



---

# Musical Instruments Organised into Four Key Families

KS2 MUSIC

Ages 9-12 ⌚ 3 min read

---

## The Four Families of Musical Instruments

Did you know that musical instruments are sorted into families? Just like your family has relatives who share similar features, musical instruments are grouped together based on **how they make sound**. There are **four main families: strings, woodwind, brass, and percussion**.

### String Instruments

**String instruments** make sound when you pluck, bow, or strike stretched strings. The **vibrating strings** create sound waves that travel through the air. Common string instruments include the **guitar, violin, cello, and piano**.

Think of it like a skipping rope: when you flick it, it wiggles back and forth and creates ripples. String instrument strings work the same way!

### Woodwind Instruments

**Woodwind instruments** produce sound when air flows through them and makes reeds or the instrument's body vibrate. Examples include the **flute, clarinet, oboe, and saxophone**. Even though some are made from metal, they're still called woodwind because historically they were all made from wood!

Think of it like blowing across the top of a bottle: the air inside vibrates and creates a sound.

### Brass Instruments

**Brass instruments** are made from shiny metal and make sound when you blow air through them and vibrate your lips. The vibrations travel through the metal tube and produce loud, powerful sounds. **Trumpets, trombones, French horns, and tubas** are all brass instruments.

Think of it like blowing a raspberry: your vibrating lips create the sound, and the brass tube makes it louder and deeper.

## Percussion Instruments

**Percussion instruments** make sound when you hit, shake, or strike them. This family includes **drums**, **cymbals**, **xylophones**, **bells**, and **maracas**. Each percussion instrument sounds different depending on what it's made from and how hard you hit it.

Think of it like knocking on different doors: a wooden door and a metal door make completely different sounds!

## Why Does Classification Matter?

Understanding these four families helps musicians work together in orchestras and bands. Each family has a unique sound, and when combined, they create **beautiful harmony**. Learning about instrument families also helps you appreciate how sound is created in different ways.