



How to...



WOW!
More than 21 million Americans play the piano, making it the most popular instrument in the US.

Learn to play an instrument

If you're looking for a hobby, making music is a great one to consider.

Playing an instrument is a fun way to express yourself. Research shows that practicing a musical instrument can help kids do better in school, feel less stressed, and be more confident. "Playing a musical instrument is almost like creating your own little world where you, and only you, get to decide how your music unfolds," said Norma Jean Haynes, author of the book *Make Music!* Here's how to get started.

Consider your options

When deciding on an instrument to play, the most important thing to consider is which one makes you excited to learn. Other factors that matter include price, size, and how available the instrument is. For instance, the ukulele is a popular choice because the small guitar-like instrument is relatively inexpensive and small enough to take places. Another small, inexpensive instrument is the harmonica. You can also ask an adult if there are instruments your relatives have that you could borrow. Many instruments can also be rented from music stores, which is a less expensive option than buying one.

Start simple

You can use online video tutorials to learn basics, such as how to hold your instrument, where to place your fingers, and more. These videos can also teach you how to play scales, chords, or simple melodies. When

you're ready, pick a band or singer you like, then look for an online video tutorial on how to play one of their songs on your instrument. It may take you a while to learn the whole song, so set small goals for yourself. Aim to learn just a few measures at a time and celebrate each time you master a section.

Get into practicing

With any activity, including playing an instrument, practice is the best way to improve. But it's important to find a way to really enjoy practicing. If you practice because you want to, not because you have to, you'll enjoy it more. If you've chosen an instrument you're interested in and have selected music you like, practicing will be more enjoyable. Next, turn practice into a fun routine. Maybe you practice after you've finished your school work to challenge your brain in a different way. Or you might practice on Saturday mornings when you aren't under as much time pressure.

Add an instructor

Learning to play an instrument on your own is a great journey because it allows you to follow your interests. If you continue to enjoy it, consider meeting with an instructor. Your parent may know of local teachers, a family friend, or a college student who could help you take your skills to the next level.



A first step is to learn how to hold your instrument.

Fun facts about popular instruments

These instruments are exciting to play and listen to. They also have an interesting history of how they came to be.

Ukulele

Ukulele means "jumping flea" in Hawaiian. One reason for the name may be that a player's fingers move quickly on the instrument, like fleas.



Recorder

Many children learn how to play the recorder in school. The instrument dates to the 1300s, and most were made of wood. Today, they are often made with plastic.



Piano

Standard pianos have 52 white keys, which used to be made from elephant tusks. That changed in the 1950s, when manufacturers started using plastic to make the keys.

Saxophone

When the saxophone was invented in the 1800s, there were 14 versions of varying size and pitch. Today, there are four types commonly made.



Violin

Violins are made using more than 70 pieces of wood, typically from maple or spruce trees. They were first made in Italy.

