

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 2 Advanced bands. The difference between the 2 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 – 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 1 – 12 week session if you feel up to the challenge, you could also remain for a second 12 week session 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 5 levels of band. We do offer a Summer session for the 2 Advanced bands that is 9 weeks long. Most of our Intermediate band folks move up into an Advanced band for this time. 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 everyday.

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 levels, you will find the instrument balance.

4. How long is the program?

Our Fall and Winter programs are 12 weeks in length and are offered for all 5 levels. Our Summer session is 9 weeks in length and offered for the 2 Advanced band levels only. We find that a good number of our Intermediate band folks take this opportunity to try out an Advanced level. In some cases, when they return to the Fall program, they move permanently into the Advanced level. It just depends on if you like the 1 hour of instrument instruction or not.

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

The New Horizons Adult 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 age ranges from late thirties to mid eighties with the majority of people being retired.

7. Parking?

Yes, we do provide parking in the Talbot lot which is directly across from Talbot College and the Music Building. We have a parking attendant working during our NHB hours so that you can gain access to this lot very easily.

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. You will be learning the same basic instrument skills when taking up a new instrument. 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 a Performance Major or a Music Education Major 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 as a student needs. 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 – ie 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 purchasing 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's buyer beware when purchasing outright second hand) For percussion, you should purchase a set of sticks and drum pad so that you can practice at home during the week.

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

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

If you are a Beginner II, you will receive the second Standard of Excellence book that 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 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 go on in that level 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 to the transition between Beginner II and Intermediate band levels mostly.

13. Who do I give feedback to?

We appreciate all feedback provided by our NHB members, instrument instructors and conductors related to improving our NHB program. We are very proud of our program and feel that it's best in class. Please join us for this experience.