

# Basic Transposition for the Trumpet

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Before diving into transposition, we need to understand that the B-flat trumpet is not a concert pitch instrument. In other words, when you play notes written for B-flat trumpet, they will sound different than when played on the piano.

Quick definition of terms:

Written Pitch = the notes written on the music

Concert Pitch = sounding pitch (or the note that will sound when played on the piano)

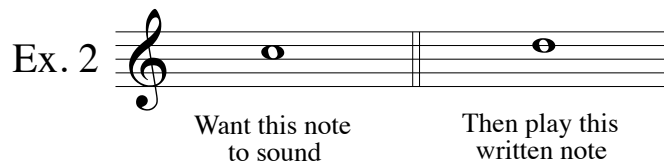
M2 = major second (also called a whole step)

If you play a written C on the trumpet, it will sound a concert B-flat (see Ex. 1)



This means that the trumpet sounds a whole step (major second) lower than the written pitch. To compensate for this difference, music that is written for B-flat trumpet is transposed a whole step higher than it will sound. It's like adding +1 for every number given: If I said "two," you would say "three."

So, if you want to play a concert C, you would need to play a written D (see Ex. 2)



Ex. 3 is the first few measures of "Twinkle, Twinkle" in two different keys. The first key (F major) is the concert key (or the sounding pitches). The second key (G major) is rewritten (or transposed) a major second higher in order to sound in unison with the first line.



If someone played line 1 of Example 3 on the piano and you played line 2 on your B-flat trumpet, the notes would sound in unison.

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The last thing to consider is the key signature. If you were to play a C major scale on the piano, there are no sharps or flats. But if you transpose that scale up a whole step you would be playing a D major scale with two sharps (see Ex. 4)

Ex. 4

So whenever you transpose music (to be played on B-flat trumpet) that is currently written in concert pitch, you will need to raise every note by a M2 and add two sharps to the key signature.

Note that sharps will cancel out flats, so if there is one flat in the key signature and you add two sharps, there will only be one sharp remaining.  
(see Ex. 3)

This entire transposition process is reversed if you are playing a C trumpet and reading music written for B-flat trumpet. You would then lower all of the notes by a M2 and add two flats to the key signature.  
(see Ex. 5)

Ex. 5

Notes written for B-flat trumpet

Transposed down a M2 (added two flats) to be played on C trumpet  
(these are also the correct sounding pitches because C trumpet is a concert pitch instrument)