

## PUT A MUTE IN IT!



Here's a quick guide to many kinds of mutes for trumpet. Let's start off with some tips:




- Despite the name, modern mutes are designed to change the **colour** of the sound, not the **volume**.
- By going into the bell, mutes make the trumpet a bit **shorter** (ie: **sharper**). Know how much you need to pull out your tuning slide for each mute you own.
- When purchasing a mute, make sure it has the right sound, consistent intonation and doesn't make the horn too stuffy. Ask yourself: is it really worth saving \$20 to have a terrible straight mute for ten years?
- Start building your mute collection. For common mutes (straight, cup and harmon) you should own multiple kinds for different situations.
- Get to know the reputable brands. Trumcor, Jo-Ral, Denis Wick, are well-known makers and a good starting point. Beyond that, specific makers are often known for a particular mute.




Some mute terminology:

English	French	German	Italian
Mute	Sourdine	Dämpfer	Sordino; sordina
With mute	Avec/con sourdine/sord.	Mit dämpfer; gedämpft	Mettere la sordina
Without mute	Sans sourdine	Keine dämpfer; ohne dämpfer	Senza sordino
Open; remove mute	Enlevez la sourdine; ôtez la sourdine	Dämpfer weg; dämpfer absetzen; offen; dämpfer ab	Togliere la sordina; via sordina
Stop	Bouchée	Gestopft	
Cup mute	Sourdine bol		

For more information, see: Hickman, David. "Chapter XV: Types of Mutes," in *Trumpet Pedagogy*. Chandler, AZ: Hickman Music Editions (2006).

Mute	Major brands	Sound quality	Repertoire	Other notes
Straight (loud) 	Trumcor, Jo-ral, Wallace, Wick	Metallic, edgy, bright, piercing	Orchestral: Bartok, <i>Concerto for Orchestra</i> ; Strauss, <i>Ein Heldenleben</i> ; Stravinsky, <i>The Rite of Spring</i>	Your most commonly-used mute. Use this when the score says "mute" with no other designation (unless you think a soft mute is necessary).
Straight (soft) 	Trumcor, Jo-ral, "Sotto voce", "Montreal mute", Facet, Marcus Bonna	Soft, "stuffy"	Copland, <i>Quiet City</i> ; Debussy, <i>Fêtes</i> ; Shostakovich, Piano Concerto No. 1	Useful for soft, delicate or distant-sounding passages. Also useful for blending with quieter instruments.
Cup 	Humes & Berg, Trumcor, Denis Wick, Jo-ral, Facet	Subdued, cool, often associated with jazz	Jolivet, Concerto No. 2, Tomasi – Concerto	Many makers offer adjustable cups, allowing a range of colour options with a single mute.

Mute	Major brands	Sound quality	Repertoire	Other notes
<p>Harmon</p> 	<p>Harmon, Jo-ral, Trumcor, Humes &amp; Berg</p>	<p>Stem "in" or "extended" ("wa-wa mute"): old-timey, nasal</p> <p>Stem out ("harmon mute"): very metallic but quiet. The "Miles Davis" sound.</p>	<p>Used extensively in jazz music.</p> <p>Halsey Stevens, Sonata (mvt. 3)</p>	<p>If you see "harmon mute" assume the composer means stem out.</p> <p>Some people believe dents add character to a harmon mute.</p>
<p>Bucket</p> 	<p>Humes &amp; Berg, Jo-ral, "Soulo"</p>	<p>Soft, muffled.</p>	<p>Used primarily in jazz music.</p>	<p>Some models (as pictured) are inserted into the bell; others clip over the end of the bell.</p>
<p>Practice</p> 	<p>Many, many options. Also, Yamaha produces the electronic "Silent Brass" system.</p>	<p>Very quiet. Sound quality ranges from edgy and muted to merely muffled.</p>	<p>Very rarely used in repertoire.</p>	<p>Many options, varying widely in terms of volume, intonation, resistance.</p>

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<p>Plunger</p> 	<p>Most trumpeters use a <b>small</b> toilet plunger. Makers like Humes &amp; Berg sell a trumpet-specific model.</p>	<p>Creates "wah-wah" and can produce a squealing sound.</p>	<p>Used extensively in jazz music.</p>	<p>Some musicians cut a hole in the mute for consistency. It's also common to cut a slit in the handle and insert a coin for a buzzier sound.</p>
<p>Piccolo mutes</p> 	<p>Trumcor, Jo-ral, Denis Wick</p>	<p>Straight: <b>extremely</b> bright and metallic.</p>	<p>Mussorgsky/Ravel, <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i>; Stravinsky, <i>Petroushka</i> and <i>The Rite of Spring</i>; Tomasi, <i>Semaine Sainte à Cuzco</i>.</p>	<p>Straight, cup and harmon mutes are all available for piccolo trumpet. Straight is fairly common, the rest are almost never used.</p>
<p>Derby/hat/bag</p> 	<p>Crown Royal or any felt/velvet cloth or bag.</p>	<p>Smooth (less edgy).</p>	<p>Gershwin, <i>An American in Paris</i> and Piano Concerto. Ives, <i>The Unanswered Question</i>.</p>	<p>You can make your own if you're feeling crafty. Some musicians put the bag on the stand and play into the stand.</p>