

## Which instrument should I play?



Things to consider



what instrument do I really fancy?

what kinds of tuition are available in my school?

how big is the instrument? Can I carry it?

Strings



Violin, viola and cello can all be started quite early and violins and violas in particular don't cost as much as some instruments. Later on they offer excellent opportunities to play with other people, as orchestras need an awful lot of string players.

The double bass can be started early if you can get a small enough instrument, but the usual age is 12 or so. You'd probably need to borrow one to start off. Later on it offers opportunities to play with other people as orchestras are always short of bassists. It can also be used in wind bands and jazz bands. It is difficult to transport and will make heavy demands on the "parental taxi service"

Guitars are fairly cheap to buy. Learning to play classical guitar well is a good start before transferring to other styles. A good starting age is 8 or 9.

The electric guitar can be used in jazz or rock groups and sometimes in wind bands. Best to start this at secondary school,

Woodwind



Flutes and clarinets are relatively inexpensive and can be started around age 9 or 10, once you have your second teeth. They are used in orchestras, wind bands and some jazz bands.

Oboes and bassoons are more expensive to buy, so you probably need to borrow one to begin, but they are very satisfying to learn. They can be started at age 10 or 11. Owing to their scarcity, you should easily find a place in an orchestra or wind band once you are good enough.

Saxophones have become a lot more reasonably priced in recent years, and the alto sax (not the soprano) can be started at around age 10. It is popular but not so much that you will have difficulty finding a place in a band. It is most useful in wind bands and jazz bands and some rock groups.

Recorder is a good instrument to start if you want to transfer to any other instrument later on, but especially another woodwind instrument. The recorder has a bit of a reputation as a 'school' instrument, but you should really listen to some proper recorder playing to hear how beautiful it can be.

## Brass

The trumpet, cornet and trombone are not too expensive, and you can start once you have your second teeth. The trumpet and cornet can be used for orchestras, wind bands, jazz bands, brass bands and some rock groups. The cornet can do the same things as a trumpet and play the same music, but is really at home in the brass band. Trombone is a bit bigger to carry although not particularly heavy

French horn is another expensive instrument for beginners, and a bit more difficult to play. Again you'll need your second teeth, as for all brass instruments. There are never enough horn players around which is an advantage when it comes to finding a place in an orchestra or band.

The tuba is another instrument you really need to borrow first, and many players start on another brass instrument like the tenor horn or euphonium, which are easier to carry, and swap later on. There are rarely enough tuba players, which is an advantage when it comes to finding a group to play in. It can be used for orchestras, wind bands and brass bands.



## Percussion

Most people choose to learn drum kit. It's easiest to do this as an individual lesson, or in a group of 2 at the most.

## Piano and keyboard

To learn piano you need to have access to one for your lessons and/or at home.

Many people start on the keyboard and then transfer, although the techniques are not really alike. The same applies regarding instruments. If you wish to have keyboard lessons at school, you'll need to be able to get your keyboard there each week.

Both of these instruments can be started early, but if taking lessons at school, Key Stage 2 is probably best.