



Instruments/Ensemble –Information Sheet



Orchestra

There are four main sections to an orchestra.
Strings, brass, woodwind and percussion.

Other instruments such as the harp are sometimes included in the orchestra.

Woodwind

Instruments which produce sounds by blowing across a hole or through a single or double reed. They need not to be made of wood.

Piccolo, flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon.
(highest → lowest)

Although the saxophone is a woodwind instrument it is not usually found in an orchestra.

Brass

Family of instruments made from metal with a mouthpiece. The sound is made by vibrating the lips. The notes are changed by pressing valves or moving a slide.

Trumpet, French horn, trombone and tuba

Strings

The family of instruments which has strings. The sound is produced by moving a bow across the strings or by plucking the strings (pizzicato).

Violin, viola, cello and double bass.

Percussion

Instruments which are hit, shaken or scraped.
Tuned percussion can produce different notes, e.g. glockenspiel and xylophone.
Untuned percussion has no fixed pitch. e.g. cymbal, and side drum

Wind band/ Military band

A band with woodwind brass and percussion playing music composed for the concert hall.
Military bands would march while playing.

Brass band

A band of brass and percussion instruments. A brass band uses a separate family of instruments, cornet, flugel horn, tenor horn baritone euphonium and bass.

Striking	The sound is produced by hitting the instrument.
Bowing	The sound produced by moving the bow across the strings of a stringed instrument.
Blowing	The sound is produced by blowing into or across the mouthpiece of the instrument, e.g. brass, woodwind and recorders.
Plucking'	Sound made when you pluck the strings of a stringed instrument with a finger or fingers.
Sustained	The sound is held on.
Pizzicato	An instruction given to string players to pluck the strings instead of using the bow. Sometimes written as pizz.
Glissando	Sliding from one to another, taking in all the notes in between where possible.
Ensemble	A group of musician's playing/singing together.
String quartet	A group of four string players. Normally consists of two violins, viola and cello.

