

MUSIC · Y2-Y6

# Instruments of the Orchestra

Knowledge Organiser — KS2 Music

## Key vocabulary

1

**Orchestra**

A large group of musicians playing together — usually 50-100 players.

2

**Conductor**

The leader of the orchestra. Stands in front waving a baton, keeping everyone together.

3

**Family**

A group of instruments that make sound the same way. Four orchestral families: strings, woodwind, brass, percussion.

4

**Pitch**

How high or low a sound is.

5

**Timbre**

The 'colour' or character of a sound — what makes a violin sound different from a flute even when they play the same note.

6

**Solo**

When one instrument plays alone.

7

**Ensemble**

A group of musicians playing together.



## Strings family

Played by bowing or plucking

- VIOLIN — small, highest sound, most common in orchestra (60+ in some orchestras).
- VIOLA — slightly bigger than violin, lower sound.
- CELLO — held between knees, much lower sound, played sitting down.
- DOUBLE BASS — biggest, deepest, played standing up.
- HARP — large, plucked with fingers. 47 strings.
- Sound made by: vibrating strings, with a bow drawn across them, or plucked.
- Strings are usually the LARGEST family in an orchestra.

## Woodwind family

Played by blowing through

- FLUTE — held sideways, no reed. Highest pitch.
- PICCOLO — tiny flute, even higher.
- OBOE — has a double reed. Distinctive nasal sound.
- CLARINET — has a single reed. Lower than oboe.
- BASSOON — long, double reed, deep bass voice.
- Sound made by: air vibrating either over a hole (flute) or against a reed (oboe, clarinet, bassoon).
- All originally made of wood — some now metal but still 'woodwind'.

## Brass family

Played with buzzing lips

- TRUMPET — small, bright, highest brass.
- FRENCH HORN — coiled tube, mellow sound.



- TROMBONE — has a slide that moves to change pitch.
- TUBA — biggest, deepest, lowest brass instrument.
- Sound made by: vibrating ('buzzing') your lips into a metal mouthpiece.
- All made of brass (a metal) — that's where the name comes from.
- Brass section is usually the LOUDEST part of an orchestra.

## Percussion family

Played by hitting, shaking, or s

- PITCHED PERCUSSION (different notes): xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba, timpani (kettle drums).
- UNPITCHED PERCUSSION (no clear pitch): snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine.
- Sound made by: hitting, shaking, scraping, or rubbing.
- Percussion includes hundreds of different instruments worldwide.
- One percussionist often plays many different instruments in a piece.
- Often AT THE BACK of the orchestra so the audience can see them.

