

NHB Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know which band to join?

For someone who has never played an instrument before, you would become part of our Beginner level. You would receive instrument instruction based on your instrument, in a group setting, along with band. You are taught the basics such as putting your instrument together, getting a sound, learning to read music, learning and playing scales and playing very simple pieces. You will be able to bring these talents together when you are in band, following the conductor. You could also participate in an optional Rhythm/Theory class offered to our Beginner/ Beginner II registrants.

Once you have completed the Beginner program, you move into the Beginner II program. You still receive instrument instruction in a group setting, along with band. This level gives you an opportunity to build on your skills, 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 in Beginner II for a second 12 week session – or longer -- and continue to build your playing skills and confidence. You'll know when you're personally ready to move on to the next level of band.

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

If you are currently playing your instrument on a regular basis, and no longer feel the need for instrument instruction, you would be a good candidate to join one of the two Advanced bands. The bands play music of the same level, with the difference between the two being the conductor's music selection.

2. How much time commitment is there?

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 while you learn 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 band levels. Our Summer session is 8 weeks in length including a concert venue. Please note: there is no instrument instruction provided during the summer term.

5. When did the program start at Western University?

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 currently have 9 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. Our ages range from 30s to mid-90s, with the majority of people being retired.

7. What about parking?

Parking is the responsibility of all visitors to the University (including our NHB members) should they visit the University anytime during the week...there is the Pay & Display metered parking in the Talbot lot where they can use a credit card or the Honk app .

On weekends, our NHB members can park in the Talbot lot which is directly across from Talbot College beside the tennis dome, or in the South Valley parking lot which is located north east of the recreation centre off Huron Drive.

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. You may be able to move up in band levels more quickly with your background, depending on how you develop your playing skills.

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/Facebook Marketplace/Kijiji or a 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 joining Beginner level band, 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 joining Beginner II level band, 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. Qualified 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.

If you have any other questions related to our New Horizons Band program here at the Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University, please direct all inquiries to Brenda Smith, NHB Program Coordinator at bsmit32@uwo.ca