

Woodblock (instrument)

A **wood block** (also spelled as a single word, **woodblock**) is a small slit drum made from a single piece of wood and used as a percussion instrument. The term generally signifies the Western orchestral instrument, though it is related to the *ban* time-beaters used by the Han Chinese, which is why the Western instrument is sometimes referred to as **Chinese woodblock**. Alternative names sometimes used in ragtime and jazz are **clog box** and **tap box**. In orchestral music scores, wood blocks may be indicated by the French *bloc de bois* or *tambour de bois*, German *Holzblock* or *Holzblocktrommel*, or Italian *cassa di legno* (Blades and Holland 2001).

The orchestral wood block of the West is generally made from teak or another hardwood. The dimensions of this instrument vary, although it is either a rectangular or cylindrical block of wood with one or sometimes two longitudinal cavities (Blades and Holland 2001). It is played by striking it with a stick, which produces a sharp crack (Montagu 2002b). Alternatively, a rounder mallet, soft or hard, may be used, which produces a deeper-pitched and fuller "knocking" sound.

In a drum kit, a wood block was traditionally mounted on a clamp fixed to the top of the rear rim of the bass drum.

Related instruments

Log drums made from hollowed logs, and slit drums made from bamboo, are used in Africa and the Pacific Islands.

The muyu (simplified Chinese: 木鱼; traditional Chinese: 木魚; pinyin: *mùyú*) is a rounded wood block carved in the shape of a fish and struck with a wooden stick. It is made in various sizes and is often used in Buddhist chanting, in China as well as in other Asian nations including Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Also, in China, a small, rectangular, high-pitched wood block called *bangzi* (梆子) is used. This instrument is called a temple block in a Western orchestral context. Typically used in sets of four different pitches, they are sometimes called "skulls" by jazz players because of their globular shape (Montagu 2002a).

References

- Blades, James, and James Holland. 2001. "Woodblock". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. London: Macmillan Publishers.

Woodblock



Percussion instrument

Other names	Woodblock, Chinese woodblock, Clog box, Tap box
Classification	Percussion
Hornbostel–Sachs classification	111.2 (Percussion idiophones)

Related instruments

slit drum, temple blocks, log drums, muyu, jam block, simantra



Tubular wood block



Sound of block

- Montagu, Jeremy. 2002a. "Temple blocks", *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-866212-9.
- Montagu, Jeremy. 2002b. "Woodblock", *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-866212-9.

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