

Name _____

Form _____

String Instruments of the Orchestra



Violin

The violin is the smallest member of the string family and is able to play the highest notes. It has four strings which are made out of wire or nylon. It is tucked under the chin and played with a bow made of wood and horse's hair. The bow is coated with sticky resin and when it's moved across the strings, it vibrates them, making a sound.



Viola

The viola is a bit bigger than the violin and makes a deep, rich sound.

It has two jobs in the orchestra; it plays harmonies, but also gets great solos from time to time. It can be played by bowing, plucking and can also be strummed!

Cello

The cello looks like a violin – but bigger.

You couldn't hold this under your chin! Instead, it rests on a spike which sticks into the floor and is held between the players legs and played with a bow.

Because its body is bigger and its strings longer than the other instruments, the sound it makes is much deeper.



Double Bass

The double bass is the biggest string instrument in the orchestra, and a great instrument to learn if you want to play jazz.

It got its name from the job it used to do. It used to 'double the bass' played by the harpsichord in 17th-century orchestras. Now it has its own music and even the occasional solo!



Harp

The harp has existed for hundreds of years and was played in Ancient Egypt and in Roman times.

It has a big, triangle shaped wooden frame, which about 45 strings stretch across, from top to bottom. These are all different lengths and different thickness, so they play different notes. They are plucked by the harpist, so that they make a sound.



Activities

1. Name the five instruments that belong to the string section of the orchestra.
2. Write down which instrument has the highest sound and why.
3. Write down which instrument has the lowest sound and why.
4. From the information above, name four things that these instruments have in common.
5. Which of the string instruments is often used in jazz music?
6. Find out the Italian musical word that means "plucking the strings".