

# Hey Kids, It's a Viola



The Viola ("vee-oh-la") is slightly bigger than the violin and plays notes that are lower in pitch. The tone of the viola is darker and less brilliant than the violin. The viola plays a middle part in the orchestra. It is hard to hear the viola when the whole orchestra is playing, though they would certainly be missed if they weren't there.

## History

The viola was developed in the 16th and 17th centuries, about the same time as the rest of the string family. Some early string instrument builders tried to get more sound from the viola by building it bigger. Modern builders still experiment occasionally with the design of the viola, though most people like it just the way it is.

## How It's Played

The shape of the viola is slightly different, and a little heavier than the violin, though it is played in very much the same way. The viola rests on the left shoulder, and is kept in place by the players chin. The left hand is responsible for fingering the notes, while the right hand plucks or bows the strings. Beginning viola players often like to tape the fingerboard, to help remind them of left hand finger placement.

## How It's Made

A viola is made of many pieces of wood that are chosen to enhance the performance of the instrument. The top is made of spruce, and the back and ribs are made of maple. The neck is made of maple and ebony, the preferred wood for the fingerboard because of its hardness and beauty. All of these parts are carefully carved and then glued together with a special glue. After the body of the viola is assembled and varnished, the four strings, bridge, tailpiece, and various smaller pieces are added. Players can choose to include a chinrest.

