

Guide to the Flutophone, a Lesser-Known Instrument

by Espie Estrella

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A flutophone may look like a toy, but it is a legitimate pre-band instrument belonging to the wind family.

The benefits as a first instrument are multifold. It is inexpensive, made of durable and lightweight plastic, and requires little breath force, unlike an actual flute or clarinet. Its mouthpiece is familiar to most, and it is used like a common referee's whistle.

Basics

A flutophone is shaped like a clarinet. It has a foot-long cylindrical body with holes along the length. The instrument has one hole along the underside. The thumb of the left hand is used to cover this hole when playing. The index, middle and ring finger of the left hand are used to cover the upper three holes, and the pinky is not used. The right thumb lays on the thumb rest along the underside, while the index, middle, ring, and little finger of the right hand are used to cover the lower four holes.



To play the instrument, cover the appropriate holes corresponding to the fingering for the note, and blow softly through the mouthpiece. The amount of breath used helps create changes in loudness, softness, and emphasis of the notes.

The mouthpiece is detachable and can also be used to tune the flutophone. Pulling out the mouthpiece will lower the pitch. Pushing it in raises the pitch.

To play middle C, all the holes, including the one at the bottom, are covered.

A flutophone is a stepping stone for helping young children learn the concept of reading sheet music.

Flutophone vs Other Instruments

Similar to a concert flute, a flutophone is pitched in C. Other popular instruments that are pitched in C include the piano, violin, oboe, bassoon, and harp. You can play a full chromatic scale on a flutophone.

It is often a starter instrument because young children enjoy playing an instrument that is relatively easy to learn and simple to play. [Difference Between Flutophones and Recorders](#)

A recorder, also known as a block flute, is another beginning instrument common among young children. Its history dates back to the Baroque musical period of composer Johann Sebastian Bach. The flutophone, was invented in 1943. The two instruments play similar notes. The most significant difference is that the flutophone is a little easier for younger children to use. Young children can start on flutophones and then graduate to recorders smoothly.

	Flutophone	Recorder
Breath control	Flutophones are easier to play because it requires less air control.	Recorders need more control and force to play.
Tone	Flutophones have a less refined tone due to its whistle mouthpiece, which can give it a shrill quality.	Recorders have a softer tone with more concert band quality.
Finger Holes	The finger holes of the flutophone have grooves making it easy to tell if you are covering the holes properly.	On recorders, the holes are smooth.
Versatility	A flutophone can play fewer notes than a recorder.	A recorder can play all notes.
Price	Flutophones are a little less expensive, costing approximately \$5.	Recorders cost about twice as much, approximately costing \$10.