



INSTRUMENT EXPLORATION: The Brass Family

Age Range: Elementary

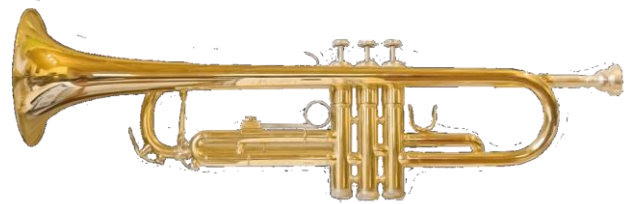
Learning Objective: Students will learn how to make a sound on a brass instrument and hear recordings of various brass instruments.

ENGAGE students

EXPLAIN. “The brass family is one of the four main instrument families in the orchestra. The instruments in the brass family are the trumpet, the trombone, the French horn, the euphonium, and the tuba.”

EXPLORE sounds

LISTEN. “We’ll start with the trumpet, which is shown in this picture! Let’s [listen to the trumpet](#), playing together with a harp.”



WATCH. “Now we’ll look at the trombone. Here is [a trombone solo, featured in a jazz piece.](#)”



WATCH. “Next is the French horn. Listen to the [French horn play this solo](#) from Star Wars.”





INSTRUMENT EXPLORATION: The Brass Family, cont.

LISTEN. “Now it’s time for a much bigger instrument, the euphonium! [Listen to the sound of the euphonium here.](#)”



WATCH. “And finally, the biggest member of the brass family, the tuba. Hear the Minnesota Orchestra’s Steve Campbell [play the tuba here.](#)”



EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

PLAY. “Do you know how to make a sound on a brass instrument? You need to blow on it, but you need to do something else, too. You need to buzz your lips inside the mouthpiece!” Only a trained brass teacher can teach students how to properly buzz their lips, but here are a few fun activities to help give students an idea about how to start buzzing:

- Start with kazoos! If you don’t have kazoos on hand, make them by covering one end of a toilet paper tube with wax paper and securing it in place with a rubber band. Playing a tune on a kazoo gives students an idea of what buzzing feels like on the mouth and lips. But there is a key difference between making a sound on a kazoo versus a brass instrument. To play a kazoo, the player must hum/sing into the instrument. Brass players do not do this –they use their wind, or breathing.
- Move from kazoos to zerberts (or raspberries, or whatever term you like to use for creating a seal between your mouth and forearm and blowing.) After the first zerbert, try to do the same thing with just your mouth-- in other words, with no arm.
- Try buzzing lips into various tube-shaped objects, including an actual brass mouthpiece, if you have access to one.
- Once students have a little experience with buzzing, ask them to try experimenting with different speeds. Notice the difference in sound between fast and slow buzzing.

WATCH. [Watch this tutorial](#) about buzzing to get an idea of what brass players need to do to get some really good buzzing going.