

# Year 9 Music Ensemble Reading Homework 1

## What is an Ensemble?

An ensemble is a group of people performing a specific musical composition together and/or a group of musicians that regularly play musical instruments together on different gigs. There are various kinds of ensembles that are differentiated based on the [type of music](#) they play, the type of instruments they use in their performances, and the number of musicians performing together.

## **Small Ensembles**

Small ensembles are groups of musicians numbering from two to eight: the specific compositions associated with small ensembles dictate the set of musical instruments to be used.

- **Duet**—Duets are made up of two musicians performing together, or compositions meant to be played by two [musicians](#) either on different or similar instruments, for example, piano duet or piano for four hands.
- **Trio**—Trios are three musicians performing together, pieces of music meant to be played by three [musicians](#), or pieces of music meant for three instruments. For example, a string trio is composed of a cello, violin, and viola.
- **Quartet**—Quartets are four musicians performing together, or compositions meant to be played by four musicians or a composition for four instruments. For example, a [string quartet](#) is composed of one cello, one viola, and two violins.
- **Quintet**—Quintets are five musicians performing together, pieces of music meant to be played by five musicians, or a piece of music that includes five instruments. For example, Schubert's *Piano Quintet in A major* is composed of a [piano](#), bass, cello, violin, and viola.
- **Sextet**—Six musicians performing together, compositions meant to be played by six musicians, or compositions for six instruments. For example, a string sextet is composed of two cellos, two violins, and two violas.
- **Septet**—Composed of seven musicians; a piece of music meant to be played by seven musicians; or a piece of music for seven instruments. For example, [Beethoven's Septet in E-Flat Major, Op. 20](#) is composed of a bassoon, cello, clarinet, [double bass](#), horn, violin, and viola.
- **Octet**—Composed of eight musicians, and may also refer to a composition meant to be played by eight musicians or a composition for eight instruments. [Mendelssohn's Octet for Strings in E flat major, Op. 20](#) originally scored for two [cellos](#), four violins, and two violas is an example.

## **Large Ensembles**

Large ensembles are called that because they have larger groups of musicians. They can range from ten to thousands of players.

- **Chamber Orchestra**—[Chamber music](#) is a type of classical music, and a chamber orchestra refers to the 40 or fewer musicians that commonly play the compositions. Instruments commonly include wind instruments (flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons,

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trumpets), string instruments (violins, viola, cello, [bass viol](#)), and drums and keyboard. The *Quintet in B minor* is a chamber piece written by Johannes Brahms.

- **Symphony Orchestra** and **Philharmonic Orchestra**—A symphony is a large piece of work that has three or four movements; the musicians which play it are known as a symphony orchestra or a philharmonic orchestra. [Symphony orchestras](#) can have as few as 10 members; philharmonic orchestras can have very many indeed. Instruments include winds (flutes and piccolo, oboes, clarinets, English horn, bassoons, trumpets, horns, trombones, and tuba), strings (violins, viola, cello, bass viols) and optional percussion, harp, keyboard, and saxophone.
- **Concert Band**—A [concert band](#) comes in a number of different flavors. When performed with a conductor at a specific place, that is a concert band; if the musicians are on their feet led by a drum major, that is a marching band. Typical instruments include winds (flutes, piccolo, oboes, clarinets--alto, bass and contrabass, English horn, bassoons, saxophones--alto, tenor, baritone and bass, cornets, trumpets, horns, trombones and bass trombones, tuba, and euphonium) and percussion and timpani; as well as optional harp, keyboard, bass, and cello.
- **Jazz Band**—Jazz bands are specific types of bands that are typically made up of a rhythm section (guitar, tuba, drums, piano) and a melodic section (saxophones of all kinds, trumpets, trombones).