

**Your guide to
getting musical**

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“Learning an instrument and singing are two of the best ways of maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life. They introduce you to a whole new world of fun and sociability, and are so much more than just a hobby. Choose what to do, where to do it, and have fun!”

Robin Osterley, Chief Executive, Making Music

Am I musical?

You don't have to be a musical genius to learn to play or sing – it doesn't matter what age you start at, or how good (or bad) you think you are, everyone is musical to some extent and anyone can have fun making music.

The important thing is that you react to music. Whether it's tapping your feet, drumming rhythms with your fingers, feeling the urge to dance, or singing over tunes you know well, these reactions all show that you have a feeling for music.

You can use the kind of music you react to and the way you react, to help you choose what you'd like to learn. Whether it's pop, jazz, classical, gospel or folk, you can find an instrument or tutor to suit you.

Remember it's only by starting to learn that you'll find out just how musical you really are – so go for it!



Making your mind up

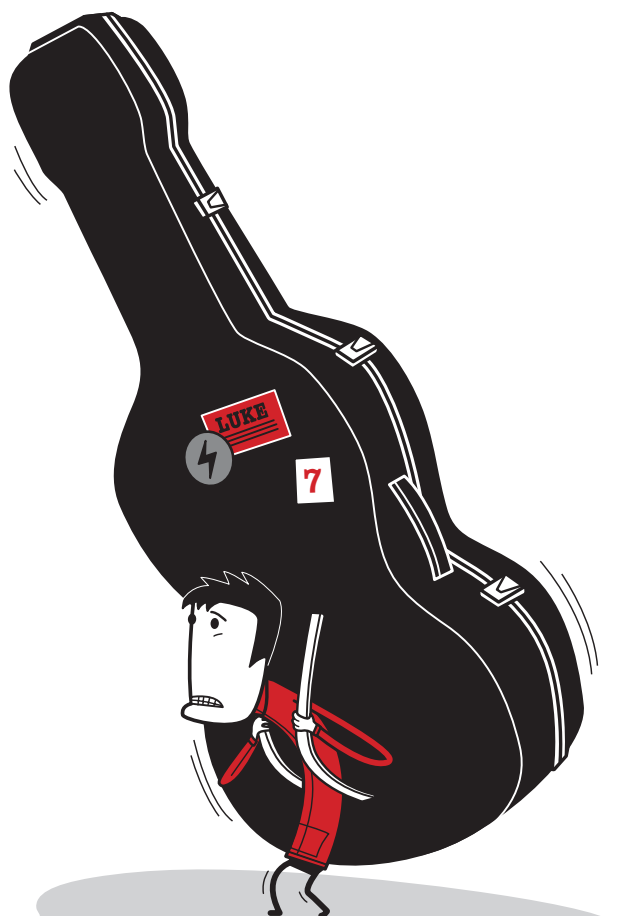
If you don't know what you want to learn, it can be tricky to know where to start.

Listening to music and going to see music played live is a good way to get ideas. You'll learn what different instruments sound like and you'll get a feel for the kind of music you're interested in.

Lots of musicians talk about hearing an instrument for the first time and falling in love with it. Picking a sound you like is one way to choose, but there are also practical things to think about:

- **Size** – Some instruments are heavy to carry, so may not be a practical choice if you don't have transport. Big, heavy instruments, or instruments with widely-spaced keys or strings, can be tricky for young children (although you can get some instruments in smaller sizes).
- **Strength** – Instruments that involve a lot of blowing require strength and aren't suitable for young children, especially if they still have their first set of teeth.
- **Time** – How much time do you have to practise? Some instruments take longer to master than others.
- **Low cost, low maintenance** – You can get cheaper student models of many instruments that are aimed at beginners. These are usually made of durable material and are less likely to get damaged.
- **Try before you buy** – Some instruments are expensive so you could rent for a while until you're sure it's the instrument for you.
- **Space and noise** – You'll need enough space to sit or stand so that you can play comfortably. Some instruments, like the trumpet, drums or bagpipes, can be very loud, so it's important to keep your neighbours in mind!
- **Playing in a group** – If you want to play in a band, you might choose guitar, keyboard, drums or bass. If an orchestra appeals, instruments like oboe, bassoon, double bass, or tuba are more in demand than others.
- **Don't forget** – The cheapest, lightest and smallest instrument of all is your voice! Singing is a great way to get involved in music and gives you lots of opportunities for performing.

**‘Big, heavy
instruments
can be tricky for
young children’**



Buying an instrument

Instruments can be expensive, so there are a few things you should think about before you buy.

- How much do you want to spend?
- Do you want something new or second-hand?
- Do you need an instrument for a small child?
- Is renting the best option?
- Do you need advice?

There are various places you can start your search.

Local music instrument shops

Most instrument shops stock a range of new and second-hand instruments. Many also sell cheaper student models (great for beginners) and some offer the option to rent.

The Music Industries Association (MIA) is the trade association for the UK musical instrument industry and all MIA shops subscribe to a code of conduct and standards. You can search for your nearest MIA shop at: www.mia.org.uk (follow the link 'Find a music shop').

The MIA doesn't represent all of the music shops in the UK – to find others, look in your local phone directory or online.

Specialist instrument shops and dealers

Specialist instrument shops and dealers sell specific families of instruments, like brass or guitars. They stock a wide range of new and second-hand instruments at a wide range of prices. Many offer student models and smaller-sized instruments, and some have instruments to rent. Instruments from dealers will come with a guarantee and are likely to be set up ready for playing.

Look for specialist shops and dealers in music magazines and online.

Buying online

Visiting a shop is a good idea if you need advice, but buying online can be convenient if you know what you want. Most specialist dealers and local music shops have their own websites, with pictures, descriptions and prices for you to compare.

Here are a few examples (there are many others, so make sure you shop around).

www.dawsons.co.uk

Wide range of instruments, including guitars, keyboards, orchestral and folk instruments and drums.

www.andertons.co.uk

Guitars, drums, synthesizers, PA, studio and computer music products.

www.pmtonline.co.uk

Electric and rock instruments.

www.worldtribal.com

Drums and percussion from around the world.

www.gurusoundz.com

Maker and importer of Asian instruments, with pictures, descriptions and price guide.

www.howarth.uk.com

New and second-hand woodwind instruments and accessories. Rental option.

www.johnpacker.co.uk

Woodwind and brass instruments, plus accessories and tips on maintenance.

www.myatt.co.uk

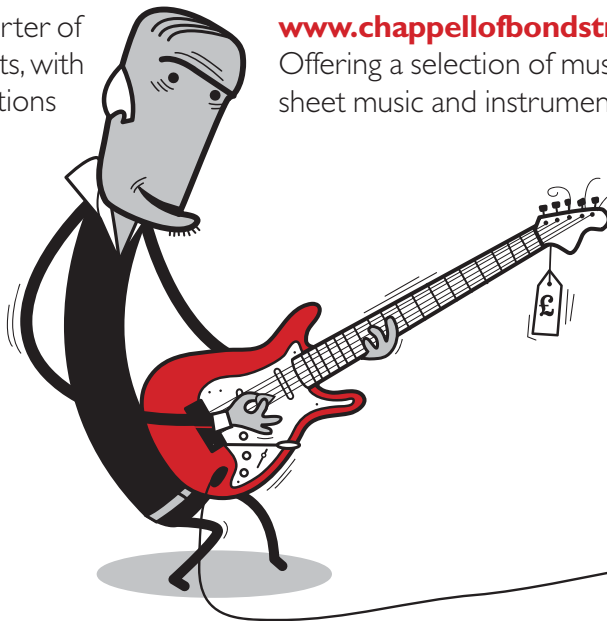
Woodwind and brass instruments and their accessories.

www.musicroom.com

An online music shop with a range of instruments and accessories.

www.chappellofbondstreet.co.uk

Offering a selection of music books, sheet music and instruments.



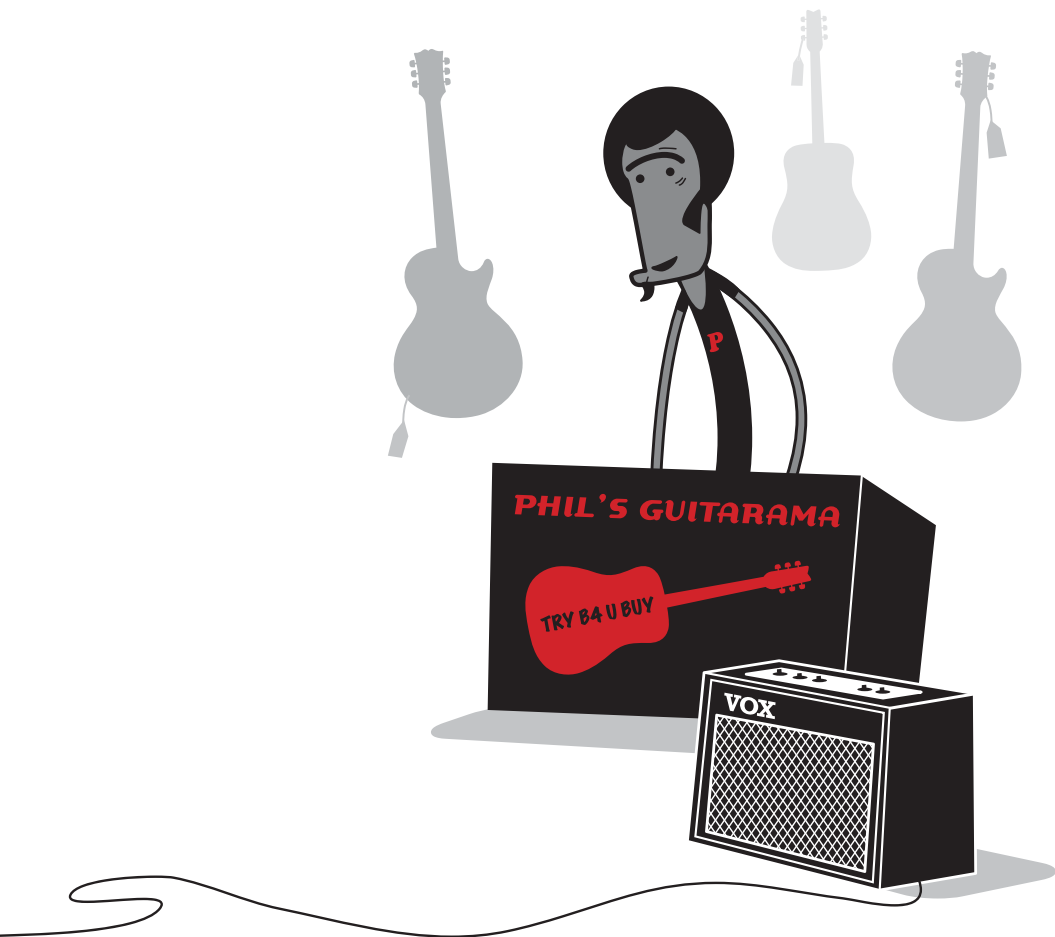
Tips on buying your instrument

- Shop around to get the best deal.
- If you want to buy online, use a well-established site and make sure you're clear about the warranty, guarantee and returns policy.
- Once you've bought an instrument, make sure you get it insured: www.musiciansinsurance.co.uk or www.musical-insurance.co.uk are places you could try.
- If you're buying a second-hand instrument, ask a specialist to check it – some second-hand instruments have hidden problems.
- Make sure you have everything you need to keep your instrument in working order. Most sellers will help you with this.
- Many instrument dealers and Music Services participate in the Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme (AIPS). This allows pupils at Local Education Authority schools to buy a range of instruments without VAT.
www.lbwf.gov.uk/assisted-instrument-purchase-scheme
- The Arts Council is launching a new scheme in England called Take it Away. This scheme will let people apply for interest-free credit to purchase any kind of musical instrument. For more information visit: www.takeitaway.org.uk

Accessories

Most instruments need accessories, either for playing, cleaning or carrying them. These range from reeds for woodwind instruments, strings and straps for guitars, and gig bags and hard cases for all instruments.

To buy accessories like cork grease, valve oil, instrument cases and reed cases, try your local music shop, although specialist instrument dealers will have a wider range. A huge range can also be found online.



Learning to play

There are lots of ways you could learn to play or sing, so you need to think about which would suit you best. Most people have lessons one-to-one with a private tutor, but you might prefer to learn in a group, or teach yourself.

Face to face

Learning an instrument takes time, so a tutor is often the best option. If you want to find a teacher or class, there are various places to look:

- **Instrument shops** – Many music shops have their own teaching services, a list of local tutors, or a noticeboard where tutors advertise.
- **Schools** – Most schools offer music teaching for children, both individually and in groups.
- **The Music Industries Association (MIA)** – Search the MIA's database of music teachers on its website: www.mia.org.uk (follow the link 'Find a music teacher' from the homepage).
- **The Incorporated Society of Musicians** – Search the online database of music teachers by location (some instruments are better represented than others): www.ism.org
- **LEA Music Services** – Music Services run most of the music teaching in schools, so will have a list of vetted tutors. To find your local Music Service visit: www.federationmusic.org.uk
- **Adult Education Colleges** – These offer classes on a range of instruments and some offer group tuition. Find them in your local directory or ask at your library.
- **Talk to your friends** – If you know someone who's having lessons, ask for their recommendations.
- Call the free **Play it Again** phonenumber on **08000 960 570** to get advice on finding a music course.

Make sure the tutor you find is right for you or your child. You should start with a telephone call to find out more about them. Do they specialise in the kind of music you want to play? Are they experienced in teaching at your level?

Don't be afraid to ask for references or to arrange an initial meeting to talk things through. If you're choosing a tutor for your child, check that they've been cleared to work with children (eg CRB checked).

Teach yourself books, DVDs and online

If you'd prefer to teach yourself, most music shops and some libraries stock a range of tutor books for beginners. DVDs are also available to guide you through the basics for a range of instruments, including guitar, flute, piano and trumpet. You'll find DVDs in most music shops or online.

There are also specific online products that let you learn and get feedback through your computer. Ask in your local music shop for more information.

Listening and copying

You don't have to use a tutor, book or DVD to learn music; for years pop, rock and folk musicians have taught themselves by listening and copying. So if there's a favourite song, solo or chord sequence you want to learn, listen to it and then try to play what you hear. Keep listening and experimenting until you get it right.



Practice makes perfect

If you want to play or sing well, it takes practice!

Learning to play or sing is a physical process. So whether you're a complete beginner or haven't played for a while, you'll need to get your muscles into shape.

How much, how often?

The amount of time you should spend practising depends on your age and ability. To begin with, little and often is best. Don't overdo it and remember to take a break if you feel uncomfortable.

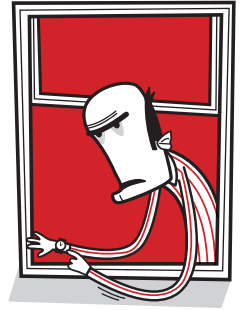
As you improve you can build up to longer sessions; if you get really good, you might find yourself practising for a few hours every day.

For young children, five to ten minutes a day is fine to start with. Try to make it part of a daily routine.

Tips on how to practise

Practice is very important if you want to improve and a good teacher will give you advice on how to practise properly.

- **Always warm up first.** Try something easy or start with some scales. This helps you focus on your posture and warms up your muscles and instrument or vocal cords.
- **Make good use of your time.** Once you've warmed up, be brave and tackle the difficult bits – you won't improve by playing the easy bits over and over again.
- **Be analytical.** Take passages apart and find out how they work. And make sure you're not learning mistakes.
- **Listen hard to yourself.** Are you making a good sound? Are you in tune? Train your ears as well as your muscles.
- **Other skills.** Remember to work on skills like sight-reading and have a go at playing or singing by ear.



Keeping it down

Some instruments are very loud, so try not to practise at times when you might disturb people.

If you play an amplified instrument, try using headphones. Using a mute on stringed and brass instruments will keep the sound down, and drummers can buy drum heads that are almost silent.

Don't give up!

If you've been practising hard, but don't feel that you're improving, don't give up – learning works in surprising ways. You might be at the same stage for ages and then suddenly take a big stride forward.

Remember you can practise just by thinking about it when you're on the bus, doing the washing up or in the bath!



Try a little tenderness

All instruments benefit from a little love and attention to keep them in perfect working order.

What you need to do depends on what you play, and if you're a singer you need to look after your voice.

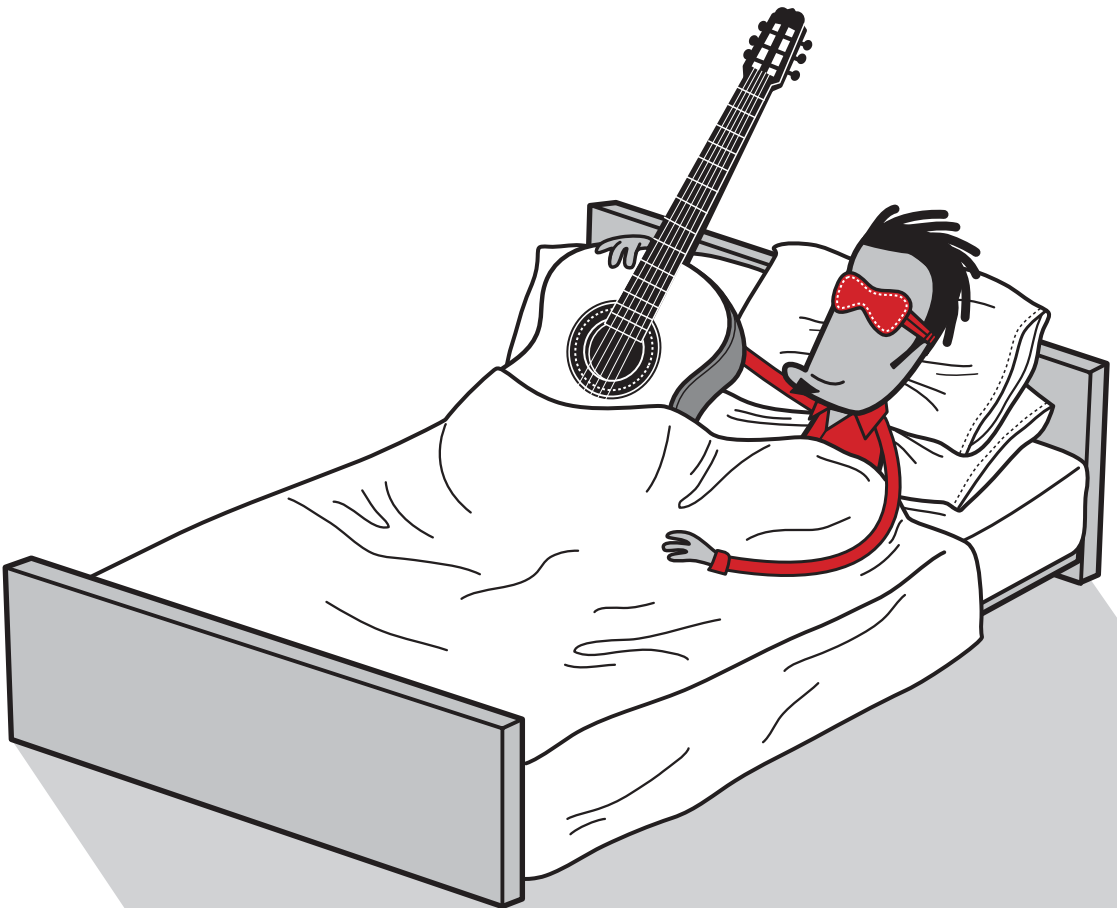
Many of the things to think about are common sense.

Instruments

- Keep your instrument away from direct heat and extremes of temperature. Wooden instruments can warp, which makes them play out of tune.
- When you've finished playing, put your instrument in its case – if you leave it lying around it could get damaged.
- Use a stand for your guitar or banjo and if you lean it against something, make sure the strings can't be knocked.
- When you assemble your clarinet, oboe or bassoon, make sure you don't damage the key-work. If the fit is too tight, put cork grease onto the cork joints.
- If you play a brass instrument, make sure the valves move smoothly by applying some valve oil to them.
- If you're a woodwind player, use a 'pull-through' to remove the condensation that builds up inside when you play.
- Keep your reeds in a reed case to protect them.
- Have your piano tuned at least once a year.
- Use a duster to clean the strings on stringed instruments – acid from your fingers can damage them.
- Make sure you have a sturdy case or gig bag for travelling with your instrument.

Singers

- Always take a deep breath before you start and try yawning – yawning opens up your throat and helps your voice resonate.
- When you're singing, make sure you have some water handy.
- Try to cut back the amount of tea, coffee and alcohol you drink – these can all dehydrate you.
- Try to avoid smoky environments, colds and infections.
- If you have a cold, try inhaling steam – pour hot water into a bowl, lean over it with a towel over your head, and inhale. Be careful not to scald yourself. Do this for about five minutes twice a day.
- Never sing with a sore throat and never strain your voice. If you feel tired, stop. Don't risk damaging your voice.



Getting physical

To get the most out of playing or singing you need to use your body in the right way.

Warming up

Musicians are like athletes; they need to warm up before they perform. Cold muscles, tendons and vocal cords can get strained, and a cold instrument won't respond well. Warming up, by playing or singing something simple, is important to get you ready.

If you're a singer try starting with gentle humming or some tongue twisters. Warm your body up with stretches and careful neck rolls. Then take a deep breath and say the word 'sing', holding the 'ng' sound. Move the pitch up and down, exploring your voice.

Posture

Playing an instrument involves the same complex movements over and over again. Being aware of your posture and how you hold your instrument will help you relax and avoid problems like repetitive strain injury (RSI).

If you're a singer, your body is your instrument, so to produce the best sound, you need to hold yourself in the right way. Make sure you're standing up straight, with your shoulders relaxed and your feet shoulder-width apart. Keep your neck and back straight. When you're singing, keep checking to make sure your posture is correct.

If you suffer from aches and pains when you're playing or singing, try changing your posture so that you're more relaxed. Any tension will affect you physically and also the sound you make. Try to be aware of your body:

- Is your posture as natural as possible?
- Are you relaxed?
- Are your shoulders down?
- Are you sitting too high, or too low?

One method that can help is the Alexander Technique. It focuses on body awareness and releasing tension. To find a specialist in your area visit: www.alexandertechnique.com/teacher

Breathing

Are you breathing properly? If you're an adult, the chances are the answer is 'no'.

Most children breathe properly instinctively, but as we get older we forget. Bad breathing can affect any musician, but especially wind players and singers.

If you're a singer you should practise breathing: imagine a rubber ring around your middle – breathe in through your mouth and imagine the ring inflating. Then release the air with a 'ss' sound and then a 'sh' sound. Count in your head as you do this – the length of time you can hold the sound will increase the more you practise.

Developing good breathing takes practice, patience and lots of concentration. An experienced teacher will give you advice.

Some tips:

- Breathe deeply from your lower lungs, not high up in your chest.
- Avoid raising your shoulders as you breathe in.
- Get your diaphragm into shape to give you control over your breathing.



Get it together

There are lots of benefits from playing or singing with other people.

Whether it's with one or two people, or with a band, choir or orchestra, playing with other people will build your confidence and give you a good incentive to practise.

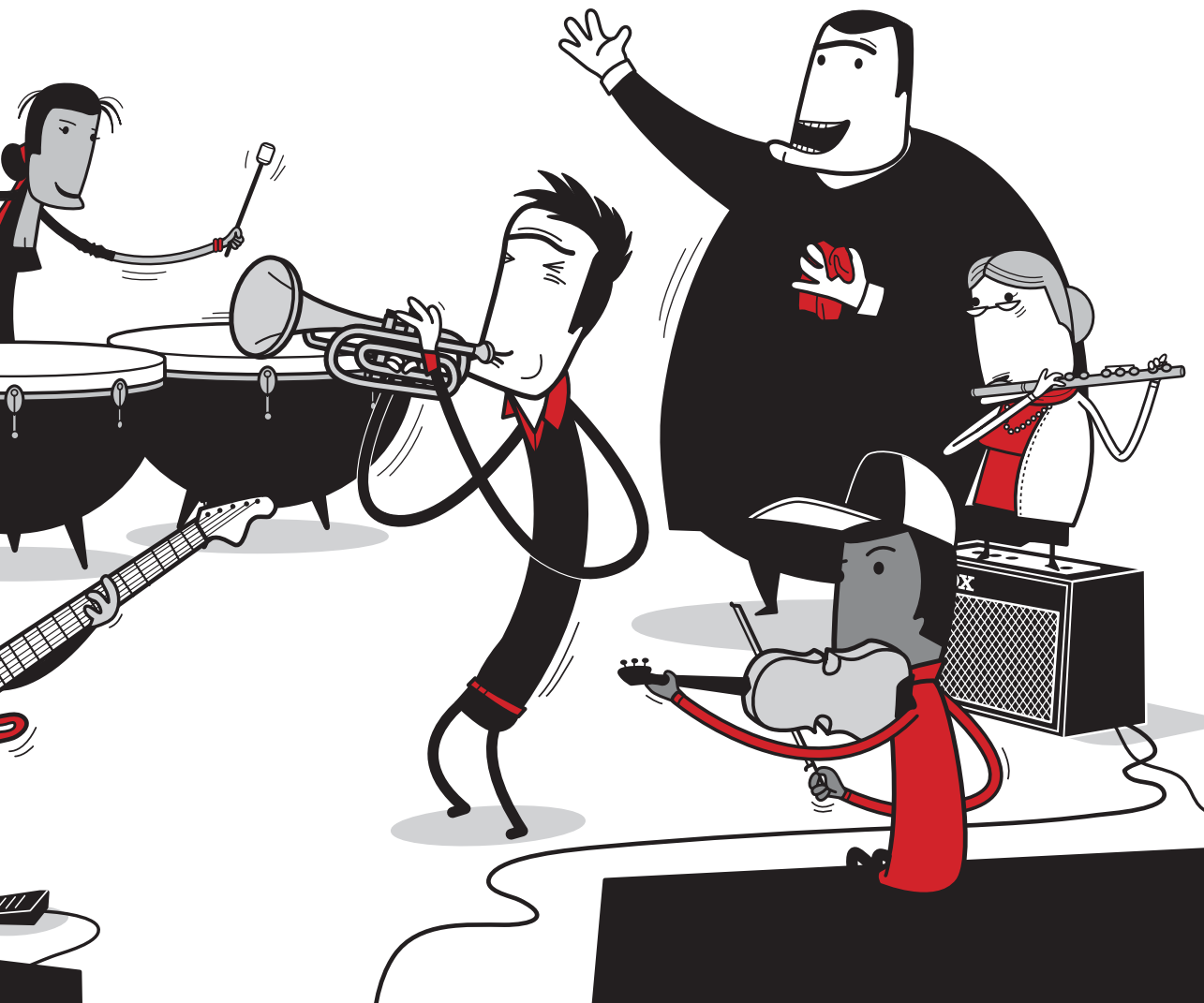
It will also make you think about your own playing – teaching you to listen, and improving your rhythm, counting and sight-reading.

If you want to find a local choir, drum circle, folk group or band to join, there are lots of places you can look:

- **Making Music** – An organisation that represents music groups all over the country. To find your local group visit: www.makingmusic.org.uk
- **Music Services** – The Music Service at your local education authority can help with groups and orchestras for children of school age. To find a Music Service visit: www.federationmusic.org.uk
- **Musical instrument shops** – These often have a noticeboard where groups advertise for players. You could even advertise yourself. Specialist music shops sometimes display leaflets and adverts for local amateur orchestras and other groups looking for players.
- **Libraries** – They sometimes hold a database of performing groups and amateur orchestras in the area. Just go in and ask.
- **Rehearsal rooms** – They regularly display adverts for bands that are looking for new players. Find out where they are in your local directory.
- **Schools** – Secondary schools with big music departments can be a good source of information.
- **Youth Music** – An organisation that supports music-making events and activities for young people. Find projects and events near you on their website: www.youthmusic.org.uk



- **Weekend Warriors** – A scheme that gets lapsed musicians back into playing in a band: www.weekendwarriors.uk.com
- **Colleges** – Many local adult education colleges run music groups.
- **Magazines** – Try looking in the classified section at the back of music magazines.
- **The internet** – Always a good way to find information. Try the **Play it Again** website: bbc.co.uk/playitagain



Listening and reading



If you want to be a musician, it's important to keep your ears open to as much music as possible.

Listening

Music on the BBC

bbc.co.uk/music

Music and programmes for a huge range of genres.

World Music on BBC Radio 3

bbc.co.uk/radio3/worldmusic

Music from around the world.

Classical music on BBC Radio 3

bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical

A huge range of classical music.

Folk on BBC Radio 2

bbc.co.uk/radio2/r2music/folk

All about folk and acoustic. Try the Virtual Session.

Sold on Songs' Songwriting Guide

bbc.co.uk/radio2/soldonsong/guide

Advice on songwriting.

BBC Asian Network

bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/music

Music ranging from old favourites to the latest British Asian sounds. Listen on digital or online.

6 Music

bbc.co.uk/6music

New and old bands performing alternative/indie music.

1Xtra

bbc.co.uk/1xtra

For the best of hip hop, R'n'B, garage, dancehall and drum & bass.

Unsigned bands on BBC Radio 1

bbc.co.uk/radio1/huwstephens

Unsigned music from across the UK.

Unsigned music on BBC Local Radio

bbc.co.uk/kent/your_space/music

bbc.co.uk/leeds/entertainment/music/raw_talent

bbc.co.uk/northamptonshire/entertainment/weekender

bbc.co.uk/liverpool/unsigned_bands

Featuring the best local unsigned music. Listen online.

Experimental music on BBC Radio 1

bbc.co.uk/radio1/maryannehobbs

Classic FM

www.classicfm.com

Accessible classics.

Jazz FM

www.jazzfm.com

Dedicated to jazz. Listen online.

Resonance

www.resonancefm.com

London-based radio art station maintained by London Musicians' Collective.

Last FM

www.last.fm

The internet radio station that gets to know what you like.

Myspace

www.myspace.com

Create your own space and listen to other musicians.

YouTube

www.youtube.com/categories

Select the 'music' category for bands, singers and songwriters.

Reading

BBC performing groups

bbc.co.uk/orchestras

Find out more about the BBC performing groups.

BBC Music Magazine

bbcmusicmagazine.com

Find out what's happening in the classical music world.

Gramophone

www.gramophone.co.uk

Classical music magazine.

Froots

www.frootsmag.com

Guide to worldwide roots music.

Songlines

www.songlines.co.uk

World music magazine.

Jazzwise

www.jazzwise.com

Monthly jazz magazine.

Kerrang!

www.kerrang.com

Weekly music magazine with news, reviews and features on rock bands.

Mojo

www.mojo4music.com

Rock, alternative and world music.

NME

www.nme.com

Music news, gigs and reviews of rock, indie and alternative music.

Guitar Magazine

www.guitarmagazine.co.uk

For anyone with a passion for the guitar.

Knowledge

www.knowledgemag.co.uk

Find out about the UK drum & bass scene.

The Wire

www.thewire.co.uk

Modern music.

One-Music

bbc.co.uk/radio1/onemusic

How to make it in the music business.

Blast

bbc.co.uk/blast/music

Top tips for budding musicians.

Musical Futures

www.musicalfutures.org.uk

A new way of teaching, based on how pop musicians learn. Watch the video and explore how informal learning works.

Play it Again

bbc.co.uk/playitagain

Information and video tutorials.



Some key words

A cappella – Singing without an instrument.

Acoustic – When an instrument or voice doesn't use amplification.

Alto – The lowest female voice.

Aria – An extended vocal solo.

Bar – A segment of time with a given duration.

Baritone – The middle male voice.

Bass – The lowest male voice.

Brass – A group of instruments including trumpet, tuba and trombone.

Choir – A group of singers usually comprised of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses.

Chord – A combination of three or more notes (or tones) played at the same time.

Conducting – Using arm and hand movements to make sure a group of musicians all play or sing at the same speed.

Conductor – A person directing a choir, band or orchestra.

Improvisation – Making music up on the spur of the moment.

Key – A system of notes (tones) and half notes (half tones) based on a key note and giving the piece of music its specific harmonic qualities.

Mezzo soprano – The middle female voice.

Music theory – The study of all the elements of music and how they're put together.

Mute – A device used to muffle or dampen the sound of an instrument.

Octave – A note (or tone) that is eight steps above or below another note. For example, on a keyboard, the key which is eight notes above a C, also plays a C note, but sounds an octave higher.

Orchestra – A large group of musicians playing strings, brass, woodwind and percussion instruments.

Percussion – A group of instruments including timpani, cymbals and xylophone.

Pitch – The frequency of a note (how high or deep it sounds).

Reed – A flexible strip of cane or metal that fits into the mouthpiece of a wind instrument. It vibrates when the player blows across it and produces a sound.

Riff – A short, repeated idea or pattern which often forms a distinctive part of a rock or jazz tune.

Rhythm – The element of music that is all about time (the beat).

Scale – A series of notes (or tones) arranged in a specific order, generally played, or sung, from the lowest note to the highest note and back down again. In western classical music, major and minor scales consist of a specific arrangement of seven tones and half tones.

Sight-reading – Playing or singing music that is written down without learning the piece first. This could be standard notation, chord charts or symbols, or guitar tablature.

Soprano – The highest female voice.

Strings – A group of instruments including violin, cello and double bass.

Tenor – The highest male voice.

Tutti – When everyone plays or sings together.

Virtuoso – A person who is brilliant at performing.

Woodwind – A group of instruments including clarinet, oboe and bassoon.

A big thank you to...

Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Wales, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Scottish Arts Council

www.artscouncil.org.uk

www.artswales.org.uk

www.artscouncil-ni.org

www.scottisharts.org.uk

Supporting and promoting music and the arts.

Federation of Music Services (FMS)

www.federationmusic.org.uk

Representing 150 LEA music services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Learndirect

www.learndirect.co.uk

Offering over 900,000 courses on a range of topics, search their online database for music courses near you or call free on 08000 960 570.

Live Music Now

www.livemusicnow.org

Giving young musicians paid performance work and support at the start of their careers, and bringing live music to a variety of settings.

Libraries

www.harden.dial.pipex.com/ukpublib.html

Offering local information, advice, workshops, courses, internet access, magazines and CD and DVD hire. Find your local library through this site.

Go to www.iaml-uk-irl.org and search Encore! and Cecilia to find out about music and collections in local libraries, museums and archives.

Making Music

www.makingmusic.org.uk

Representing and supporting amateur and semi-professional music groups across the UK. Find a music group in your area on the Making Music website.

MEC (The Music Education Council)

www.mec.org.uk

An umbrella body for organisations connected with music education in the UK.

MIA (Music Industries Association)

www.mia.org.uk

The trade association for the UK musical instrument industry, MIA shops subscribe to a code of conduct and standards. Search the MIA website for MIA shops and music teachers.

Music for Youth

www.mfy.org.uk

Providing free access to educational and performance opportunities for young musicians and audiences through festivals and concerts.

Music Manifesto

www.musicmanifesto.co.uk

A DfES, DCMS, music organisations, music industry and other partners' collaboration, aiming to provide musical opportunities for young people.

The Prince of Wales Arts and Kids Foundation

www.artsandkids.org.uk

Funds and supports arts venues across the UK, making performances and exhibitions accessible to disadvantaged children.

Scottish Music Centre

www.scottishmusiccentre.com

A charity that offers advice and information on local groups, music scores, software and lots more on all things musical in Scotland.

Take it Away

www.takeitaway.org.uk

An Arts Council England initiative offering interest-free credit up to £2,000 to buy an instrument from participating shops – launching in 2007.

Youth Music

www.youthmusic.org.uk

Supporting music making and training, delivered by non-profit organisations and mainly outside of school hours.

Whether you're an absolute beginner, or just haven't played in a while, it's never too late to get into music. This guide gives tips and advice on how to get started.

Play it Again gives everyone a chance to have a go at making music. Find out more at bbc.co.uk/playitagain or call free **08000 960 570**.

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