

Desktop Samba Pack Meet the Instruments

Resource one of two

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Tamborim (tam-bor-EEM)

The tamborim is a small, high-pitched frame drum from Brazil and one of the most important instruments in samba. It has been a feature of the Rio Carnival for over a hundred years.

Although it fits in the palm of your hand, it produces a sharp, powerful sound that can be heard across an entire street parade. In a large samba ensemble, dozens of tamborims are played together to create their distinctive rhythms. Unlike its similarly named cousin, the tambourine, the tamborim can also be tuned.



How to play

Hold the frame in one hand and strike the head firmly with a samba stick, which can have one, two, or three prongs.

What does it sound like?

Bright, sharp and cutting, with a clear high-pitched tone.

Musical role

The tamborim plays the central repeating rhythm sitting on top of the samba ensemble.

Try this

Tap the drum, then press one finger gently onto the head and tap again.





Try this

Tap the centre of the head for a low sound, then the edge for a higher sound.

Pandeiro (pan-DAY-roh)

The pandeiro looks similar to a tambourine, but it is a far more versatile instrument. It was brought to Brazil from Portugal several centuries ago and is now widely used in samba, capoeira, and many other styles of Brazilian music.

Skilled players can produce a wide range of sounds simply by changing where and how they strike the drumhead. Like the tamborim, the pandeiro can also be tuned to alter its pitch and response.



How to play

Hold the pandeiro in one hand and strike the head with your fingers, thumb and palm while allowing the jingles to ring.



What does it sound like?

A warm drum sound combined with bright, shimmering jingles.



Musical role

The pandeiro often helps maintain the pulse while adding rhythmic patterns and musical colour to the ensemble.



Apito (ah-PEE-too)

The apito (Portuguese for whistle) is used to lead Samba ensembles. Different whistle patterns signal performers when to start, stop, change section, or play louder or softer, or repeat a rhythm.

Before microphones and amplification became common, the whistle's piercing sound made it the ideal way to communicate across large outdoor performances. The whistle included in this pack is a tri-tone whistle, meaning it can produce three different notes, allowing the leader to give a variety of musical cues.

How to play

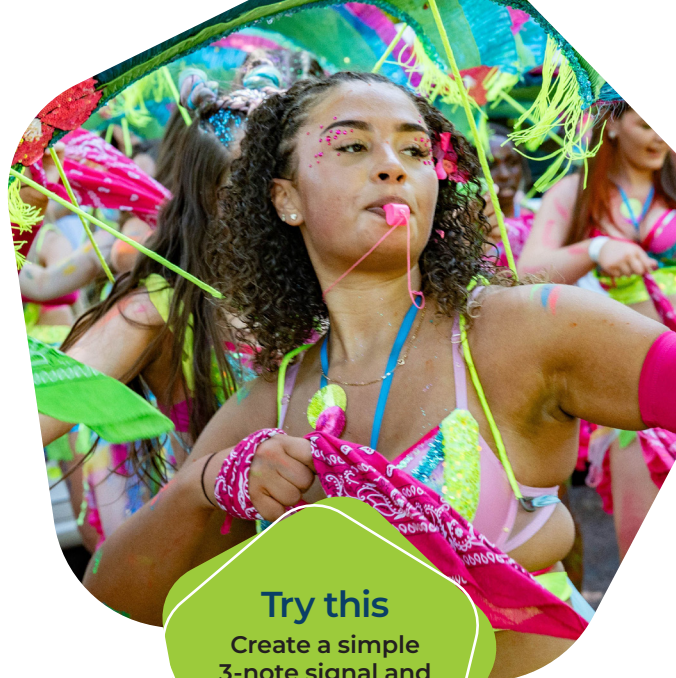
Blow short or long bursts of air while covering different holes to produce the whistle's three distinct notes.

What does it sound like?

Loud, sharp and high-pitched, making it easy to hear above a full samba ensemble.

Musical role

Used to lead the ensemble, signal changes, and cue rhythms during rehearsals and performances.



Try this

Create a simple 3-note signal and get the group to repeat it back.



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Ganza (GAN-zah)

Ganzas are cylindrical shakers made from metal, wood, or plastic and filled with beads, seeds, or other small materials. They are one of the most important percussion instruments in Brazilian samba and are often played in large numbers to create a continuous, flowing rhythmic sound.

Ganzas are usually held in one or both hands and played with a steady back-and-forth motion, making them a great instrument for developing coordination, flexibility and a strong sense of pulse. In a samba ensemble, they help maintain the pulse and add a constant rhythmic texture.

How to play

Hold the shaker and shake it gently towards and away from you.

What does it sound like?

A short, sharp clicking sound.

Musical role

Excellent for keeping a steady pulse or playing simple repeating rhythm patterns.



Try this

Shake the ganza and listen for the movement of the beads inside.



Try this

Play a repeating pattern using the high bell followed by the low bell.

Agogo Bells (ah-GOH-goh)

Agogo bells are two or three metal bells of different sizes, connected by a rod. The two bells produce different pitches, making the agogô one of the few melodic percussion instruments in a samba ensemble.

Agogô bells are among the oldest instruments used in Afro-Brazilian music. Their origins can be traced back to West Africa, where similar double bells were played during ceremonies, religious rituals, and community celebrations. They were brought to Brazil through the African diaspora and became an important part of samba as the style developed during the early twentieth century.



How to play

Hold the handle in one hand and strike the larger bell (lower pitch) or the smaller bell (higher pitch) with the beater.

What does it sound like?

A bright, metallic, ringing sound with two distinct pitches.

Musical role

The agogo provides repeating rhythmic patterns and adds contrast through its two different pitches.

Reco Reco (HEH-ko HEH-ko)

The reco reco is a traditional Brazilian scraper instrument. Its name comes from the sound it makes when a stick is drawn across its ridged surface. Early versions were often made from bamboo, while many modern samba ensembles use metal reco recos, giving them a brighter, more cutting sound.

Although it doesn't usually play the main rhythm, its unique sound adds an important layer of texture that helps bring the ensemble to life. To create different rhythmic effects, players can vary the speed, length, and direction of each scrape.

How to play

Hold the instrument firmly in one hand and scrape the stick across the ridges using smooth, even movements.

What does it sound like?

A rasping, metallic sound with a clear rhythmic pulse.

Musical role

Adds texture and rhythmic interest while reinforcing the groove of the ensemble.



Try this

Experiment with the speed of the scrape to hear different sounds.



Repinique (reh-pee-NEE-keh)

The repinique is a double-headed drum used throughout Brazilian samba. It is often considered the lead drum of the ensemble because it plays important rhythmic signals known as chamadas ("calls"), which the rest of the ensemble respond to. Traditionally, the drum is played with one stick and one bare hand, allowing the player to produce a wide variety of contrasting sounds. Its bright, powerful tone means it can easily be heard above the rest of the ensemble.

How to play

Strike the drumhead with a stick while using your free hand to add extra sounds and accents.

What does it sound like?

Strong, bright and resonant, with a clear, cutting tone.

Musical role

The repinique can keep the rhythm, lead call-and-response patterns and signal changes to the ensemble.

Try this

Play a steady beat of 4, and add a quiet hand tap between each one.





Try this
Play one long
scrape followed by
two short scrapes,
and repeat.

Guiro (GWEE-roh)

The guiro is a scraper instrument with deep roots in Latin America and the Caribbean. Traditional guiros were made from dried gourds with ridges carved into the surface, although modern versions are also made from wood, plastic and metal. The guiro is used in many musical styles, including salsa, merengue and samba. Although it doesn't usually play the main beat, the guiro adds an important layer of texture and helps keep the rhythm moving. Players can create a variety of sounds by changing the speed, direction and length of each scrape.



How to play

Hold the guiro securely in one hand and scrape the stick along the ridges using smooth, even movements.



What does it sound like?

Dry, rhythmic and scratchy, with a crisp, percussive character.



Musical role

Helps maintain repeating rhythmic patterns while adding texture and movement to the ensemble.



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Baqueta (bah-KEH-tah)

A Baqueta (Portuguese for drumstick) is used to play many Brazilian percussion instruments, including the tamborim, agogô, repinique and reco-reco. It is also sometimes known as a Samba Stick, or Whip.

Although it may seem like a simple accessory, the baqueta has a huge effect on the volume, articulation and character of the sound. To create a wide variety of rhythms and expressions, change the angle, grip, and the force of your stroke.

How to play

Hold the baqueta using a relaxed grip and strike or scrape the instrument with controlled, even movements.

What does it do?

The baqueta transfers your movement to the instrument, helping to produce a clear, consistent sound.

Musical role

Allows percussion instruments to be played with authentic tone, volume and articulation.

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Try this

Change the force and angle of your strike, and hear how the sound changes.