

LESSON 3

Wind Instruments

In every orchestra there are two distinct groups of wind instruments: brass and woodwind. Although the two are similar, there are many characteristics that differentiate the two. From material to playing technique, these are the core differences between brass and woodwind instruments:

Material

Woodwind instruments, such as clarinets and flutes, are made from wood or metal, while brass instruments are made exclusively out of metal or brass. Although both types of instruments use a force of air to make a sound, the mouthpiece of woodwind instruments requires a reed while the mouthpiece of brass instruments do not.

Technique

Brass instruments are lip-vibrated instruments, meaning the different pitches are caused by alterations of both the air flow *and* lip tension of the player. The difference in pitches of woodwind instruments is caused when a player blows through a reed to cause air within the resonator to vibrate. The reed sits at the back of the mouthpiece and vibrates against the rest of the mouthpiece to help create the sound.

Valves vs. Keys

Valves are a crucial part of brass instruments, as they help direct air in and out of the instrument, creating different pitches. Woodwind instruments, on the other hand, rely on the keys located alongside the body of the instrument to vary air flow.