

O'Fallon District 90 2014 Beginning Band Info



Choosing your band instrument is very exciting, but it can also be a bit overwhelming! When you come to try out band instrument, we'll take some time to talk about a few things: Your physical characteristics (things like the size of your hands, arms, and facial/dental features), how naturally disposed you are to a particular instrument, why you are interested in a particular instrument, and how all of those things fit into what the band needs for a good balance of instruments.

All of the items above are very important in that they help us to work with you to figure out what you'll be most successful playing. For instance, students that have fantastic motor skills and a very strong sense of steady pulse will be naturally more inclined to succeed in the percussion section than a student who lacks that level of coordination and struggles with tempo.

It is also extremely important for the success of the band as a whole, to make sure that our instrumentation is balanced. Just as a basketball team needs players to fill all five positions to be successful, we need a balanced mix of all of the band instruments to sound our best.

We are looking for:

16 Flutes
4 Oboes
20 Clarinets
16 Alto Saxophones
20 Trumpets
12 French Horns
24 trombones/baritones
8 Percussionists

Below, you will find a bit more helpful information about the band instruments. We have chosen some brands that we know are high quality and worth the investment you'll be making. While they may be slightly more expensive, I strongly encourage you to stick to those brands to avoid getting stuck with a low quality instrument that can keep your child from growing as a musician.

Woodwind Instruments

Flute: Students that choose the flute cannot have a "cupid's tip" on their top lip. This keeps the air stream needed to make a good sound from going over the tone hole evenly. They also need to have arms that are long enough to hold the flute correctly. We will check to make sure that you are able to produce a good sound on the flute when you come to try out instruments.

***Oboe:** Oboe is recommended for some of the most dedicated and musically inclined students that are willing to take private lessons from a professional in addition to what we do in band class. Students that play these instruments will need to make sure they have playable reeds at all times. Private lessons are required for students to start this instrument as a beginner.

Clarinet: The clarinet is a great choice for many kids. We will need to make sure that students wanting to play the clarinet have fingers that are able to cover all the holes on the horn. Not covering the holes makes playing the clarinet very difficult. Students playing the clarinet will need to have a constant supply of reeds.

Alto Saxophone: The saxophone is always a popular choice for students. We have found that kids that are dedicated to practicing their instruments do very well with this horn. We would also recommend, due to the higher cost of this instrument, that you discuss the level of commitment that your child has to learning the saxophone before we finalize your decision.

Brass Instruments

All brass instruments are played with a mouthpiece. The higher sounding the instrument is, the smaller the mouthpiece. It will be important for us to consider lip shape, teeth structure, and braces issues when looking at brass instruments.

Trumpet: The trumpet is the highest member of the brass family. It is a very versatile instrument that can really shine in concert band, marching band, and jazz band.

***French Horn:** The horn is very similar to oboe in that it is recommended for students that show that they have a very strong musical ear and a high interest in the instrument. We would encourage students that choose the Horn to take private lessons to supplement what we do in class. The French Horn plays in the treble clef like a trumpet, but can also go much lower. It produces a much more mellow sound than a trumpet. Private lessons are required for students to start this instrument as a beginner.

Trombone: The trombone is a bass clef instrument and is different from the other brass instruments in that it uses a slide instead of valves to change notes. A strong trombone section really adds to the tone quality of the band. All bands need a lot of trombones!!!

Baritone: The baritone plays in the same range as a trombone, but uses valves like a trumpet instead of a slide to change notes. It looks like a smaller version of a tuba.

***Tuba:** No band can sound complete without a great tuba section! It is the lowest sounding instrument in our band and provides us with a strong foundation for all of the other instruments. Baritone players may be converted to tuba players during their second year of band.

Percussion Instruments

It has been our experience that most kids think of percussion in band as meaning that they can choose to play only the snare drum or a drum set like what you'd see at a rock concert. While we do learn to play the snare drum as part of our growth as musicians, we spend a lot of time learning to play other instruments like the marimba, tambourine, cymbals, xylophone, bells, triangle and many other things!

Please understand that we always have an overwhelming number of students that want to play a percussion instrument. We need to make sure that the kids that are most suited to playing percussion are selected to do so since there are only so many percussion parts available for students when it comes time for our concerts. We'll be looking for things like coordination, an ability to keep a steady pulse, and commitment to being a total percussionist. This way, we can keep everyone involved in a meaningful musical experience with a full and balanced ensemble.

Hopefully, this information will serve as a guide to help and your child to choose the most appropriate band instrument. We understand that choosing an instrument can be a lifetime decision. We hope that tonight will be an exciting experience for you and your child in planning their future musical experiences in O'Fallon!