

Signal Mountain Middle School Band

6th Grade Instrument Selection Guide



Choosing an instrument is an exciting first step to learning music! This guide will explain how the instrument selection process works and information about each instrument.

Instrument Selection Process

In band, students learn how to play one instrument for an entire school year. Beginning band instruments include flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, baritone, tuba, and percussion. Starting in 7th grade, we offer some additional instruments: oboe, bassoon, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone.

It is important to understand that there are a set number of students selected to play each instrument depending on the size of the band. This will ensure an enjoyable musical experience for everyone. The band director will try to accommodate the requests of the parent or student. However, spots for an instrument must follow two guidelines: 1. The student must achieve a minimum score on that instrument and be approved by Mr. Buckner, 2. Multiple students that are approved on a particular instrument will be selected on a first-come-first served basis. Scores on instruments are done at Thrasher and Nolan Elementary each year, as well as on informational meeting in the middle school band room each May. Students that already tried out instruments will also be able to try any instrument again that night.

Instruments

Flute

The flute is the smallest of the beginner instruments. It is a very popular selection each year, but only a small portion of those wishing to play flute will be selected.

Physical Characteristics: Flute players should have a slight “frown” to the upper lip with NO tear drop shape in the middle. Flute tones are produced by being able to focus an extremely small air stream to an exact location on the tone hole. The tear-drop-shaped lip will make it difficult to direct the air so precisely. Flute players should also have agile fingers for moving this multi-keyed instrument through a fast musical passage. Students with extreme overbites (receded jaw) should avoid choosing flute as this makes it difficult to produce quality sounds. Flexible lower lip desirable.

Other Considerations: Students with double-jointed fingers should avoid selecting flute as this condition can cause lack of agility in the fingers. Braces ok.



Flute Personality:

Careful, Patient, Studious

Clarinet

The clarinet uses a “single reed” and a mouthpiece to produce the sound. Clarinet is a popular instrument each year and many students will get the opportunity to play.

Physical Characteristics: One necessity of clarinet tone production is the ability to make the chin flat.

Other Considerations: Students who have difficulty remembering a series of instructions should avoid playing clarinet. Clarinet players are also responsible for maintaining a working stock of 4-6 quality reeds. A box of 10 reeds costs around \$25.00 and can last (with proper care) up to 4 months. Some orthodontics is okay.



Clarinet Personality:

Diligent and Focused

Alto Saxophone

The saxophone is a woodwind instrument. It uses a single reed and mouthpiece to produce the sound. Because of the volume produced, only a few students will be chosen for this each year.

Physical Characteristics: Since the balance of the saxophone is maintained by the use of a neck strap, it is extremely important that students be able to sit up completely straight when asked to.

Other Considerations: Saxophone players are responsible for maintaining a working stock of 4-6 quality reeds. A box of 10 reeds costs around \$23.00 and can last (with proper care) up to 4 months. Alto Saxophone students will have the opportunity to audition for Tenor Sax or Baritone Sax (based on their proven musical and behavioral abilities while playing the alto saxophone) as a 7th grader.



Alto Saxophone Personality:
Studious and Confident

Trumpet

The trumpet is the smallest member of the brass family. The sound on the trumpet is produced by buzzing into a small cup-shaped mouthpiece. This is a popular instrument.

Physical Characteristics: While orthodontics is somewhat troublesome to a trumpet player, it is not impossible to make good sounds with braces. A slight overbite is okay, but an underbite can severely hinder progress on cornet/trumpet. Trumpet players come in all shapes and sizes.

Other Considerations: Trumpet parts usually have the melody (recognizable) part. Therefore, students who choose and are selected for trumpet should exhibit a confident demeanor, strong personality, and demonstrate a high level of self-motivation.



Trumpet Personality:
Confident and Daring

French Horn

The French Horn is a member of the brass family. The sound of the French Horn is produced by buzzing into a small mouthpiece similar to a trumpet. Students with good musical ears (such as Honor Choir students and piano players) should consider French Horn.

Physical Characteristics: While orthodontics is somewhat troublesome to a French Horn player, it is not impossible to make good sounds with braces. A slight overbite is okay, but an underbite can severely hinder progress on French Horn. The French Horn's valves are manipulated with the LEFT hand.

Other Considerations: Because of the difficult nature of French Horn notes (mentioned above), students should exhibit GREAT ability to match sung or played pitches by humming or singing. This is a good instrument choice for students who have participated in piano lessons or honor choir groups. Students with a history of academic or behavioral problems will NOT be selected for French Horn.



French Horn Personality:
Academic and Brave

Trombone

Trombone players should have good "musical ears". The trombone is played like the other brass instruments (buzzing into a cup-shaped mouthpiece), but uses a slide instead of valves. The slide is not marked or notched and players rely on their memory and listening skills to tell if they are in the EXACT proper location. Students with good musical ears should consider Trombone.

Physical Characteristics: While some might think that trombone players must have long arms, the truth is there are numerous accommodations that make it possible for students of all shapes and sizes to play. Trombone players should have average to fuller lip size.

Other Considerations: Great trombone playing takes good concentration and study. Many quiet academicians have excelled at trombone. This is a good instrument choice for students who have participated in piano lessons or honor choir groups. Braces ok.



Trombone Personality:
Sense of Humor, Confident, Brave

Baritone

The baritone is basically a trombone that is wrapped up and has valves instead of a slide!

Physical Considerations:

While the picture at the side makes this instrument look large, it is actually a medium sized instrument. Some baritone cases are larger than others, but the instrument itself sits in one's lap very comfortably. Average to fuller lips is also a good idea for this instrument. Braces ok.



Baritone Personality:

Dreamer and Diligent

Tuba

The tuba is the largest instrument in the band and many would believe it would be hard to physically manage. The tubas we use for beginners are 3/4 size and easy to handle. There are a limited amount of tubas, students who are not selected for tuba may be recommended to play a baritone (smaller version).

Physical Characteristics: Tuba players need to have full lips and a large lung capacity. While the size of the student doesn't matter TOO much, a long torso (upper body) helps a student reach the mouthpiece of the tuba while resting the bottom of the tuba on the edge of their chair or across the thighs.

Other Considerations: While we do have a limited number of tubas to leave at home, it is a good idea to consider being a car rider once or twice a week to bring this home. Braces ok.



Tuba Personality:

Unique, Fun-Loving, Brave

Percussion

Just because you are always tapping on things does not mean you are a natural percussionist (drummer). In fact, the percussion section is the most select, hand-picked section of the band. Only students with high grades, low discipline problems, and extremely high gross and fine motor skills will be considered for percussion. This is a popular instrument.

Physical Characteristics: Students should exhibit a great deal of coordination in gross and fine motor skills.

Other Considerations: The percussion family includes mallet instruments (bells, xylophone, marimba, vibes), accessories (triangle, tambourine, cymbals) and battery instruments (snare drum, bass drum, timpani). Drum set is not taught at school.



Percussion Personality:

Coordinated and Organized

