

Stand and be counted

Example: Write on the board the rhythmic pattern:



- Ask four children to stand at the front of the class. Teacher models the activity by directing the students to sit (*me*), kneel up high (*so*) or stand (*la*). This is then a *so me la* melody which the children sing with inner hearing as the teacher indicates the students one at a time.
- The class then sings the teacher's melody.
- Individual students then create a melody using the students at the front as the 'notes'.
- The class sings all created melodies.

This activity is useful for only a limited range of notes but could be adapted for older children learning an instrument. The 'notes' could be E G A on the recorder or G A B on xylophones.

- The students at the front could also form quavers by placing hands on each others' shoulders.



Handy props

- Chairs or hoops are useful props for quick rhythm activities.
 - Students sit on the chairs or stand in the hoops to represent the number of sounds on a beat. This could be used with four beats and crotchets (one child on a chair/in a hoop) and quavers (two children on a chair/in a hoop) or could be made more complex with six or eight beats, semiquavers, compound metre...
 - The hoops can also be used by placing objects into them to represent the number of sounds on each beat. The teacher models the activity and individuals then create their own rhythms.
- A staff board and counters are a useful tool. Not only are they a useful aid when teaching the staff, note positions, melodic dictations and writing known melodies, they may also prove a useful tool for melodic improvisation and composition.



–The teacher sets the parameters, for example: 'For this melody I would like you to use only *so me* and *do* and I would like *do* on the first space.'

–The students could work in pairs, singing their composition upon completion. This activity could then be expanded in a number of ways. Students could write their melody onto the staff; students could play their melody on tuned percussion instruments as if there was a treble clef on the staff; advanced students could play their melody on tuned percussion as if there was a bass clef (creating a minor melody); rewrite the melody with a G *do*...

- I have found that the upper-primary students love to occasionally use the materials (like the staff boards) that I usually use for the younger students. (After all, adults still love playing the games, exploring the resources and playing with the puppets at music workshops—and they are a lot older than upper primary students!)

Extending the boundaries

- Rhythm snakes are one of my favourite improvisation activities. It is truly quick and easy and can be made as simple or complex as you like. Students are in a circle, though they can play this successfully at their desks. The simplest form of the game is where each student claps two beats of rhythm around the circle, trying not to miss a beat. Young ones use just crotchets and quavers. This is challenge enough for beginners.

Here are some ways to increase complexity, making the game one you can play throughout the primary school:

- Students add time names (*ta titi*) to their rhythm;
- increase to four beats;
- allow for free rhythmic patterns (not necessarily consciously known by the students);

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