



**Age Range:** Elementary

**Learning Objective:** Students will learn to identify the double bass by sight and sound.

## ENGAGE students

**EXPLAIN.** “The double bass (also called the string bass, or just bass) has the same basic shape as the violin, viola, and cello, it is just a lot bigger. It’s about six feet tall, and bass players need to stand or sit on a special stool to play it. Because it’s so big, it can make really low sounds. Bigger instruments make lower sounds.”



## EXPLORE sounds

**WATCH.** Watch and listen to the beginning of [this movement from Gustav Mahler's first symphony](#). “About fourteen seconds in, you will see and hear the double bass play a solo. It is a sort of sad and mysterious version of the folk song Frère Jacques (English translation: Are You Sleeping, Brother John?)”

**LISTEN.** “When the composer Camille Saint-Saens decided to write a piece of music called ‘The Elephant,’ he chose the double bass to capture the spirit of that big and playful animal. [Listen to the music](#) while you look at some cute elephant pictures.”

**WATCH.** “Like the other members of the string family, the strings of the double bass can be bowed or plucked. When the strings are plucked, it’s called pizzicato. The double bass is often used in jazz music. In jazz, the pizzicato double bass sound is very common. Here is a well-known jazz song, ‘[On the Sunny Side of the Street](#),’ played and sung by Esperanza Spalding and her band!” (Look out for Spalding’s bass solo at the 2:49 mark!)

## EXTEND learning

*Choose one or more activities to extend learning.*

**WATCH.** Here is [one more example](#) of pizzicato double bass – look/listen out for drumming on the bass, and for one player to use a bow partway through!

**REFLECT.** Write down or tell someone three things you learned about the double bass.