

Transposing Instruments

Music

Which instruments sound a different note from the one written, and by how much.

A B $\flat$ instrument playing a written C sounds a B $\flat$ — a whole tone lower.

Instrument	Key	Written → sounds
Clarinet, trumpet, tenor sax	B $\flat$	Down a tone (tenor sax: + octave)
Alto & baritone sax	E $\flat$	Down a major 6th / + octave
French horn	F	Down a perfect 5th
Cor anglais	F	Down a perfect 5th
Piccolo	C	Up an octave
Double bass, guitar	C	Down an octave
Flute, oboe, violin, piano	C	As written

To write for a B $\flat$ instrument, transpose the concert pitch UP a tone. To read what it sounds, transpose DOWN.