

# Norwalk Symphony Woodwind Activity

## FUN FACTS

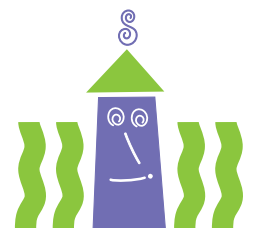
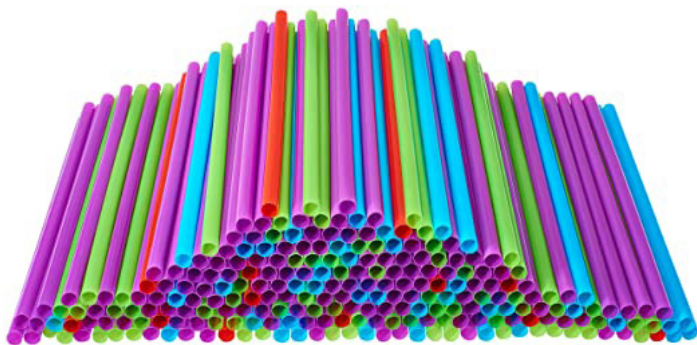
- Woodwind instruments are made by blowing air (wind) into the instrument and that they all used to be made all of wood, which is where the name “woodwind” comes from.
- The bigger the instrument and the longer the tube that the air is vibrating in, the lower the sound or pitch will be. The smaller the instrument and the shorter the tube that the air is vibrating in, the higher the pitch will be.
- When you blow into one of the woodwind instruments, either your breath makes the air vibrate inside the instrument, or your breath makes a reed that you hold between your lips vibrate and that vibration causes the air inside to vibrate. Remember, it all starts with vibrations!

## YOU WILL NEED

A few basic drinking straws  
Scissors

## STEPS

1. Take one of your straws and pinch one of the ends together, to flatten it, about an inch, to make a mouthpiece.
2. Take your scissors and carefully cut the corners of the pinched and flattened end to look like a point. Don't cut any other part of the straw.
3. Just blow into the end of the straw you have cut to be your mouthpiece. It will sound a little like a kazoo!
4. Now let's demonstrate how the length of the tube changes the pitch – take your scissors and cut off about two inches from the other end of the straw (not the mouthpiece) and blow into the mouthpiece again. What happened to the pitch of your instrument? Does it sound higher or lower? Cut off another two inches and blow again. What happened to the pitch this time? Is it higher or lower than after the first cut?
5. Take a new straw, one you haven't used, and cut one end for a mouthpiece, as you did with the first straw. Have the scissors ready and in one hand. Go ahead and blow into the new straw and as you are blowing start cutting off little pieces of the straw. I think you can guess what's going to happen to the pitch. **Be careful as you are cutting the straw shorter and shorter.**



Stepping Stones Museum for Children