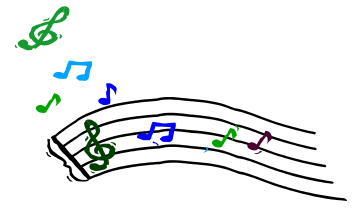


## WHY PLAY CHAMBER MUSIC?



Playing chamber music helps enhance your **musicianship**. It's easy to 'hide' in a large orchestra or band, but in a small group your skills are much more exposed. You work harder to play accurately and in tune, to listen and blend, to create musical phrases – and as a result, these musical skills improve.

Playing in a small group allows you to be more autonomous and **independent**. You can make your own rehearsal and performance decisions, and you can choose your own repertoire. You're not beholden to a conductor. You can tailor your performances to your own interests and/or the jobs you're hired to play.

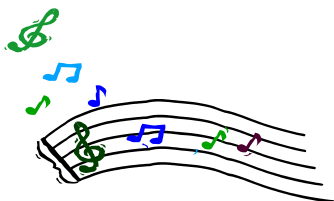
Playing in a chamber group helps develop your **communication** skills. All members of the group have an opinion on how the music should be played. Listening to all ideas and implementing the ones that work best help to hone **collaborative** skills that you can use later on in college, your career, and in everyday life.

There is a wide **variety** of music available for almost any instrumental combination. Some include piano and/or voice(s). Pops, holiday, classical, jazz, etc.... You can find just about anything by going online or checking with your music teacher.

Chamber groups are **portable**! It's a lot easier to take a trio, quartet or quintet 'on the road' than a full band. Small groups fit better into more venues, creating more opportunities to gig.

Playing chamber music is both a **social** and musical activity. Start a group containing friends you already have, or start a group with people you hope to become friends with. Either way, you will have **fun!**

OVER



## GETTING STARTED

The easiest way to start a group is to find some friends who play the same instrument that you do, and who are around the same level of playing ability that you are. You can start at duo, trio or quartet very easily this way.

The next easiest thing is to find friends near your ability level who play instruments within your musical family group (woodwinds, brass, percussion). For example, some great trio combinations are:

Flute, oboe, clarinet

Flute, oboe, bassoon

2 trumpets and trombone

2 trombones and baritone

...you get the idea... 😊

If you're having a hard time getting a group together, ask your teacher in school for some guidance.

Next, find some music. Again, your teacher is a great resource for this. Also, there are so many online resources for sheet music and some of them are even free. Here are some great websites to start with:

[Jwpepper.com](http://Jwpepper.com)

[Sheetmusicplus.com](http://Sheetmusicplus.com)

[Hickeys.com](http://Hickeys.com) (Hickey's Music Store is located in Ithaca, NY)

[Musicianspublications.com](http://Musicianspublications.com) (has lots of 'pops' – especially for woodwind groups)

[Clarinetinstitute.com](http://Clarinetinstitute.com) (has loads of free chamber music!!)

After several rehearsals and coachings, you'll be ready to play in public! Call a local seniors' center and ask to schedule a concert. Keep your ears open for local arts festivals that might be looking for groups to provide performances. Maybe your teacher can arrange some gigs for you at the elementary school(s) in your district.

The main thing is to grow as a musician, and to have fun making music with your friends. Playing chamber music provides a path to both of these goals.

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## Improving Your Group's Performance

Do you already play in a small ensemble, and wish to sound even better than you already do? Try a few of these easy-to-implement suggestions.

**INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION** – Everyone should prepare their own music as best they can prior to a rehearsal. Work out the notes and rhythms, notice the phrasing, articulations and dynamics. Listen to a recording of the piece, if possible. Prepare your instrument too: make sure it's in good working order and if you're a reed player, work on your reeds and keep them in shape. Spend a few minutes of each individual practice session with a tuner, so that you know the tendencies of your instrument. Practice your parts with a metronome so that you know the correct tempos.

**BALANCE AND BLEND** – A well balanced, blended sound is the hallmark of an outstanding chamber group. Take time to tune pitches, intervals and chords. Record your rehearsals and listen to the playback for discrepancies in the balance of parts. Work on achieving a characteristically blended sound. Try this exercise during warm-up: two players play any note of their choice, and hold out the notes together until an even blend of sound is achieved. Then add a third player, and so on.

**STYLE AND INTERPRETATION** – If you are in a traditional type of ensemble, like a brass quintet or woodwind quintet, you can find lots of online video and audio clips of professional groups to emulate. Listen to and watch as many as you can, especially if you can find recordings of literature that your own group is working on. In lieu of, or in addition to this, seek out a qualified music teacher(s) to coach your group toward a fine performance.

It takes some work to develop a terrific ensemble, but the musical rewards are definitely worth it!

