

Instruments of the Beginning Band

The Woodwind Family

Flute—The flute is a challenging instrument and is the highest-pitched instrument in the beginning band. The flute is made of silver or a silver-plated brass alloy played by blowing across an opening in one end while fingers press keys to change notes. With its clear, penetrating sound, the flute often plays the melody in band. Some advanced flute players will occasionally play the piccolo, which is an even smaller and higher type of flute. Flute players must be able to blow a lot of air with great control and follow complex directions easily. There will be about 16 flutes in the Beginning Band. Flute is highly competitive, and lessons are encouraged.



Oboe—The oboe is a double reed instrument. This means that the player will blow through two tightly joined cane reeds instead of a mouthpiece to produce a brilliant and distinct sound. The oboe is a very special instrument, and only a few students will be chosen to play it. Good oboe players are hardworking and usually independent with good grades. Good oboists are highly sought by universities and colleges, often receiving substantial scholarships. About 2 students will be selected to play oboe in the Beginning Band. Piano background is helpful, and private lessons are a must.



Bassoon—The bassoon is also a double reed instrument. It is the lowest member of the woodwind family and has a very dignified and majestic sound. The bassoon is a highly specialized instrument in the band, and only a select few students will be chosen to play it. Good bassoon players are usually curious and often enjoy puzzles and mind-bending games. Exceptionally small hands can be problematic for the bassoon. Good bassoonists are highly sought by universities and colleges, often receiving substantial scholarships. Only about 2 students will be selected to play bassoon in the Beginning Band. Piano background is helpful, and private lessons are a must.



Clarinet—The clarinet is the most popular of the woodwind instruments. The clarinet produces a large, beautiful sound that ranges from very high to very low in pitch. Most quality clarinets are made of a special wood, called Grenadilla, which only grows in the savanna of Africa. Some advanced clarinet players will also have the opportunity to play other types of clarinets, including the bass, contra-alto, and contra-bass clarinets. This is a very versatile instrument suited for a variety of people. About 25 students will play clarinet in the Beginning Band.



Alto Saxophone—The saxophone is a woodwind instrument even though it is made of brass. Most people know the saxophone as they have heard it in jazz or rock music, but the sound of the saxophone in the concert band is quite different. The saxophone's key system is most similar to a flute, but is much more complicated. Some saxophone players will have the opportunity to play tenor or baritone saxophone after sixth grade. Saxophone players must have appropriate jaw structure, good manual dexterity, and excellent control of facial muscles. The saxophone class is limited to around 8 students in the Beginning Band.



The Brass Family

French Horn—The French Horn is one of the most majestic and versatile instruments in the band. Recognized by its distinct coiled shape, the horn blends with both brass and woodwind sounds. It is also one of the most commonly heard instruments in motion picture soundtracks, and it has the widest range of any brass instrument. Horn players must have a good sense of pitch. Good horn players are highly sought by universities and colleges, often receiving substantial scholarships. About 10 students will play French horn. Private lessons are highly recommended for French horn.



Trumpet—The trumpet is the highest and most popular member of the brass family. Recognized by its bright, clear sound, the trumpet is frequently used to play the melody. In addition to the concert band, the trumpet is used in marching band, jazz band, and the symphony orchestra. Good trumpet players usually have thin, even lips and are often very outgoing. Up to 20 students will typically play trumpet.



Trombone—Easily recognized by its long slide, the trombone is one of the most powerful instruments in the band. Playing primarily in the lower range of the band, the trombone is used both as a melodic and a supporting instrument. Trombones are used in virtually every type of musical group, including jazz, rock, and marching band as well as the symphony orchestra. Good trombone players should have a good ear for pitch and arms sufficiently long to reach the lower slide positions. About 12 students will play trombone.



Euphonium—Sometimes called the baritone horn, the euphonium has one of the richest sounds in the band. The euphonium plays in the same range as the trombone, but its winding cone-shaped tube gives it a much darker tone. The euphonium has grown to become one of the most popular band instruments for solo playing in recent years. We will invite about 8 students to play euphonium in the Beginning Band.



Tuba—The tuba is the *most important* instrument in the band. It is the largest and lowest of the wind instruments, and it produces the fundamental sound upon which all others are built. Despite its relatively large size, *even the smallest student can easily handle the tuba with proper instruction*. Good tuba players are generally intelligent and assertive, with a passion for their instrument. Tuba players do not have to carry their instruments home every night. Instead, they keep a tuba at home or practice before or after school in one of our special practice rooms. Good tuba players are highly sought by universities and colleges, often receiving substantial scholarships. Only about 8 students will be invited to play tuba in the Beginning Band next year.



Percussion

Percussion—Percussion is one of the most misunderstood sections of the band. Often referred to as the “drums”, this name is actually a very incomplete description of what is involved in the beginning percussion class. Percussionists learn to play a number of instruments, including keyboard instruments like the marimba and xylophone, battery percussion like the cymbals, snare drum, and bass drums, and accessory percussion instruments like the tambourine and triangle. Percussionists spend the majority of the beginning percussion year on a marimba and a practice pad, though percussionists will have opportunities to play on a great many different instruments. The percussion class is limited to about 12 students in the Beginning Band. Piano background is helpful, and private lessons are highly encouraged for students to succeed in percussion.

