

ENSEMBLES IN SCHOOLS:

Meet the String Family!



LESSON: MEET THE STRING FAMILY



OBJECTIVE

- Students will be able to identify the instruments of the string family by sight and/or sound



MATERIALS

- DSO Kids website: <https://www.mydso.com/dso-kids/learn-and-listen/instruments>
- Instrument diagrams and descriptions (pages 6-10)
- Recording of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 1 in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 - IV. Allegro (available on Naxos)



PROCEDURE

1. Ask your students to share what they know about the string family. Ask them how they think string instruments produce sound, a general picture of what they look like, what they're made out of, and to share any instrument names they are familiar with. Record student answers on the board.
2. Show and/or read the instrument diagrams with instrument family facts provided in teacher resources on pages 6 to 10. Access the DSO Kids Learn and Listen page and play the corresponding listening examples for students. The listening examples referenced in the diagrams are also available on Naxos.
3. Ask students to share what new information they learned about string instruments (e.g. Did they know that string instruments are plucked with fingers or played with a bow? Did they know that the violin can produce higher notes than the bass? What do they notice about the size of the instruments?)
4. Play the recording of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 1 in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 - IV. Allegro for students. Explain that this is an example of the violin, viola, cello, and bass performing together! These are the same instruments that will visit your school. If space allows, encourage students to move around the classroom in response to the music (e.g. using big gestures when the music is loud and small gestures when the music is soft, or moving up high when they hear high notes and low to the ground when they hear low notes).

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY - MAKE YOUR OWN STRING INSTRUMENT:

See the instructions in the teacher resources section of the lesson plan on page 11.

ASSESSMENT

Designate five areas around the room and place a photo of each string instrument in each corner of the room, using the photos provided in this packet (teacher resources, pages 6-10). Ask students questions (provided on page 5 of teacher resources) about the instruments and have them stand with the instrument photo they think corresponds with the descriptions. For older students, play the sound files and ask them to identify the instruments by sound.

OPTION:

If you are in a classroom with limited space or with students that have limited mobility, you can split the students into two teams and ask them to answer questions about string instruments in a game show format:

Give student from each team a buzzer, chime, or bell. When you ask a quiz question (provided on page 5 of teacher resources), the first person to “buzz in” with the correct answer can pass the buzzer to the next person on their team. The first team to run out of team members wins!

TEACHER RESOURCES

QUIZ QUESTIONS

QUIZ QUESTIONS: BEGINNER

- Which string instrument in the orchestra doesn't have a bow? (Harp)
- Which instrument plays the highest notes? (Violin)
- Which instrument plays the lowest notes? (Bass)
- Which instrument does the player prop between their knees to play? (Cello)
- Which instrument can play lower than a violin, but higher than a cello? (Viola)

QUIZ QUESTIONS: ADVANCED

- Which string instrument has pedals? (Harp)
- Which of these instruments plays lower notes: the viola or the bass? (Bass)
- Which of the string instruments has more than four strings? (Harp)
- Which of these instruments is propped on the player's shoulder to play: the violin or the cello? (Violin)



VIOLIN

The violin is the smallest of the string family, and therefore it has the highest sound! The violin is small enough that musicians can hold it against their shoulder to play.

Violins frequently get the melody, or the main tune, of a piece. Listen to Vivaldi's The Four Season's "Spring": Allegro to hear the violin mimic a bird's song.



VIOLA

The viola is typically a little larger than the violin, and the notes it plays are lower. It usually plays the harmony (other notes that play with the melody) in music. It is held and played much like the violin. To hear an example, listen to the first few minutes of the first movement Mahler's 10th symphony. Pay attention to how the violas sound lower than the violins.



CELLO

The cello is quite a bit larger than the viola and violin so it is played differently. Cellists sit down with the instrument propped between their knees. The cello is not as big as the bass but it does have a deep, warm voice! To hear an example of the cello's mellow sound and range listen to the prelude to Bach's Cello Suite no. 1.



BASS

The bass is even larger than the cello! It has the lowest voice of the string family. The bassist can either stand or sit on a tall stool to play this instrument. Listen to “The Elephant” from The Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saens to hear the big, deep sounds of the bass.



HARP

The harp is very different from the rest of the string family. It is shaped a bit like a triangle and has about 47 strings and 7 pedals that the musician pushes with his or her feet. The harpist sits on one side of the instrument and leans it against his or her shoulder. They then strum or pluck the strings to make a sound. Listen to Glinka's Harp Nocturne in E flat major to hear the harp's angelic sound and wide range.

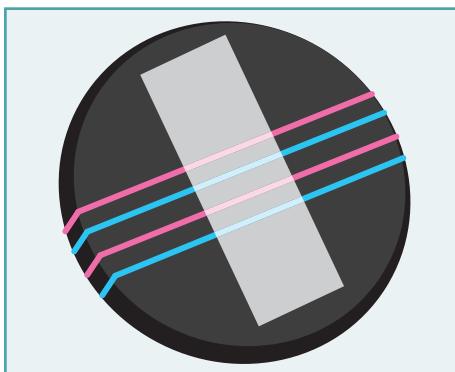
MAKE YOUR OWN BANJO!



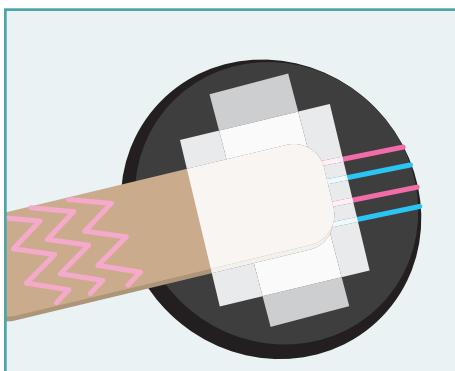
MATERIALS

- Clean jar lids
- Jumbo craft sticks
- Rubber bands
- Tape
- Decorating materials

1. Give each student a jar lid, a jumbo craft stick, and four rubber bands. Show them the photo of a banjo (page 12), and explain that banjos are included in the string family because they produce sound through the vibration of strings. Much like the harp, it is played by plucking the strings.
2. Guide them in securing the bands around the jar with a piece of tape on the back of the lid.



3. Let the students decorate the jumbo craft stick however they like. They can then secure the craft stick to the back of the lid with another piece of tape.



4. Optional: Take four sequins/rhinestones/etc., and use craft glue to secure them to the top of the craft stick to make tuning knobs.



BANJO