

When is a "flute" not a flute?

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The flute produces its sound from the flow of air across an opening. Modern flutes are usually made of metal and have keys that are depressed over the tone holes. Previously, the flute was called *traverse flute* (indicating how it was held), or included that word in other languages, e.g., *traversa*, *traverso*, etc.

The recorder has a fipple or whistle mouth piece, with a thumb hole and seven finger holes, rarely with keys. The recorder played an important role in the Renaissance and Baroque eras, and was revived in the 20th century. The use of the English word "recorder" (thought to be derived from the Latin *recordari*) dates back the the 14th century. In other languages, the name for the recorder includes a cognate of the word "flute," e.g., *flûte*, *Flöte*, *flauto*, or *flauta*, etc., which may make for confusion over which instrument is meant. Some of the names for recorder in French, German, Italian, and Spanish are:

- French: *flûte douce*, *flûte à bec*
- German: *Blockflöte*
- Italian: *flauto dolce*, *flauto a becco*, *flauto diritto*
- Spanish: *flauta dulce*, *flauta de pico*

David Lasocki, former music librarian and scholar in the field of historical woodwind playing, created this guide to pre-19th century English and French music publications. The chart indicates whether the word "flute" or its foreign language equivalent actually means "recorder" or "flute."

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Year	Recorder		Flute	
	England	France	England	France
1390-1673	recorder	flûte flûte douce flûte d'Angleterre flûte à neuf trous	flute	flûte d'Allemagne flûte traversière
1673-1700	flute flute douce (recorder)	flûte flûte douce flûte à bec	(flute)	
1700-1750	flute English flute common flute flauto		German flute flute d'Allemagne traversa flauto traverso	
1750-1800			German flute	flute

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