

Directions: Read the following information, view the videos, and complete the assignment at the end.

The Woodwind Family

Think about a coach blowing a whistle to get your attention. The noise may sound harsh. It is not too different from original woodwind instruments. The first woodwind instruments were hollow pieces of wood: one end was open and the other end was closed. By blowing into the open end, people made whistles. Over time these instruments became more complicated. Since they were made of wood, they became known as the woodwind family.

Today, woodwind instruments are made of wood, metal, plastic or some combination. They are all basically narrow cylinders or pipes, with holes, an opening at the bottom end and a mouthpiece at the top. Keys cover the holes of most woodwind instruments. They are played by blowing air through the mouthpiece (that's the "wind" in "woodwind") and opening or closing the holes with your fingers to change the pitch.

The mouthpieces for some woodwinds, including the clarinet, oboe and bassoon, use a thin piece of wood called a *reed*, which vibrates when you blow across it. The clarinet uses a single reed made of one piece of wood, while the oboe and bassoon use a double reed made of two pieces joined together. The smaller woodwinds play higher pitches, while the longer and larger instruments play the lower notes.

The woodwind family of instruments includes these basic instruments, from the highest sounding instruments to the lowest: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and saxophone.

The Woodwind Family:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEt1Mm8sSkA>

The flute:



The flute is the oldest of all instruments that produce pitched sounds (not just rhythms), and was originally made from wood, stone, clay or hollow reeds like bamboo. Modern flutes are made of silver, gold or platinum. A standard flute is a little over 2 feet long and is often featured playing the melody. Flutists play by holding it sideways with both hands and blowing across a hole in the mouthpiece, much like blowing across the top of a bottle. Their fingers open and close the keys, which changes the pitch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLUjWLHZDfY>

The piccolo is a smaller version of the flute:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw-wheB4gcM>

The oboe:



The oboe uses a *double* reed, which vibrates when air moves quickly through it. This vibration of the reed makes the air inside the oboe move, creating sound. The oboe is about the same length as the flute and clarinet. To play it, the oboist holds the oboe upright, blows through the double reed in your mouth, and uses both hands to press down on the keys to open and close the holes and change the pitch.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLTJsWCbDJ4>

The clarinet:



The clarinet looks very similar to the oboe, except for the mouthpiece, which uses a *single* reed. Clarinets come in a number of different sizes, and the standard B-flat clarinet is just over 2 feet long. You play the clarinet as you do an oboe, by holding it upright, blowing through the reed, and using your hands to change the pitches by opening and closing the keys with your fingers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMYMkQzVWfU>

The bassoon:



The bassoon is a long pipe, doubled in half, made of wood, with many keys. If it were straight, the bassoon would be around 9 feet long! Like the oboe, the bassoon uses a double reed, which is fitted into a curved metal mouthpiece. Bassoons usually play lower harmonies, but you will sometimes hear their hollow low notes featured in a melody. Bassoonists play the bassoon by holding it upright and blowing through the double reed. The air travels down the tube and then makes a u-turn and goes up and out the top. Just like the oboe, both hands are used to press on the keys to open and close the holes and change the pitch.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qoCpZBt_w

The saxophone:



The saxophone is also a woodwind instrument. Although most saxophones are made from brass, they are categorized as woodwind instruments because sound is produced by a vibrating reed rather than lips vibrating in a mouthpiece cup as with the brass instrument family. The standard saxophone is approximately 3 ½ feet in length. As with the other woodwind instruments, the pitch of the note being played is controlled by covering holes in the body tube to control the resonant frequency of the air column by changing the effective length of the tube. The player covers or uncovers the holes by pressing keys. The saxophone is a relatively new instrument (it was invented in the 1840s) compared to the symphony orchestra (1600s-1700s), so the saxophone is not usually seen and heard in an orchestra.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/music/band-instrument-lessons-music/music-woodwinds/v/saxophone-section-an-introduction>

The Woodwind Family

1. Which woodwind instrument sounds by blowing air across a hole near the top of the instrument? _____

- A. Clarinet
- B. Flute
- C. Bassoon
- D. Saxophone

2. What are the two woodwind instruments that use double reeds?

3. Which woodwind instrument is the newest/ youngest?

4. Name a woodwind instrument that is made of wood.

5. Which woodwind instrument is the lowest sounding woodwind instrument?

6. To play a woodwind instrument, the musician must _____.

- A. Press the keys
- B. Open and close the holes/keys with his or her fingers
- C. Blow air through the mouthpiece and open or close the holes/keys with his or her fingers
- D. Make a buzzing sound into the mouthpiece

7. Which of these instruments do you like the best? Why?

8. Which of these instruments do you like the least? Why?

9. Name someone that plays an instrument in the woodwind family. What instrument do they play?
