to play the bells. Percussion is usually a popular choice for beginners. Your band director may have to limit the number of students who will be assigned to percussion. In a small concert band, two to four percussionists are needed.

Most schools have those students who are taking percussion in beginner band rent either a bell kit or a snare kit. The bell kit should include a practice pad so that you can practice both melodies and snare drum parts at home. In your area, a percussion kit costs about _____ dollars per month to rent (to own). To buy a percussion kit costs about _____ dollars.

(continued)

15. The Percussion Family *(continued)*

Review Questions

1. What are instruments such as the triangle or gong used for in the band and orchestra? _____

2. The percussion family includes any instrument that is _____ or hit to make a sound.
3. The xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba, and timpani are _____ percussion instruments.
4. Explain the difference between tuned and unpitched percussion instruments: _____

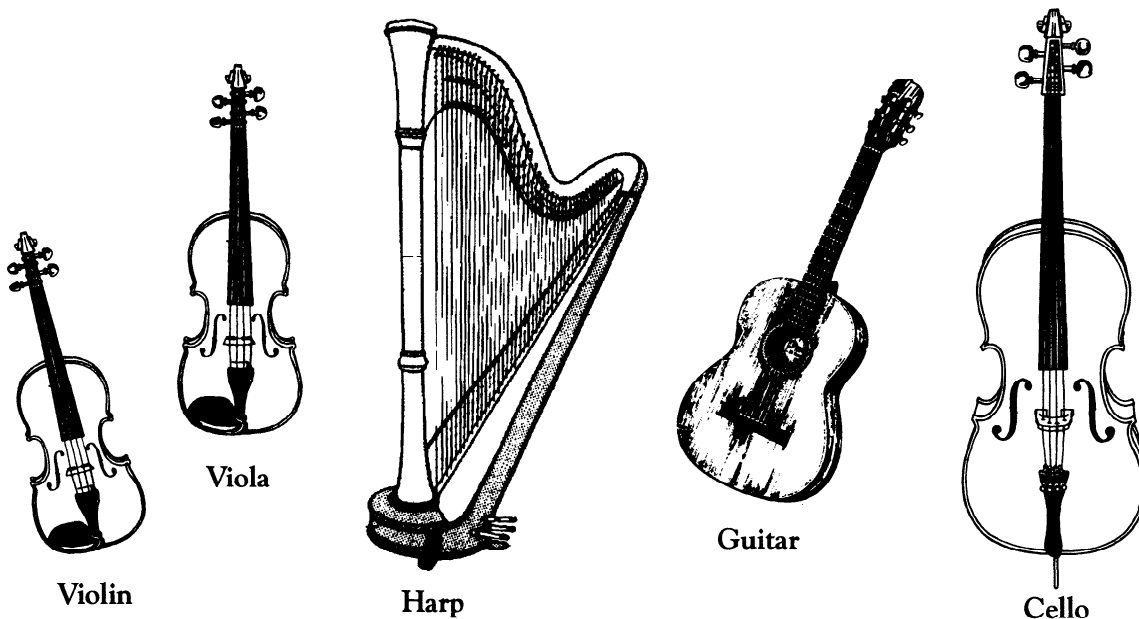
5. Give three examples of unpitched percussion instruments:

6. How many percussion instruments should a percussionist be able to play? _____
7. What is your favorite percussion instrument? _____

For Your Information

I would like to become a percussionist: Yes _____ No _____

19. The String Family



The violin, viola, cello, double bass, harp, and guitar are all members of the string family. The first four of these instruments are regularly played in the orchestra. The violin has the shortest strings and plays the highest notes. The only stringed instruments that are played in a concert band are the double bass and electric bass guitar.

All the instruments in the string family have strings. There are two ways to make sound on a string. You can pluck it like a rubber band, or you can rub it with something. When you pluck the strings, it is called **pizzicato**. A bow is used to rub the strings. A bow is a stick of wood with hair from horse tails stretched from one end to the other. When you play with the bow, it is called **arco**.

The violin, viola, cello, and double bass are all played with a bow but do not have frets to guide the fingers. The player must develop a good ear for music to be able to find the right pitch.

The harp is also a member of the string family. The strings of the harp are always strummed or plucked, not bowed.

The guitar is also a member of the string family but is not part of the orchestra. The guitar is used as a solo instrument with the orchestra in many beautiful concertos.

(continued)

19. The String Family (*continued*)

Review Questions

1. Which stringed instruments are played with a bow?

2. What is it called when a violin or viola is plucked?

3. Which stringed instruments play regularly in the symphony orchestra?

4. Which of the regular orchestral stringed instruments do you think plays the highest notes? Explain why.

5. Which stringed instruments are sometimes found in a concert band?

6. Which stringed instrument do you like the best?
