

NHB Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know which band to join?

A good rule of thumb is this – if you are currently playing your instrument on a regular basis you would be a good candidate to join one of the two Advanced bands. The difference between the two bands is primarily the conductor's music selection.

If you play your instrument on a regular basis and would prefer to have 1 hour of instrument instruction and 1 hour of band, then Intermediate band would be your choice. If you are reacquainting yourself with playing, after a lengthy absence, then it would be beneficial to start with the Intermediate band.

For someone who has never played an instrument before, you would become part of our Beginner level. You would receive 1 hour of instrument instruction in a group setting along with 1 hour of band. You are taught the basics such as: putting your instrument together, getting a sound, learning to read music, learning and playing scales, playing very simple pieces. You will be able to bring all of these talents together when you are in band following the conductor.

Once you have completed the Beginner program, you move into the Beginner II program. You still receive 1 hour of instrument instruction in a group setting along with 1 hour of band. It gives you an opportunity to build and step up to the next level of instruction. Although you can move from Beginner II into Intermediate after one 12 week session, you could also remain for a second 12 week session (or even 3rd) in Beginner II, and continue to build your playing skills and confidence levels.

2. How much time commitment is there?

Both the Fall and Winter sessions are 12 weeks in length for all five levels of band. We do offer a Summer session for four levels of band for: Advanced I / II, Intermediate and a combined Beginner/Beginner II band. It is eight weeks long, plus a concert venue arranged by the respective bands themselves. NHB takes the summer period of July and August off.

Like anything, the more effort you put into learning a new skill or fine tuning that skill, the more rewards and benefits you will see. We suggest that you practice every day.

3. Can I select any instrument as a Beginner?

Yes, you can select any of the Wind, Brass or Percussion instruments. We do not limit the number of Beginners in any one instrument. We may not have perfect balance in your Beginner band, but our conductor makes it a fun experience learning to play together in a group. As you move along into the higher band levels, you will find that the instrument balance tends to equal itself out.

4. How long is the program?

Our Fall and Winter programs are 12 weeks in length and are offered for all five levels. Our Summer session is 8 weeks in length, plus a concert venue. Please note - there is no instrument instruction provided during the summer term.

5. What is the age of the program at WU?

The New Horizons Band program came to Western University, Music Faculty in January 1999. We are very proud of our program here at Western, and are the largest NHB program in Canada. We have 16 of the original members from 1999 still playing with us today! We find that people join NHB, and become part of our NHB family for the long term.

6. What is the average age of NHB members?

That's tricky as it's not polite to ask someone their age. I would say that our ages range from late thirties to mid-eighties, with the majority of people being retired.

7. Parking?

Parking is the responsibility of the NHB members. There are several parking lots where you can pay (via credit card) for parking - there is the Talbot lot (gated side) which is directly across from Talbot College beside the tennis dome, and South Valley parking lot (gated) which is located north east of the recreation centre off Huron Drive. There is also Pay & Display metered parking available at the Talbot lot.

Complimentary parking is available evening & weekends as follows:

Friday at 8:00 pm to Monday at 7:00 am

- Alumni Thompson Visitor Parking lot (excluding event days)

Friday at 7:00 pm to Monday at 7:00 am

- Upper Heating
- Visual Arts
- Siebens

Friday at 5:00 pm to Monday at 7:00 am

- Althouse Student
- Springett Student
- Medway lot behind Elgin Hall Residence
- Huron Flats

Friday at 4:00 pm to Monday at 7:00 am

- Elborn College - regular lot spaces
- Support Services - behind building and excluding meters and reserved spaces

Here is the URL for Parking Services – Western University should you require further information: <https://www.uwo.ca/parking/find/map.html>

8. What if I've got extensive musical background? Which band do I join?

If you have a musical background in piano or strings etc., you have the advantage of being able to read music, understand musical terms, counting, playing in a band setting - so you're ahead of a true Beginner person. Unfortunately that's where the advantage ends. For this reason, you should start in Beginner. You will be learning the same basic instrument skills when taking up a new instrument as everyone else. The playing field will very quickly level out as you all learn a new instrument together.

9. Who are the instrument instructors?

Our NHB instrument instructors come from the Music Faculty. They are either Performance Majors, or Music Education Majors within the Faculty. Their credentials are impeccable, and each instructor has come highly recommended by the Faculty. They gear their teaching styles to what you need as a student. They guide you into establishing a good solid technical playing base, and continue to build on that base as you move through the Beginner, Beginner II and Intermediate programs.

10. What do I need to bring with me?

If you are joining as a Beginner, you will receive an overview on Registration day, where each instrument instructor will do a brief demonstration on their respective instruments. They will tell you what areas of your body will be impacted while playing (i.e., arms are being held up while playing, you must have great lung capacity while playing this instrument, neck straps can hold the instrument while you're playing, etc). You will make your instrument selection based on what instrument appeals to you and you want to learn to play. Before you return for Week 2, you must have made arrangements to rent or purchase an instrument. There are many different options for procuring an instrument – a music store (rent, rent to own or purchase), a loan from a friend, purchase on eBay or Kijiji or pawn shop. In these purchase options, you need to know what to look for, as it is “buyer beware” when purchasing a used instrument. For percussion, you should purchase a set of sticks and drum pad, as this will allow you to practice at home during the week.

11. What do I get with my registration fee as a Beginner/Beginner II person?

If you are a Beginner, you will receive a music stand and the appropriate Standard of Excellence book which both your instrument instructor, and your band conductor will use.

If you are a Beginner II, you will receive the second Standard of Excellence book. Again, this will be used by both your instrument instructor and band conductor.

Both are excellent reference materials as you build upon your instrument foundation and playing skills.

12. Can I change band levels if I find the level I've registered in is too easy, or too difficult?

Yes, you can. I will qualify this with the following statement though. If you are finding the level too easy or too challenging, you must immediately make the change, as the longer you stay in a level, the more it will impact the transition into a higher or lower band. You will have missed the instrument and band instruction in the appropriate level, and could potentially cause rework for the instructor and other students, as well as causing stress for yourself in getting up to speed. This would apply primarily to the transition between Beginner II and Intermediate band levels.

13. Who do I give feedback to?

We are very proud of our program and feel it is "best in class". As such, we appreciate all feedback related to improving our NHB program - and it can come from our NHB members, instrument instructors, or conductors. Feedback is best provided to the Program Coordinator. Please join us for this experience.