Instrument Families: Brass

The brass instrument family is the second group of instruments use air to be played. These kinds of instruments rely on the vibration made when the musician presses their lips to and blows into the mouthpiece. They are generally very loud instruments. While many of the instruments in the brass family are made of brass, some are made of other natural materials like wood or bone. *[Likewise, the saxophone is a woodwind but is made of brass.]* Most current brass instruments are a long tube with a bell-shape at the end that have been coiled up to make it more portable.

Types of Brass Instruments

When discussing modern brass instruments, most fall under these two first categories.

Valve



These brass instruments feature a set of valves that the player presses. When they do this, their air travels through new parts of tubing which changes the sound/pitch of the instrument. The longer the air has to travel, the lower the sound. The shorter- the higher! Some instruments in this category include the tuba, french horn, trumpet, and the sousaphone.

Slide



Slide brass instruments use a slide that is pulled toward and away from the body to change the pitch/sound of the instrument. This category primarily consists of different types of trombones (Tenor/Base/Alto/Soprano).

Other

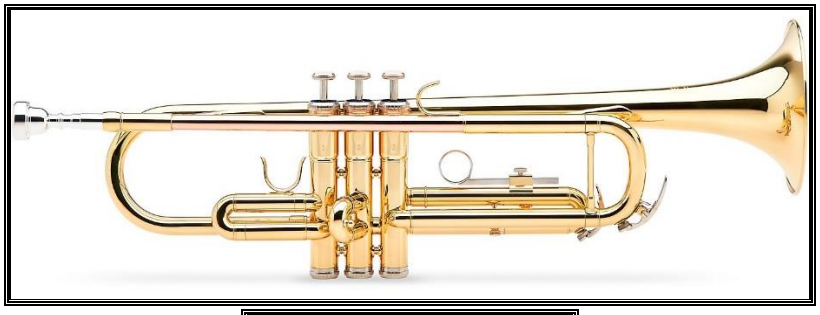


There are other types of instruments that still fit in this family but may not apply to the categories above. They all still rely on the vibration of the players lips on the mouthpiece. Some other brass instruments include the digeridoo, vuvuzela, alpine horn, or the conch.

Activities for Your Child

How Long?

Many instruments in this family are coiled up- but imagine how long they would be if they weren't! Take some time to measure out the lengths below with some masking tape. After you're finished, share each picture in comparison to their taped length. Talk with your child about what they could use to measure the length- Their own body? Their feet? A shoe? Paperclips? Anything consistently sized can be used as a measuring tool for small children. Help them record their findings!



Trumpet: Six (6) Feet



B♭ Tuba: Eighteen (18) Feet



Trombone: Nine (9) Feet

Listen to a Brass Performance

Below is a performance of an arrangement of "High Hopes" by Panic at the Disco performed by the Music City Drum & Bugle Corps' January camp in 2019. Take some time to listen. *Do you know what kind of instrument the soloist is playing? Does the sound of all of the instruments playing together remind you of anything? How does the music make you feel when you listen- and why?*

https://youtu.be/F7kRdeCOsY0