

hey, it's  
kids!

# SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!

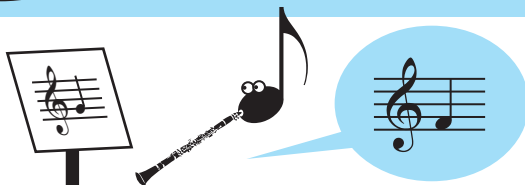


**Q:** Dear Sparky:  
What does it mean that certain instruments are "transposing instruments"?  
Does that affect how I should write music for them?

-A.M., Dana Point, CA

**A: WOOF!\***

**\*TRANSLATION:** *TRANSPOSING INSTRUMENTS* ARE INSTRUMENTS WHICH PLAY IN A *DIFFERENT KEY* THAN WHAT IS ON THE PAGE.



FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN A CLARINETIST  
**SEES AND PLAYS A G,**  
IT ACTUALLY SOUNDS LIKE AN **F!**

**WOODWIND** INSTRUMENTS  
COME IN DIFFERENT SIZES TO  
COVER A **LARGER RANGE.**

RATHER THAN LEARN **NEW FINGERINGS** FOR EACH  
**SIZE OF INSTRUMENT,** IT'S EASIER TO HAVE ONE  
SET OF FINGERINGS THAT WORKS ON ALL OF THEM!

**WHY?** THE REASON DEPENDS ON  
THE **TYPE OF INSTRUMENT!**

**BRASS** INSTRUMENTS, LIKE  
WOODWINDS, WERE BUILT IN  
MANY **DIFFERENT KEYS...**

ESPECIALLY SINCE EARLY BRASS INSTRUMENTS DIDN'T  
HAVE **VALVES,** AND THUS COULD ONLY PLAY THE  
**HARMONIC OVERTONES** OF A **SINGLE NOTE!**



EVEN AFTER VALVES BECAME **COMMON,**  
INSTRUMENTS WERE STILL AVAILABLE IN A  
**VARIETY OF KEYS...** AND IT MADE SENSE  
TO WRITE THEIR MUSIC SO THAT **FINGERINGS**  
WERE **CONSISTENT** ACROSS THE BOARD!

**EVENTUALLY,** OF COURSE, INSTRUMENTS IN  
CERTAIN KEYS WERE **PREFERRED** FOR THEIR  
**TIMBRE** AND **RANGE,** AND BECAME MUCH  
MORE COMMON!



TRUMPET IN B FLAT



HORN IN F

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN IF YOU  
JUST WANT TO **WRITE SOME MUSIC?**

FIRST, FIGURE OUT IF YOUR INSTRUMENT **TRANPOSES...** AND IF IT DOES, **HOW:**

WHEN YOU PLAY A WRITTEN NOTE ON:	BARI SAX	BASS CLARINET TENOR SAX	CONTRABASSOON DOUBLE BASS	ALTO SAX	ENGLISH HORN FRENCH HORN	ALTO FLUTE	B FLAT CLARINET SOPRANO SAX TRUMPET CORNET	FLUTE OBOE TROMBONE TUBA VIOLA CELLO	E FLAT CLARINET	PICCOLO XYLOPHONE	GLOCKENSPIEL
IT WILL SOUND:	FB+M6 LOWER	FB+M2 LOWER	ONE OCTAVE LOWER	MAJOR SIXTH LOWER	PERFECT FIFTH LOWER	PERFECT FOURTH LOWER	MAJOR SECOND LOWER	AS WRITTEN	MINOR THIRD HIGHER	ONE OCTAVE HIGHER	TWO OCTAVES HIGHER

THEN, ACCOUNT FOR IT!

IF AN INSTRUMENT **SOUNDS** A **PERFECT FIFTH LOWER,**  
TRANPOSE THEIR PART A **PERFECT FIFTH HIGHER!**



WANT THIS?



WRITE THIS!

THE **GOOD NEWS:**  
MOST **MUSIC NOTATION  
SOFTWARE** CAN HANDLE  
ALL THIS **AUTOMATICALLY!**

# DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!