

Auditioning for NCO 2027

Welcome to our Auditions Handbook where you'll find everything you need to know about auditioning for one of our eight NCO orchestras in 2027!

Please make sure you have explored this handbook thoroughly before you start preparing for your audition.

Whether you're new to NCO or you've been a member before, we would love to receive your audition. Everyone auditions afresh each year.

We are interested to hear from all young musicians, whatever their background, schooling or circumstances. We are particularly keen to increase representation in our orchestras from groups currently under-represented in classical music and to increase the number of children from state schools.

Auditions will be open until the deadline at 9am on Friday 31st July 2026.

We are here for any questions you may have. If we can support you by providing this information in an alternative format or by giving you additional information relevant to you and your child personally, please let us know by emailing auditions@nco.org.uk

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About NCO



At NCO, our purpose is to champion the life-changing power of music.

We believe no **dream** is too big.

We believe orchestral music shapes **skills** and **hearts**.

We believe everyone has their own **brilliance**.

And we believe in the **power** of coming together.

Nearly 2000 children aged 8-14 connect with National Children's Orchestras each year through:

- auditioned Orchestral Weeks and Weekends,
- non-auditioned workshops
- activities with schools, music education hubs and other partner organisations
- free tickets to concerts

We empower children to uncover the joy of orchestral music, unleash their creativity, realise their ambitions and embrace a future filled with endless possibilities.

We use the power of music to create supportive communities that enrich lives. The confidence, resilience and teamwork learned through music become skills for life, wherever each young musician's journey takes them.

Play together. Be unstoppable.

What does NCO 2027 involve?

All auditioned NCO activities include world class in-person orchestral coaching with incredible tutors, guest artists and conductors. They also include access to our online activities and resources, which aid and inspire musical and social preparation and explore creativity and support wellbeing.

If you audition for NCO 2027 you will be auditioning to join orchestras who either meet for **Orchestral Weeks** or **Orchestral Weekends**. You can read more about each option on the next two pages.

NB. If a young musician is offered and accepts a place in NCO 2027, they and their parent/carer make a commitment that the young musician will attend in full the activities for their orchestra – that's either two Orchestral Weeks or two Orchestral Weekends in 2027. Members of the Under 14 orchestra are also expected to take part in Winter Weekend, which takes place in November 2027.

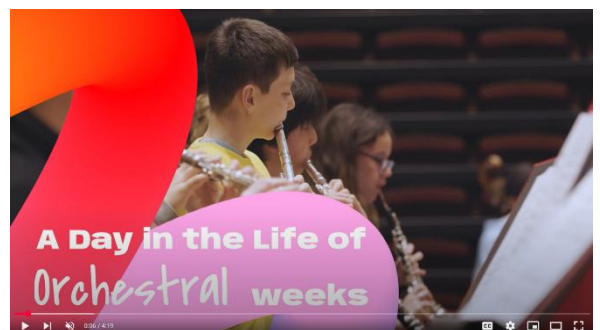
Orchestral Weeks

We have three age-banded symphony orchestras that meet for **two residential Orchestral Weeks** in the year – one week in the spring (April) school holidays and one in the summer (July or August) school holidays, leading to a concert at the end. As well as rehearsals and sectionals, members enjoy recreation and social activities, creative workshops and wellbeing sessions.

The three age-banded orchestras are based on the **age they will be on the 31st of August** of the year in which they audition for NCO, and young musicians come from across the United Kingdom.

The orchestra made up of our eldest members (those aged 13 on 31st August 2026) also meet up for a non-residential weekend in November/December, leading to a public performance.

Watch [*A day in the life: NCO Orchestral Weeks*](#) on YouTube.



Orchestral Weeks Spring 2027

For those aged 11 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 12 Orchestra):

Sun 28th March – Sat 3rd April 2027 residential at Shrewsbury School and final concert at Shrewsbury School.

For those aged 12 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 13 Orchestra):

Sat 27th March – Sat 3rd April 2027 residential at Sherborne Girls' School, Dorset and final concert at Lighthouse Poole.

For those aged 13 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 14 Orchestra):

Sun 4th April – Sun 11th April 2027 residential at Sherborne Girls' School, Dorset and final concert at Bristol Beacon.

Orchestral Weeks Summer 2027

For those aged 11 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 12 Orchestra):

Sun 8th August – Sat 14th August 2027 residential at Sherborne Girls' School, Dorset and final concert at Portsmouth Guildhall.

For those aged 12 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 13 Orchestra):

Sun 1st August – Sun 8th August 2027 residential at Sherborne Girls' School, Dorset and final concert at Bristol Beacon.

For those aged 13 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 14 Orchestra):

Sun 25th July – Sun 1st August 2027 residential at Shrewsbury School and final concert at Nottingham Royal Concert Hall.

Orchestral Weeks Winter Weekend

For those aged 13 as of 31st August 2026 (Under 14 Orchestra) there will be an additional non-residential weekend culminating in a public concert, on Sat 20th November – Sun 21st November 2027 at Woolwich Works.

Orchestral Weekends

There are five orchestras where young musicians come together for **two non-residential Orchestral Weekends** – one weekend in the spring (February or March) and one in the summer (May or June). The weekends involve non-residential, daytime, orchestral activities bringing together musicians of mixed ages (8-14) and mixed ability and currently take place in the North West, the Midlands, two venues in London, and new for 2027, the South West.

Each weekend has a musical theme, and the programme includes a range of well-known music, new discoveries and new music written specifically for the young musicians. Guest artists (previously including Jess Gillam, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Nate Holder) play alongside young musicians.

As these weekends are non-residential, accommodation is not provided between the Saturday and Sunday.

Watch [*A day in the life: NCO Orchestral Weekends*](#) on YouTube



Orchestral Weekends Spring 2027

NCO London Orchestras Sat 27th & Sun 28th February 2027. One orchestra meets at Goldsmiths University and one orchestra meets at Regent High School

NCO Midlands Orchestra Sat 13th & Sun 14th March 2027 at Ruddock Performing Arts, Birmingham

NCO North Orchestra Sat 6th & Sun 7th March 2027 at Bolton School

NCO South West Orchestra Sat 13th & Sun 14th March 2027 at Blundell's School, Tiverton

Orchestral Weekends Summer 2027

NCO London Orchestras Sat 19th & Sun 20th June 2027 One orchestra meets at Goldsmiths University and one orchestra meets at Regent High School

NCO Midlands Orchestra Sat 12th & Sun 13th June 2027 at Ruddock Performing Arts, Birmingham

NCO North Orchestra Sat 12th & Sun 13th June 2027 at Bolton School

NCO South West Orchestra Sat 22nd & Sun 23rd May 2027 at Blundell's School, Tiverton

Why join NCO?

For the children who are Members of NCO there are lots of opportunities:

- to be part of one of eight **fantastic** NCO orchestras
- to **develop** their playing and musicality
- to **celebrate** the joy of making music with others
- to make lifelong **friends**
- to **work** with incredible tutors, artists and conductors
- to discover their **creativity**
- to play a varied repertoire of music which is both **challenging and fun**, including themed programmes and creative activity
- to learn vital physical and mental **wellbeing skills**
- to **find their voices** and be heard

NCO has the great privilege of getting to know the musicians of tomorrow – both those who go on to become professional musicians and those who will take the enormous benefits of musical learning into every aspect of their lives beyond music.

NCO provides not only the highest quality in-person orchestral coaching but expands and enriches musical learning through its online offering, with events, resources and opportunities to build wellbeing skills, be inspired and explore creativity.

What do young musicians who've been in NCO before say?

"Being part of National Children's Orchestras has been like finding my people, my community – the place where I truly belong. I feel so privileged and honoured to have had the opportunity to be part of it all." Orchestral Weeks member, 2024

"I can't thank you enough for the enormous part you and the NCO team have played in the musical journey of our family over the past 6 years. They have played phenomenal music and made friends for life." Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2025

"The staff were friendly, helpful and if I was stuck on something, they always helped by explaining it to me in a way that I understood. Being part of the orchestra made me feel like I am part of a community." Orchestral Weekends member, 2025

"The last three years of NCO have been, quite frankly, the best times in his life. He has grown up, has developed musically, gained an increased sense of responsibility and made friendships that are way beyond special, ones that I'm confident will last forever. All through being in NCO." Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2024

"Before my first NCO activity I had never even considered orchestra and didn't know how awesome it could be! And now my music world has just opened entirely." Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2024

"He has had such an amazing time away with the team... I have never been able to afford to send him to any music residential but you gave him that chance and he has enjoyed every second." Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2025

"I just wanted to feedback what an amazing time my son had! Things can be difficult for him to access due to his Special Educational Needs/disability so I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for a great weekend and for making him so comfortable." Parent of an Orchestral Weekends member, 2025

"NCO is the greatest orchestra of all time, you get to make new friends, create your own music and have the time of your life." Orchestral Weeks member, 2024

"NCO's THE place to be! You make a lot of friends, music, and more! My other favourite thing about NCO is that the conductors are very funny and kind." Orchestral Weekends member, 2025

"He had a brilliant, brilliant time on the residential. Thank you so much for helping him to feel safe and secure." Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2025

"My two sons were noticeably calmer and happier after a weekend of music! We talked in the car about how they had used a different part of their brain all weekend and you could really see it in their behaviour. We have a saying in our house - music is more important than maths!" Parent of an Orchestral Weeks member, 2024

Who can join NCO 2027?

Everyone auditions for a place in our auditioned orchestras each year – players that have been an NCO member previously and players who are new to NCO, including those who may never have played in an orchestra before. This makes it fair for all young musicians interested in joining NCO.

It is **free to audition**, and auditions are submitted via a pre-recorded video.

We welcome auditions for NCO 2027 from young musicians who:

- are aged 8–13 years old (as of 31st August 2026) **and**
- play an orchestral instrument to the appropriate standard **and**
- are British citizens or are living/studying in the UK (please check with us if you are unsure)

Orchestral instruments are considered to be: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion, Harp, Violin, Viola, Cello or Double Bass.

Depending on your child's age and playing experience, they will be eligible to audition for our residential Orchestral Weeks, our non-residential Orchestral Weekends or to be considered for either.

Children do not need to have taken any formal grade exams to be part of NCO, because offers of membership are based on their playing and musicality in their audition video. However, in order for your child to have the best possible time at NCO, we recommend that they are able to play at a certain level and so we offer age band and grade guidance for each type of orchestra. We are looking for children at all levels in the bands listed. If you are not sure of their approximate grade standard, your child's instrumental teacher may be able to help.

Please look at the table and the instrument specific notes on the following two pages before applying. You will be asked in the Audition form to tell us which type of orchestral activity your child is auditioning for. A couple of things to note:

- If your child is applying for our Orchestral Weeks and they play violin or cello, you'll notice that they will need to record orchestral excerpts as well as their main pieces. This is because we have high numbers of applications from violinists and cellists, and excerpts help us with the selection process.
- Players who apply for our Orchestral Weekends are mixed ability, with a wide range of players. In 2026 this has included many playing at the entry grades of 3/4, many at the higher grades of 7/8, and many in-between! We are so excited to hear young musicians play and to shape the programme according to those who audition. We create parts of different difficulties so everyone can have a meaningful experience that is appropriate to them. The opportunities are exciting here for all players – including peer-to-peer learning and inspiration, building strong orchestral and collaborative players.
- If your child would like to audition on more than one instrument, please complete a separate Audition form for each instrument, with entirely separate audition recordings. Please note that should your child be offered a place, a membership offer will only be given for one instrument in one orchestra.

	NCO Orchestral Weeks Membership includes taking part in two week-long residential. One is in the spring (March/April) and one is in the summer (July/Aug) holidays. Those in the eldest orchestra (aged 13-14) also have a weekend showcase in November/December. Audition requirement – two pieces plus excerpts if you play violin or cello.	NCO Orchestral Weekends Membership includes taking part in two daytime, non-residential Orchestral Weekends. One is in Feb/March and one is in June. Audition requirement – two pieces.
Aged 8, 9 or 10 as of 31 st August 2026	Orchestral Weeks are not available for this age range.	Grade 3+ for: Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion, Lever/Pedal Harp, Viola, Double Bass Grade 4+ for: Flute, Violin, Cello
Aged 11 as of 31 st August 2026	Grades 4 – 8+	Grade 3+ for: Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion, Lever/Pedal Harp, Viola, Double Bass Grade 4+ for: Flute, Violin, Cello
Aged 12 as of 31 st August 2026	Grades 5 – 8+	Grade 3+ for: Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion, Lever/Pedal Harp, Viola, Double Bass Grade 4+ for: Flute, Violin, Cello
Aged 13 as of 31 st August 2026	Grade 6 – 8+	Grade 3+ for: Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, French Horn, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion, Lever/Pedal Harp, Viola, Double Bass Grade 4+ for: Flute, Violin, Cello

Please now check the instrument specific notes.

Notes for specific instruments

Depending on which type of activity (Orchestral Weeks or Orchestral Weekends) that you would like to audition for at NCO, there may be some different guidance depending on your instrument. This is because of the music that is played at the different activities, so that we know that young musicians will be comfortable and confident taking part in those activities.

Bassoon

To take part in **Orchestral Weeks**, bassoonists need to play bassoons in C, not transposing tenoroon or mini bassoons (in F or G). You can still audition for Orchestral Weeks on a tenoroon/mini bassoon as long as you are happy to commit to playing a full-size bassoon from February 2027.

Bassoonists can apply to take part in **Orchestral Weekends** on tenoroon, mini bassoon or bassoon.

Cello

Cellists auditioning to take part in **Orchestral Weeks** should be able to read tenor clef fluently.

Cellists auditioning to take part in **Orchestral Weekends** should have some familiarity with tenor clef.

If you are a cellist aged 11-13 on 31st August 2026 and are auditioning for the residential **Orchestral Weeks**, don't forget to prepare your orchestral excerpt(s).

Cornet

Cornet players are welcome to audition for **Orchestral Weekends** but it's not possible to audition on cornet for **Orchestral Weeks**.

Euphonium

Euphonium players are welcome to audition for **Orchestral Weekends** but it's not possible to audition on euphonium for **Orchestral Weeks**.

French Horn

If you're auditioning on French horn for **Orchestral Weeks**, it's worth being aware that you may need to do some transposition as part of your playing at NCO. We prefer older players to have some familiarity with transposition, and you may need to ask your teacher for help with F and E flat in preparation for NCO activity, but it's not essential for your audition.

Harp

If you are a harpist auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks** you need to be playing on a pedal harp.

If you are a harpist auditioning for **Orchestral Weekends**, you can be playing on a lever harp or a pedal harp and it's OK if you change from lever to pedal between auditioning and first NCO activity.

Percussion

Percussionists auditioning should be able to read musical notation.

We ask percussionists auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks** to prepare two contrasting pieces on different orchestral percussion instruments – one piece on a tuned instrument and one on a snare drum.

Percussionists auditioning for **Orchestral Weekends** can perform on two different orchestral instruments or can prepare one piece on drum kit and one on snare/another orchestral percussion instrument.

If you would like to talk to us about this before preparing your pieces, please email auditions@nco.org.uk

Trombone

Trombonists auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks** should be able to read tenor clef fluently.

Trombonists auditioning for **Orchestral Weekends** can audition whether they read bass or treble clef.

You can audition on Tenor or Bass Trombone.

Tuba

Tubas auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks**, should be able to read bass clef fluently.

Tubas auditioning for **Orchestral Weekends** can audition whether they read bass or treble clef.

Trumpet

Trumpeters may come across transposition at NCO; it is a good idea to practise some parts in A and C with your teacher.

Violin

If you are a violinist aged 11–13 on 31st August 2026 and are auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks**, don't forget to prepare your orchestral excerpt(s).

Viola

Viola players auditioning for **Orchestral Weeks** should be able to read the treble clef fluently.

For viola players auditioning for **Orchestral Weekends**, we prefer them to have some familiarity with treble clef.

What does it cost to be part of NCO?

To take part in NCO there are membership fees as outlined below. We are pleased to offer financial support to help ensure everyone who is offered a place has the opportunity to take part.

Orchestral Weeks fees

The membership fee to take part in two Orchestral Weeks in 2027 is:

Under 12 and Under 13 Orchestras (those aged 11 or 12 as of 31st August 2026) £2200

Under 14 Orchestra (those aged 13 as of 31st August 2026) £2400

Orchestral Weekends fees

The membership fee to take part in two Orchestral Weekends in 2027 is: £400

The true cost to NCO of providing a place in an NCO orchestra is more than double the fees above. NCO subsidises activities to keep fees as low as possible and works hard each year to raise the funds which cover the balance.

Financial Support

Our aim is that money doesn't create a barrier to a child hoping to take part in our activities. We want any young musician, no matter their background or circumstance, to have the opportunity to accept their offer of a place in NCO. It is possible to have all or part of your child's fees paid for you through our Financial Support programme.

NCO prioritises financial support for:

- Families where the child is in state education **and/or**
- Families who are entirely based in the UK, with working parent/s (including single parents and/or those who are also receiving benefits to supplement their employment income, unless they are unable to do so on medical grounds/another exceptional reason).

NCO support is means-tested so once your child has been offered a place, we ask for a range of information and supporting documents from those who would like to make an application for support.

For Orchestral Weeks, NCO will consider providing financial support on a sliding scale (25% - 100%) to families with a gross household income less than c. £80,000.

For Orchestral Weekends, NCO will consider providing financial support (100% or 50%) to families with a gross household income less than c. £60,000. For Orchestral Weekends only, NCO will also prioritise families who are living a considerable distance from where activity is taking place, as well as being on a lower income.

Thank you in advance for your time in providing this detail and for your transparency – it really does help us to best consider your request. We will ask you for some information about:

- Your finances, including your gross annual income, dividends and company ownership, pension/s, savings and property ownership and any benefits or grants you receive
- Where your child goes to school, including whether they are receiving any bursaries or scholarships or are eligible for Free School Meals or Pupil Premium
- Your other dependants

- Whether you have applied for grants from other sources e.g. charities or your local authority (we recommend this)
- Any other circumstances which will affect your capacity to pay your child's membership fees

As a charity, NCO raises funds to provide financial support to young musicians each year. In a normal year, our Financial Support programme has the capacity to support around 10 – 15% of our members, depending on the funding level we have raised. **There is no guarantee we will be able to offer support for every application we receive, even if you've received support from us before.** We recommend that you apply to other funding sources alongside your NCO Financial Support application as we are expecting significant demand for support.

If you have any questions about Financial Support that you would like to ask before your child auditions for NCO, please email financialsupport@nco.org.uk and we will be happy to help.

How to Audition for NCO 2027 in 5 steps

Step 1: Tell us you are interested!

If you are interested in auditioning for NCO, it would be very helpful to us if you could let us know by completing this [Expression of Interest form](#).

This short form allows us to not only send you any audition reminders and updates we might have but also helps us to know if we are reaching children from different locations, backgrounds, who play different instruments and for both our residential and non-residential orchestras. This in turn can help us to focus our efforts spreading the word and to plan for the considerable number of staff we need for the next stage – adjudication and moderation of auditions.

Step 2: Read our video audition information

Please read through our video audition preparation and recording information before you start.

Everyone who auditions for NCO prepares a video of their audition pieces. If you play violin or cello and are applying to take part in residential Orchestral Weeks, you will also need to prepare and record orchestral excerpts in a separate video to your pieces.

Many people get nervous about auditions, but there's no need to worry. All children are in the same boat and everyone is rooting for you. Also, as our auditions are by video, you can send us your best version!

Preparing for your Video Audition

Please prepare two pieces of music around 2-3 minutes each.

Please note that you cannot submit portions of videos recorded for examinations, such as ABRSM Performance Exams. This is in breach of the terms and conditions of examination boards and can disqualify you from the exam the video was originally submitted for and from taking any future exams with that examination board.

Your pieces should contrast in speed and style e.g. one fast and one slow, to show the range of your ability. It is fine for them to be extracts of longer pieces, but they should be no longer than five minutes each. It is not enough to play one longer piece with contrasting sections, please prepare two.

Before you decide what to play, please read the notes for specific instruments in the 'Who Can Join NCO 2027' section earlier in this Handbook and bear in mind your whole recording (including your brief introduction as described in the 'Recording your Video' section) should not exceed 10 minutes in total.

When choosing your pieces, please think carefully about what you can play confidently. It's much better to play something you know really well, than to overstretch yourself with something new that might still need more practise!

You do not need to be accompanied for your prepared pieces. You may have a piano accompanist if you choose to but there is no disadvantage to playing unaccompanied, so please think about what will make you feel most comfortable. **Recorded accompaniment is not permitted.**

Orchestral excerpts (Orchestral Weeks violin and cello)

If you play violin or cello and are applying for the residential orchestras who meet for Orchestral Weeks, you will need to **prepare and record 3 or 4 specified short orchestral excerpts in a separate video** to your audition pieces. Orchestral excerpts are short passages from regular NCO repertoire designed to test certain qualities of your playing. They will help the audition adjudicators see how different players approach the same repertoire and make our audition process as fair as possible for these instruments where we receive a larger quantity of applications.

It is important to practise them as much as your pieces as they are equally important.

Excerpts

We have included a video to support your practice, with top tips from our NCO tutors and links to recordings of these excerpts on YouTube. Please watch and listen to both to help you in your preparation. These videos can be found on a link at the top of each excerpt.

There are metronome markings/tempo indications on each excerpt – these are there simply as a guide – please play the excerpts at a speed that is comfortable for you and where you can get the greatest accuracy.

Top tips for your audition:

- We love to see that you're enjoying yourself and that you like making music! So, choose pieces that you **enjoy performing** and see how you can tell us a little bit of a story through your playing.
- We love to hear **two contrasting pieces** so that we can see the different ways that you can play. So please choose one that's fast and one that's slow – your teacher should be able to help you choose!
- If you're a percussionist we want to see two different instruments and different styles of playing (see instrument notes for full information).
- Make sure you choose a piece that you can **play really comfortably**. For example, we'd rather hear a grade 6 piece you can play really well, than a grade 7 piece that's still a little bit out of reach.
- Allow yourself to make a few mistakes! We know that when you are recording a video to send to us it's really hard to be happy sending off a few mistakes. But we ignore a few mistakes in an audition – it's life and it happens to us all!

We really want you to do well so do your very best, have fun preparing your audition and we can't wait to see you play

Step 3: Record your Audition

How, where and when?

Don't worry if you've never done a video audition before, we have detailed instructions on how best to set up your video audition. All you need is a smart phone or camera with reasonable sound quality and a place to film your audition. You will need to read through our guidance below, record your audition, upload your video to an **unlisted (not Private) YouTube link** and then submit the link to us in your application form.

If you don't have access to a smart phone or camera to record your audition, please contact us at auditions@nco.org.uk and we will be happy to help.

The date, place and timing for each audition is at the discretion of whoever is making the arrangements – it could be in your own home or where you have your instrumental music lessons for example.

What should my audition video include?

At the start of your video, please introduce yourself briefly (around 30 seconds) by telling us your name, age and the pieces you are going to play. If you wish, you can then pause the recording before you then record both of your pieces **in one take**. Otherwise, you can start playing straight away, after your spoken introduction.

You may also edit together your introduction video and the video of you playing your two audition pieces if you prefer or need to take a moment to move to your instrument and set yourself up ready to play. **However, you should still play your two audition pieces in one take.** If you are preparing excerpts for the residential orchestras, they should be recorded as a separate video and then submitted on the same form as your video audition.

Please don't add any kind of video or audio editing/effects to your audition recording – it distracts us from hearing your playing.

What should my orchestral excerpts video include?

You only need to record additional orchestral excerpts if you play violin or cello and are applying for Orchestral Weeks. These must be recorded and submitted as a **separate video** to your pieces, again **in one take**. You can find the full guidance on excerpts on the previous page of this Handbook.

Recording guidelines

To ensure that your child's audition is suitable for our adjudication and moderation process, please consider the guidelines below when recording the video audition. Auditions that do not adhere to these guidelines may not be able to be considered, and we may need to contact you to rerecord the audition.

All of the instrument should be in the frame and where possible all of your child. Choose the most appropriate orientation of the recording device (landscape or portrait) to ensure the recording area does not cut off any part of the instrument, for example bow ends, or parts of your child that are being used to play their instrument.

Your child should be facing the camera so their hands and face can be clearly seen as they play and are not covered by any music stands.

Check that the recording device does not flip the video and record a mirror image.

The video camera or smart phone you are using to record the audition should have good sound quality and not add any effects such as reverb to the video.

Try to record in a room that is not too echoey – soft furnishings provide the best sound quality for our adjudicators and moderators.

Use a tripod or stand to set up the recording device so that the audition video is steady.

Record in a well-lit area with enough room to play comfortably. Do not stand directly under lights as this will cast the player's face in shadow and make sure you do not have anything bright such as a window directly behind you.

Record in a quiet room with no background noise, interference, or interruptions.

You can record the audition as many times as you like before submitting, however we would suggest making 2-3 recordings and then picking the best one. Don't worry if you make a few small mistakes on the recording- we are expecting there to be mistakes in everyone's video as no one is perfect!

Additional notes

Percussionists: we realise that you may have to film your audition in different spaces to access all of the instruments required, or may have to move the camera or instruments into different positions to get yourself and the instruments in full view. Because of these logistics, we will allow percussionists only to edit together different videos, or press pause in between pieces to rearrange your instruments and set-up. If you have any questions or difficulty accessing a space where you can record your audition with the available instruments, please get in touch at auditions@nco.org.uk and we will do our best to help.

Second Instruments: You can audition for NCO on more than one instrument, however you must fill in separate Audition form and record and submit a separate video submission for each additional instrument. Please note that any membership offer will be given for one instrument and one orchestra only, as decided by our adjudication and moderation team.

submitting your video audition

The deadline for submitting video auditions is Friday 31st July 2026 at 9am.

Before submitting your video, please double check that you can hear the sound all the way through the video. You could even send it to a friend or family member if you want to be really sure! We will check each video once submitted for recording quality purposes and may ask you to record it again if it doesn't fulfil the above criteria.

We would like you to submit your child's video audition via an **Unlisted (not Private) YouTube** link).

Now that you have recorded your audition video/s and uploaded them to Unlisted YouTube link/s, you are ready to return to complete the Audition form. There are separate spaces on the Audition form for you to copy and paste the link to your Audition Video (and Orchestral Excerpts video if applying for residential Orchestral Weeks on violin or cello).

step 4: Checklist before starting the Audition form

Have you read thoroughly all the information in this Handbook about what you need to do for your audition, including the instrument specific notes?	☐
Have you checked which activities you are eligible to apply for? And are you ready to say whether you are applying to take part in two residential Orchestral Weeks in 2027 or in two non-residential Orchestral Weekends in 2027 or are applying to be considered for either?	☐
Have you recorded your two contrasting audition pieces (one fast and one slow) including your brief introduction?	☐

If you are applying for the residential orchestras who meet for Orchestral Weeks, on Violin or Cello, have you recorded your Orchestral excerpts, separately to your audition pieces?	☐
Have you uploaded your recording/s to YouTube (Unlisted <i>not Private</i>) and have you got your link/s ready?	☐

Step 5: Complete our Audition Form

Now that you have read through everything and finalised your child's recording, you can complete the Audition form.

The Audition form is where we will collect all the information we need to process your child's audition plus the very crucial video audition link/s!

You can complete the Audition form at the link below:

[Audition Form](#)

Are you making an audition application for more than one child?

If you are submitting auditions for more than one child, you need to use a different primary parent/carer contact email address for each child so that their records don't merge in our system. Each contact email needs to be a parent/carer email address (not a child's email) and you will need to check it regularly as we will use it for communicating with you about your child's application.

What happens next?

Adjudication and results

Your video will be adjudicated and then moderated by official NCO adjudicators and moderators. All footage will be held in accordance with Data Protection guidelines and will not be used for any other purpose.

Once decisions have been made, we will contact you by email. We aim to send out results for all auditions by email in the autumn term of 2026.

Please note, we do not give out results over the phone and our decision is final.

If offered a place in NCO 2027, in which orchestras will young musicians be placed?

If you are offered a place in one of our age-banded orchestras who meet for two residential Orchestral Weeks during the year, you will be placed in one of our three orchestras according to your age **as of 31st August 2026**.

If you are offered a place in one of our non-residential orchestras who meet for two Orchestral Weekends during the year, you will be placed in an orchestra in one of five locations. In order to create the best orchestral experience, we allocate places to create balanced orchestras in each

of the five locations. Applicants who are successful in their audition for a non-residential orchestra will generally be allocated to the following locations based on where they live:

North: North East of England, North West of England, North Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire and the Humber

Midlands: East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, Mid & West Wales

South West: South West of England, South Wales, areas of South East of England (Berkshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight)

London (x2 orchestras): Greater London, Northern Ireland, areas of South East of England (Kent, Surrey, Sussex)

If you decide you don't want to apply any more

Please note if you want to withdraw your application at any point, please email us to let us know so that we don't send you further auditions updates and so that we don't book tutors to adjudicate your audition. Letting us know as soon as possible can help us save valuable resources. Thank you.

Contact us

We appreciate that there is a lot of information to take on board and we are here to help - if you have any questions or we can support you with making your application to NCO 2027, please don't hesitate to contact us at auditions@nco.org.uk

If you have a detailed enquiry and would like to speak to someone on the phone, please send details of your query by email and we will arrange a call back.

If we can support you by providing this information in an alternative format or by giving you additional information relevant to you and your child, please email auditions@nco.org.uk

Audition Timeline Overview

Date	Detail
May 2026	Video auditions for 2027 open
9am, Friday 31 st July 2026	Deadline to submit your Audition Application form including your link to the Audition Pieces Video (and Excerpts Video if you are applying for the residential Orchestral Weeks on violin or cello only)
Autumn 2026	Audition Results emails are sent out. Once you have received an offer, you have 2 weeks to accept including: • paying in full or paying your first instalment • completing an application for Financial Support