

Signaling

A full legion had four different types of specialists carrying brass instruments depending on their uses.

The buccina, used by a legionary buccinator

A long tube of ten to twelve feet, bent into a circle that ends with a forward-looking flare above the blower's head, with an angled bar across the bend diameter for stability and as handle. Its appropriate use was the announcement of watch changes while in camp, and the call for all soldiers to gather under the authority of the executive officer.

The cornu, used by a legionary cornicen

Very similar to the buccina in looks. Was exclusively used to signal all troops in battle (in combination with the raising and lowering of standards), and so had a different repertoire.

The tuba, used by a legionary tubicen

A straight horn, three to four feet long. Exclusively used in battle and in concert with the cornu. The tuba players, or tubicen, were located within the cohorts and centuries, and let the specific divisions know which commands from the cornu were meant for them.

The lituus, used by an auxiliary liticen

Another straight horn of similar length to the tuba, but with a bend at the outgoing side, giving it the shape of the letter "J." It was the cavalry's instrument for transmitting battle field calls.

All specialists were specifically trained legionaries. The horn blower positions were highly sought after since the men received double-pay like the standard bearers and were excused from menial labor (camp building and digging).



Part of Trajan's column in Rome showing two buccina or cornu players in civilian clothes, with two tuba players standing behind.