Instrument Ranges and Score Layout

STANDARD ORCHESTRAL LAYOUT

2 flutes
2 oboes
2 Bb clarinets
2 bassoons
4 horns
3 Bb trumpets
3 trombones (third trombone is a bass trombone)
tuba
timpani
2 percussion

strings:
violin I
violin II
viola
violoncello
double bass

Note: The chart below presents standard ranges for good amateur players with “extreme” or possible range listed (playable by professionals) in parentheses.
WOODWINDS

Flute:
standard range:

Oboe:
standard range:

Bb clarinet
standard range:

Bassoon
standard range


Horns are alto/tenor instruments, unlike trumpets. They are almost always written in treble clef and sound a fifth lower than written. That is, written middle C actually sounds as an F on the fourth line of the bass clef staff. Horns are used in interlocking pairs, with horns 1 and 3 as “high” horns and 2 and 4 as “low” horns. The range given below is a bit smaller than what some players can reach (just to be on the safe side).

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**HORNS IN F**

**BRASS**

**Bb trumpet**
standard range:

**Trombone**
standard range:

**NOTE:** Bass trombone can play from the low E down to low Bb, but in that range cannot play lots of notes nor play quickly.

**Tuba**
standard range:
PERCUSSION

Timpani
Timpani are single tunable drums. They come in four (or occasionally five) sizes. Not all orchestras possess all drums. The drums may be re-tuned within their range, but you should allow 15-20 seconds for each re-tuning. Glissandi (slides) may also be written within the range of each drum.

standard ranges:

Orchestral pitched percussion

Xylophone
standard range:

Glockenspiel
standard range:

Unpitched percussion
These may include snare drum, bass drum, tom-toms, wood blocks of various sizes, triangle, mounted cymbal(s), crash cymbals and other small unpitched percussion instruments. A good rule of thumb for their usage is “less is more”, that is, don't overuse them. A little unpitched percussion goes a long way.
**STRINGS**

**Violin**
standard range:

- **open strings**
  - range

**Viola**
standard range:

- **open strings**
  - (C below middle C)(G)
  - (D above middle C)(A)
  - range

**Violoncello**
standard range:

- **open strings**
  - range

**Double bass** (also called **Contrabass** or **String bass**)
standard range:

- **open strings (sound one octave lower)**
- **sounding range**

written range