

Music

The layout of the orchestra

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The conductor directs the orchestra, telling them when to start and stop as well as how fast, slow, loud and soft to play. The conductor has their back to the audience and uses a white stick called a *baton*.

The pink section in the picture above is where the **string family** sits. The little square is where the harp sits when it visits, as it is not a regular member of the orchestra. The main string instruments are violin, viola, cello and double bass. All of these instruments are wooden, have the same shape, four strings and can be played by using a bow or by plucking the strings (which is called *pizzicato*). The string family has the largest number of instruments and because this family is quiet, they sit at the front.

The violin is the smallest and highest sounding, while the double bass is the largest and lowest sounding.

Behind the string family sits the **woodwind family** (the blue section in the picture above). Even though the flute is made from metal, it is part of the woodwind family because all of the instruments in this family used to be made from wood. All of these instruments are blown and use *keys* to change their pitch from high to low.

The piccolo (smaller than the flute) is the smallest and highest sounding, while the bassoon is the largest and lowest sounding.

Behind the woodwind family or sometimes to the sides sit the **brass family** (the green section). This is the loudest section of the orchestra, which is why they sit at the back. All of these instruments are made from brass, have a bell-shaped end and create sound by blowing into a mouthpiece. The trumpet, French horn and tuba use *valves* to make their pitch higher or lower but the trombone uses a *slide*.

The trumpet is the smallest and the highest sounding, while the tuba is the largest and the lowest sounding.

The percussion sits at the very back of the orchestra (in the dark blue section). Sometimes they are a large section, sometimes they are smaller. Some percussion instruments include triangle, cymbals, timpani (drums), bass drum and xylophone.

Small instruments with short strings or short tubes sound high and large instruments with long strings or long tubes sound low.