

Topic 2: Instrument Focus – **Woodwind and Brass**

By the end of this session, students should be able to answer the following questions in their workbook:

1. **What is a woodwind instrument?**
2. **Which instruments can be found in the woodwind section?**
3. **What is a brass instrument?**
4. **Which instruments can be found in the brass section?**

Pupil resources: Topic 2 in pupil workbook

SMSC Links	BV Links	LNIT Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social – the cohesion of ensemble music making and collective feedback• Cultural – learning about the symphony orchestra and Western Classical Music conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tolerance and Mutual Respect – class feedback to questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literacy – writing down responses to learning objectives• IT – a chance to research how to make instruments at home if IT is available

Information to promote learning:

1. What is a woodwind instrument?

- Instruments that historically were made of wood (think recorders) but now also include metal.
- Usually shaped like a cylinder (flute) or more conical (clarinet)
- Some have reeds – clarinet and saxophones
- Some have double reeds – oboe and bassoon

Class activities to promote learning:

Class Activity: how does a reed work?

This video [click here ▶](#) might be useful if you want to have a practical way of learning how a reed works, and linking to the science behind how music is made, as well as maybe trying to make your own reed if you have the material available. This could be a great project to combine with work in art.

2. Which instruments can be found in the woodwind section?

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Bassoon

Click here ► for videos of many of these instruments, discussing how they work and what they sound like.

Extension: include rarer instruments which can be heard in some more modern music:

Piccolo

Bass Clarinet

Cor Anglais

Contrabassoon



Teacher Resources

Woodwind Family:

Originally, all the instruments in this section were made of wood, but today the flute is made of metal (though in some orchestras who try to replicate the original sound of the music, you will still find wooden flutes).

The players sit in two lines behind the string players, and each type of instrument has a principal player (so rather like the leader for the string section). These principal players all sit centrally near each other to make sure they are working together.

There are **four** members of the wind family:



Clarinet



Flute



Oboe



Bassoon

In this concert, you will also see and hear two more instruments, that were introduced during the Romantic Period (around 1820-1900):

- The piccolo, which plays the highest notes in the entire orchestra. Its sound is very bright, and no matter how quietly the piccolo plays, and how loud the rest of the orchestra, it can always be heard (which might be quite stressful for the player!)
- The contrabassoon plays the lowest notes in the orchestra. Its sound is not as obvious as the piccolo, but when it's played it adds extra depth and weight to the orchestra's sound.

Woodwind Listening:

- *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas, which includes prominent solos for both bassoon and contrabassoon (and musically describes a really good story too!) **Listen here** ►
- *Syrinx* by Claude Debussy for solo flute (see Sam Coles, the Philharmonia's Principal Flute, **perform it here** ►)



Piccolo



Contrabassoon

3. What is a brass instrument?

- Instruments made of metal
- Do not have reeds
- Sound changed by the embouchure of your mouth
- Valves were introduced in the late Classical/early Romantic periods (early 19th century) which gave instruments like the trumpets more notes to play

4. Which instruments can be found in the brass section?

French Horn	Trombone
Trumpet	Tuba

Class activities to promote learning:

Class Activity: how can you make a noise with brass instruments?

Try blowing raspberries: this is the technique required to play a brass instrument. Can you change pitch? Dynamics? Speed of vibration?



Teacher Resources

The brass instruments are the loudest in the orchestra, and they sit near the back behind the woodwind and in front of the percussion. There are **four** types of brass instrument:

Trumpet



Trombone



Tuba



French Horn



All the brass instruments are played in the same way: the players blow raspberries down their mouthpieces, creating a column of vibrating air. The vibrations of the players' lips *creates* the sound – if they just blew normally down the instrument, only the sound of wind would be heard.

When playing together and loudly, the brass section sounds spectacular, but they can also play surprisingly fast too!

Brass Listening:

- Look up 'Flight of the Tuba Bee' on YouTube, for some particularly fast playing! **Listen here** ►

How does this piece suggest a bumble bee?
How does the music picture this?

Click here ► for videos of many of these instruments, discussing how they work and what they sound like.

Differentiation: support and challenge

These activities are excellent for all learners, but could possibly be differentiated in the following ways:

Increased support	Increased challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit to the 4 principal woodwind instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon) and 2 brass (trumpet, horn)• Use mnemonics or anagrams to help learning – e.g. for Woodwind instruments - FOCB (e.g. Football or Cricket – Both!)• Complete the 4 learning objectives, asking pupils to match the description to the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce other instruments including the saxophone and euphonium to introduce pupils to a wider range of instruments• Ask pupils to research some of the instruments independently, coming up with fun facts about the instrument (remember they can access the Philharmonia resources online if they have internet access)

Pupil Tasks to promote learning:

Pupil Task 2.1 – naming the instruments and which family they belong to (visual)

Answers:

- 1 = trumpet/brass
- 2 = oboe/woodwind
- 3 = French horn/brass
- 4 = bassoon/woodwind

Pupil Task 2.2 – recognising the instrument (audio)

Any sound clips of your choosing can be used for this, or you can use the clips below. These clips have accompaniment, making it a little more challenging. Of course, clips could be used where only the solo instrument is playing:

Question: **What instrument is playing the main melody?**

1. **Flute** (Ed Sheeran)
[Listen here ▶](#)
2. **Trumpet** (Louis Armstrong)
[Listen here ▶](#)
3. **Oboe** (Morricone)
[Listen here ▶](#)