

Concert band & brass band

Most students play in one of these long before they sit in an orchestra. A *concert band* is woodwind, brass and percussion — an orchestra with the strings taken out and the clarinets promoted. A *brass band* is a fixed British line-up of brass and percussion only, written almost entirely in treble clef so a player can move between instruments.

SIDE BY SIDE

	Concert band	Brass band	Orchestra
WHAT IS IN IT	Woodwind, brass, percussion — no strings except an optional double bass	Cornets, horns, baritones, trombones, basses, percussion. No woodwind at all	Strings first, then woodwind, brass, percussion, harp
LINE-UP	Flexible — publishers write for what schools have	Fixed by tradition; the same 25 parts everywhere	Fixed core, extras added by the piece
SIZE	30–70 players	Twenty-five brass plus two or three percussion	30–100+ players
PLAYERS PER PART	Several clarinets and flutes share a part; one or two on each brass part	Several cornets share a part; mostly one to a part elsewhere	Whole string sections share a part
CLEFS	Treble for most, bass clef for trombone, bassoon, euphonium, tuba	Treble throughout — even the tubas. Bass trombone is the one exception	Every clef, and most parts at concert pitch on the page

CONCERT BAND, FRONT TO BACK

Flutes · piccolo	Top line. Piccolo doubles it an octave up for brilliance.
Oboe · bassoon	Colour and character; one or two of each, often optional.
Clarinets 1-2-3	The heart of the band. Several to a part, like a violin section.
Bass clarinet	Joins the low line and softens the tubas.
Saxophones	Alto, tenor, baritone — the glue between woodwind and brass.
Trumpets · horns	Trumpets for melody and fanfare, horns for harmony and warmth.
Trombones	Chords, weight, and the slide effects nothing else can do.
Euph. · tuba	Euphonium sings a tenor tune; tuba is the bass line.
Percussion	Timpani plus a kit of three to six players.

BRASS BAND, THE STANDARD 25

Soprano cornet	One, in E flat. The highest voice in the band.
Cornets in B flat	Nine: solo (four), repiano, seconds, thirds.
Flugelhorn	One. Mellow than a cornet; sits between cornets and horns.
Tenor horns	Three in E flat — solo, first, second. The band's viola.
Baritones	Two in B flat. Lighter than a euphonium, and not the same thing.
Trombones	Two tenors in treble clef, one bass trombone in bass clef.
Euphoniums	Two. The band's tenor soloist.
Basses	Two E flat and two B flat. Written treble clef, sounding very low.
Percussion	Two or three players, kit and timpani.

WRITING FOR BAND

Treat the clarinets as your string section: they can sustain, divide and play quietly for a long time. Give the tune to something that can be heard over brass, and let the saxes join the two halves of the band together.

TRANSPOSING, IN PRACTICE

Nearly every part is transposed, so the written note is not the sounding note. Score at concert pitch, then transpose the parts — or write in your notation program and let it produce both.

SEATING & RANGES

Woodwind sit at the front, brass and percussion behind, with the low voices furthest back. Keep young brass under a written top G, and never write a page without rests — loud and high at once is what tires a section.