

Resources for Classroom Music Teachers



# Instant Print Music Lessons

eBook

40

## LIFESAVERS FOR THE MUSIC TEACHER

A Collection of the 40 best music teaching ideas  
from hundreds of music teachers worldwide



Edited by Janice Tuck

# **40 Lifesavers for the Music Teacher**

**A Collection of the best Music Teaching Ideas selected from  
hundreds of Music Teachers Worldwide**

**Volume One  
2008**

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# Introduction

Have you ever wondered how some teachers find teaching music almost effortless? They never seem tired and always have "tricks" up their sleeve that not only entertain the children they teach, but they are able to communicate the ideas they have without any stress or seemingly no preparation at all?

This book was written with this intention in mind and was compiled as a result of an exciting competition where music teachers explained the ONE teaching tip or insight that has gained them the most success in the music classroom.

There was no given format requested and the stories have minimal editing from the competition versions.

In short, this book is made by music teachers to help music teachers to perform at their best in even the most grueling of situations for the sole reason of making music learning fun for children in music classes worldwide.

While you read the stories and ideas you'll find each one will have a short introduction which will give you a little bit of background information of where the idea was used and for who the idea is best suited for.

Anyone reading this book can access this information and learn it. It's just a matter of finding the ideas, trying them out and adapting them to your own needs.

Within "40 Lifesavers for the Music Teacher", you'll find inspiring stories from music teachers worldwide. Teachers just like you. Ideas that have always worked in tried and tested group and classroom situations and will help you achieve your own teaching goals and outcomes with the least effort possible and stories that will provide answers and inspiration in any Music Teachers life.

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# 1. Fun and Games

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## Musical Heads Down, Thumbs Up!

*This game is a great musical adaptation of an effective timeless classic.*

*Musical Heads Down- Thumbs Up is adapted from a traditional game which has been used in Australian classrooms for years.*

*The game requires a larger group and is perfect to use as a “time filler” for middle to upper primary aged students while revising and practicing aural rhythm concepts.*

*This game adaptation best suits students who have some knowledge of rhythms or who require help with aural rhythm concepts.*

*However, please be warned. Once you start this game, your students will keep asking for it in every lesson!*

### **Game Objective:**

To work out the person that picked you!  
This game helps make learning aural rhythms fun.

### **Appropriate Ages:**

Prep – Gr. 6 primary or junior level grades.

### **Game Preparation Notes:**

- Make your own cards or purchase commercially A set of rhythm cards each with a 4 beat pattern printed on one side.
- I usually stick to crotchet/quarter note and quavers/eighth notes at first.
- The game works best with crotchets/ quarter notes, quaver/ eighth notes, triplets, and semi-quaver/ sixteenth notes.
- Try to avoid using too many rests, and if you do decide to use them, come up with clear signals. ( An example for a crotchet/quarter note rest could be a simple click)

Examples of rhythms that work well for beginners include:  $\frac{4}{4}$  ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ || or  $\frac{4}{4}$  ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ||

### **Game Instructions:**

- 1) Choose 4 students to come and stand out the front (they are the “beat masters”)
- 2) Each beat master is given a different rhythm card.
- 3) Class is instructed “Heads down, Thumbs Up!”.
- 4) Beat masters then select one class member and gently tap the rhythm from their card on that student’s back.
- 5) If a class member is chosen they must put their thumbs down to indicate they have already been chosen.
- 6) Once all beat masters have finished choosing someone they return to the front of class.
- 7) Class is instructed to “Sit up, and Stand Up if you were Tapped”
- 8) Beat masters hold up their rhythm card and display it to the whole class.
- 9) Each person standing has one chance to identify the correct “beat master”.
- 10) If they do identify the beat master, they then take that person’s place as a beat master in the next round.

### **Modifications of the Game**

To make game more challenging for senior primary students you could have:

- two Beat Masters tap the same rhythm patterns – forcing students to identify the rhythm and which person tapped it
- have 6 different beat masters
- have 8 beat patterns instead of 4 beat patterns

To Simplify the Game for Junior Primary Aged Students

- Try 2 beat patterns

*Mark Winter*

*If this game is new to you, it will take time to learn and feel comfortable to play. However if you can work through this and be prepared to try it with new classes, it will be well worth the effort. As your classes get more experienced, they will even be able to run the whole game on their own. What else could a music teacher ask for when they have their students learning aural rhythms all on their own without even realizing it. After all they're just having fun aren't they!*

*As the children play it, they will all feel equally involved and important in the game and they all have a chance to win every single round.*

*You can use this game to fill in 5 minutes or play several rounds to fill in 20 minutes or even longer, the choice is yours.*

*Thanks for your input and adaptation of this traditional classic Mark. This is a game many teachers will be able to use in their regular "memory bank " of ideas.*

## Giant Musical Snakes and Ladders

*Here is a game that will encourage loads of active participation and will bring the game of Snakes and ladders to life!*

*The adaptation of this game encourages not only everyone to be involved and participate, but also makes sure that the children can answer important questions from relevant topics in order to progress. The other bonus of this game is that the questions have the ability to change from game to game. For this reason the game would never get boring to the children, and while it would take some preparation time for the teacher, the results would be well worth it.*

*Giant Musical Snakes and Ladders would be particularly suitable for all junior levels of schooling and could be used in either a large or small class situations. Children usually already know how to play the original version of the game, so the sense of familiarity helps them an immediate feel of “I Can Do This” – a hurdle that sometimes needs to be overcome with brand new ideas and young children.*

I am working on a version of Big Snakes and Ladders for to use for assessment purposes.

I bought some calico material and my husband drew a 5 X5 square grid of the game Snakes and Ladders on it.

The layout is a little bit different than the original version. Whenever you land on a snake, there will be a ladder as well on the same block.

You need to answer a question, sing a song, play something (whatever is relevant to your teaching) and the student needs to perform or answer the question.

If the student answers correctly, they go up the ladder, if wrong they go down the snake. I will use a big dice and bean bags for counters.

My little ones (Year 1 & 2 could even walk on the snakes and ladders instead of using the bean bags.

To attach answers to the game, you can print out on A4 paper, laminate and use Velcro to stick it on. This way you can change it any way you like.

*Hannelie Peck*

*It is amazing that with the same traditional game idea, how varied and exciting different interpretations can be!*

*I can just imagine using Hannelie's adaptation outside and with all children busy, learning and focussed. The great thing about her game is that it doesn't even need to be used solely for music. You could adapt this idea for many subject areas and it would always feel different because the questions would change regularly. For all those multi skilled teachers out there, this game could be used to help serve many purposes.*



## Musical Statues

*This classic party game is a wonderful reward or incentive for junior level students. Musical Statues incorporates movement, listening and loads of fun for everyone. It's requires minimal set up, a small bit of free space and a CD player or even just an I-pod to play the music.*

I work with elementary children and have found, when all else fails, Musical Statues is always a winner. From kindergarten to fifth grade, it's a great way to reward them for good behavior or hard work.

For those who don't know how it works, just play some music, and when the music stops they must freeze. You can suggest they freeze into animal poses, and it's also a wonderful way to quiz them on concepts, classical music, or to repeat rhythm patterns individually.

*Marie Hattman*

*Thank you to Marie for her thoughts on this classic game. Her contribution has certainly reminded me to continue using this idea and also reminded me of other variations of the game.*

*If you are looking for another version of Musical Statues, I've also found that calling the game "Islands" can also be fun.*

*Make up some paper islands on A3 or A4 sheets, you can make them as bold and bright or as simple as you like. You can laminate them if you like and scatter them around on the floor.*

*The rules of the game are exactly the same as Marie has explained to us except for when the music stops everyone gets to the nearest island as quickly as possible. The last child to reach the island is "out" and becomes a judge.*

*It kind of a mix between the "Musical Statues" and "Musical Chairs" game and could be an adaptation suitable for slightly older classes.*

## The Cup Game

*Before Ann had suggested this idea, I have to confess that I had never heard of it! I then started to research it a little and found how big it seemed, particularly in the United States. It's amazing how a game that seems to be a standard way of life in one country can be almost unheard of in another. Thanks Ann for suggesting this game and introducing it to me. I hope it gives inspiration to many other teachers out there who, like me have just never heard of it.*

For a fun activity with middle school music classes, we play the cup game. I use this activity as a reward for a good rehearsal or after a group of music has been learned & performed. It is a great way to practice rhythm and work together as a group.

We will often use a simple song in 4/4 time to go along with the game (Like Jingle Bells) and that will give us the opportunity to talk about tempos. It is also possible to simplify this game to work with younger kids.

You can also have the kids come up with their own versions of the cup moves. The kids love it and will practice it after class till they can do it better than me!

The game can be found demonstrated several places on the internet by searching for "cup game". Here is one link: <http://www.mbinde.com/games/cup-game/>

*Ann Jaques*

*Playing Instructions: (from:  
<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/games/thecupgame.html>)*

*This game is for 3 or more players. (The more, the better.)*

*This is a game of accuracy. If you make the wrong move, you're out. The last person playing is the winner.*

- *First take your cup and turn it upside down.*
- *Clap twice and tap the cup 3 times on the top.*
- *Now clap again and pick up your cup and move it to the right.*
- *You clap, pick up the cup upside down, so when you pick it up, it's upright.*
- *Tap the top of it with your left hand, put it down.*
- *Pick it up with your left hand, put your right hand down, and cross your left arm over your right to put the cup back on the table.*

*So the whole thing is:*

*Clap, clap, tap, tap, tap.*

*Clap, move, right.*

*Clap, turn, touch, touch, change, pat, over.*

*If you'd like to see a demonstration we've found a couple of videos on You-tube which show how the game is played – to view them simply visit:*

*[http://musicteachersblog.com/?page\\_id=71](http://musicteachersblog.com/?page_id=71)*

*I could see this as being a great game to implement while teaching drum kit to a class. The problem with teaching drums to a middle school class is that only one person gets to play while the others need to do something else. This game does not need a teacher once the students are experienced at playing it and would keep them focussed, musical, team orientated and would be loads of fun!*

*While other activities like projects, worksheets or a skill like juggling would still be beneficial activities to still encourage while teaching drum kit, this game would help "break up" The monotony of doing the same every session while teaching this topic. I look forward to using this "new found" game introduced to me by Ann with kids who just need something to do while increasing their co-ordination and rhythm.*

## Giant's Castle

*Children love using flashcards, but the problem is that the same games get boring. If the same game is played too often, we all start to lose concentration and enthusiasm. I know that I am always looking out for slight variations and changes to keep the children challenged and enjoying the games.*

*Giants Castle has all the criteria of a great young child's game. It's simple, a little crazy and is a fun variety to other flashcard games. This game is sure to become a hit with students very quickly and will be a great game to use with your young classes when you just need to lighten things up a little.*

The activity that my Junior Grades ask for constantly is called "Giant's Castle". Basically, it's this:

- The children sit in a circle. I place flashcards on the floor to represent a ladder (10 or 12 cards) leading to the Giant's castle (my chair).
- I "capture" one child (preferably a giggly one) who sits at my feet. Students are invited to save their friend by climbing the ladder step by step.
- Flashcards may have a 4 or 8 beat rhythm pattern to clap, a pattern of pitch dots to sing, or notes on the staff to name, sing or play - whatever they are currently working on.
- If the chosen student correctly performs all cards, the captured one is freed, and we begin again.
- If the chosen student falls off the 'ladder' i.e. makes a mistake (which the rest of the class are avidly watching for) I begin to 'eat' the captured child - with much licking of lips and slurping noises, I pretend to chew off a little finger.
- When I show the class the 'stump' (folded down finger), they get excited and all want to be the next rescuer.

Silly, but the kids love it, and they try so hard to perform correctly, even though they get the most enjoyment when someone fails and I get to 'eat' a child - fun, and playing it every now and again helps to keep them on side.

*Beverley J Hartwig*

*I can just imagine teachers everywhere being asked time and time again to play this cute, fun game. Classrooms will be squealing with excitement and children will just love learning with flashcards while avoiding being eaten by their teacher.*

*Giant's Castle is a game that really captures the essence of getting young students into a fun and active learning environment filled with excitement. Thanks to Beverley for her fun flashcard, action game.*

## Musical Hangman

*Hangman is an old classic that is always popular with students of all ages. This musical version will have your students expanding their musical knowledge while having loads of fun. The only pre requisite to playing Musical Hangman is the children have a good understanding of reading and writing. Other than that, it's the perfect game solution for many ages and ability levels.*

### **Game Objective:**

To guess the musical term or phrase

### **Playing Instructions:**

1. Pupils can choose an instrument, rhythm style or any musical term of their choice.
2. The other members of the class ask questions to help uncover the mystery word. Students could ask for letter names or even clues to help solve the puzzle. Some questions to ask could include:
  - What Musical family does it belong to?
  - How is it played?
  - What section of the orchestra does it belong to?
  - What's the origin and history?

I find it great fun and informative and often get asked for a game at the end of each lesson.

*Jane Morrey*

*Thank you to Jane for submitting her musical adaptation of Hangman. This is a game that could be implemented into classrooms and studios without much preparation or effort at all and I'm sure everyone will agree that this idea really works and is highly useful.*

## The Count to 60 Silence Game

*Here is a game to help you gain focus and attention with your classes. This game is ideal to help calm down the younger classes and can also be adapted to use with flashcards.*

Here's a game that I play with my classes of 5 and 6 year olds. It's a simple game and the object is to keep quiet for 60 seconds.

### **Playing Instructions:**

- Explain the game to the class by outlining the object of the game. Also explain to the class that this is a team game and it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that each other is keeping quiet. If one person makes a single noise or fidgets then that person is letting the team down.
- Explain that you the teacher will count to 60. If anyone makes the slightest noise or fidgets the count will start again at 1. If the class begins laughing continuously, moves around or makes noise, keep counting 1 until the class returns to quite then resume count. If they reach 60 they get to play the drums or their favorite tune or game or could even leave early.
- Only the person counting is heard.
- The counting speed and the voice could be modulated loud or soft, high pitch / low pitch or can be fast/slow or stop/start for a little fun. This game can help with their awareness, focus and concentration.

### **Game Variations:**

- You could use flash cards instead of your voice to count with.
- Numbers could be written on a board and the teacher points to the numbers to signify counting.
- Counting with numbers could be replaced with using symbols, colors or characters.

*Paul Lau*

*As a teacher it is great to have many ideas in your "Kit Bag" to get your classes on task and focused. Paul's idea is easy to implement, would easily settle an excited class effectively. Thanks Paul for contributing such a great idea.*

## Alphabet Soup

*Whether you need to fill in an extra few minutes of a lesson or are in need of an activity to get your students to revise learned information, Alphabet Soup is a great addition to your list of resources.*

*This game has very quick and easy set up and would suit ages and abilities of students from beginner to more advanced.*

My students enjoy playing a game called "Alphabet Soup".

At the end of a lesson, if there are a few extra minutes, I let them spoon a letter (pre-written onto a piece of paper and folded) out of a soup bowl.

The students then proceed to name a musical idea, composer, or symbol, etc. that begins with that letter. (for example; A- appoggiatura for a more advanced student or for a younger student, A is the second space in the treble staff). They must know the definition as well or be able to explain something about the work. B- Bach-Baroque composer.

This is quick and easy game and can be used in sessions with players divided into teams.

Hope you enjoy!

*Alphabet soup seems like a great way to get students thinking about and using musical terms, knowledge and trivia in a fun way. Thanks Dianne for an effective, unique game idea which is so easy to implement.*

## Musical Charades

*Musical Charades is a word guessing game where one or a team of player's act out a word or phrase and the other players guess what it is. The whole idea is to use physical language rather than verbal language and results in loads of fun and laughs. This musical version would be a great way to break the ice and get everyone in the whole class involved with minimal preparation and maximum involvement. This game would be suitable and fun for all ages and abilities. You just tailor the ideas to suit your age groups.*

I teach in a school for autistic children ages 2 - 15 years. I utilize this lesson plan with children ages 12 - 15 years, so the age group should be adjusted accordingly. I use this in the beginning of the school year, as it is great fun and my classes can not wait for their next 'music class' time.

### **Playing Instructions:**

1. Assemble songs that are age appropriate and that the children will recognize. I use songs from movies that most children have seen For example: "I'm a Believer" by Smashbox and from the movie Shrek.
2. Divide the class into groups with a total of about 3 - 4 groups.
3. Instruct the class on how to play charades.
4. Tell each group to choose one song. (I put a list of movies and songs on the board to choose from.)
5. Help each group as needed on ways in which they can 'act' out their song choice.
6. Get started and have fun!

*Teresa Norman*

*The game Charades is one of those games that just never ages or dates. Recently, there been new TV shows based on the game and internet sites like You Tube have plenty of fun versions of the game.*

*If you are stuck for ideas, You can find many websites to get more clues from and you can even print out your own clue cards. Thank you to Teresa for her description of this classic, fun game.*



## Memory Rhythm Flashcard Game

*This game is a great way to improve memory and is perfect for those more advanced students needing extra challenge.*

I would like to share a game with you. It can be played in a class or with individual students.

### **Materials Needed:**

You will need 4 printed flashcards each with a rhythmic pattern.

An example you could use could include:

Time signature:  $\frac{3}{4}$

Card 1: ♩ ♪♪♪ |

Card 2: ♩ . |

Card 3: ♩ ♩ |

Card 4: ♪♪♪ ♩ |

The 4 cards represent 4 bars.

### **Playing Instructions:**

1. Show the students a 4 bars rhythm (use the time signature that best suits your class).
2. Clap the rhythm together with the class 2 or 3 times. Have the students try to memorize the rhythm.
3. Turn the 1st card over have the students clap.
4. Turn the 2nd card over and they still will need to remember the first as well
5. Third time cover the first 3 bars and keep clapping.
6. Fourth time turn all cards over have the class clap the 4 bars by memory. See if your students can remember all the rhythmic patterns of the whole 4 bars.

*Chin Wai Ling*

*Students never grow out of these types of games, and thanks to Chin for providing this challenging upper level flashcard game requiring them to develop their skill in memory. I can't wait to use it on students who need to remember rhythms and melodies for theory exams.*

## Game Show Mania

*Game shows are fantastic fun for the classroom and kids love them because they are something that they often see on TV.*

*I remember vividly as a child playing along with the game and fantasizing about the prizes I would pick out or would want to win.*

*Generally all the feelings of game shows are linked to feelings of excitement, fun and enjoyment. So why not use this concept to revise and extend our students on musical concepts?*

*Here are some contributions based on the game show “Jeopardy” for us to use and implement into our classroom settings.*

I have found that my students like to play “Music Jeopardy” at the end of the year as a revision activity.

I choose categories such as; rhythm, melody and composers and have 5 questions ranging in value from 100 – 500 points.

The classes are divided into teams, questions asked and hopefully the right answers are given.

For fun I tell the students that if they miss then I get the points. This usually makes them stay interested in playing because they want to win!

*Kathryn*

Sometimes it is difficult to get students to participate in a free flowing manner, especially if it involves singing!

To get around this, I use a deck of cards and announce that we are playing “Jeopardy” or some other game show.

This is how I implement the game into my classroom:

- I have all the cards labeled with a student’s name along with several wild cards.
- I establish the topics of the game to be covered. Some examples could be: repeating a musical phrase, working on pitch, intervals, dynamics or learning a piece of music.
- I announce the rules appropriate to the objective and age of students.
- Using my game host voice, I announce the procedure and get the game showing.

- Instead of asking for a volunteer, I simply take a card from the deck and address that person. If I have the time, space and full cooperation, we may even set up a game show type seating with the contestants in front of the room.
- Cards are placed on the bottom of the deck or in a discard pile once they have been used, and all cards are reshuffled when needed. I also use the cards to deal out teams and other groups when necessary and my students seem to appreciate the randomness of the selection.

The game sets a festive atmosphere and all students generally participate enthusiastically. We have virtual "prizes" such as a trip to Disneyland or Hawaii or use pretend money.

*MB Jones*

*If you are unfamiliar with the game shows that are most relevant to your classes, try looking them up on the Internet. You will find an abundance of different versions of the rules, videos and ways to adapt the game to the classroom.*

*Overall game shows are fun and the kids love them, especially when it's a game they are really familiar with. Thank you to both contributors for sharing their experiences and implementation of "Music Jeopardy"*

## Class Award and Point Games

*Here are some Class award ideas and point games contributed by three teachers to help with getting your students to remain on task and arriving to lessons on time. These ideas are useful for any classroom situation or ensemble session and can be used for any age group.*

### "Star Class Award"

My students come to music class once a week, and I was having a problem with some teachers who would keep their class back from music class to further prepare the students for standardized testing.

I created a "Star Music Class" award that I gave at the end of each grading period to all classes that met the criteria.

After the first couple of years of doing this, I had teachers telling me, "I want to win that award this year." And some of these teachers had been the worst offenders in terms of keeping their kids during music class time.

There were two requirements to win the award. The first was the teacher's responsibility, and the second was the students' responsibility:

They were:

1. The class needed to come to music every time that they were scheduled.
2. There were no student's names placed on the music teacher's discipline log for them to be considered for the award.

At the awards assembly after the end of a grading period, the teacher(s) who won the award were presented with a nice colored certificate I create on my computer. I also gave a photocopy for each student in the class to take home.

Within a day or two of the assembly, I'd also drop by each winning classroom with a treat (usually cookies) for both the winning teacher and students.

At the beginning of each school year, I send a memo to the teachers that outlines the requirements and rewards I also keep a bulletin board in my room titled "Star Music Classes."

I have the bulletin board divided into 4 parts- one for each grading period. At the beginning of a grading period, I have slips of paper with each teacher's name in the appropriate quadrant (I use a 72 pt. font), listed by grade level.

If a class misses a music class (without scheduling a make-up class), or if a student's name goes on my discipline log, then the teacher's name is removed from the bulletin board.

This works out to be a great way for the teachers and students to check to see if they still qualify for the award.

After a grading period's awards have been given, I put a list of winning classes onto the bulletin board.

*Marcia Gilbert*

### **"100 Point Card System"**

The idea which I find works best in my band classes is called the 100 Point Card System.

Here's how it works:

I give each of my student's 5 points each when I catch them doing something right. For example: cutting the music off and listening, sitting with good posture, standing in line quietly or answering a question correctly.

When a student gets to 100 points, he/she will receive a free 100 card. The card may be used in any band grade or traded in for candy at the end of the nine week grading period.

This solves so many discipline problems, and the kids love to "go shopping" with their free cards. I have tons of candy for them to choose from.

*Claudia Lundin*

### **"The 10 Point Game"**

#### **Playing Instructions:**

- You start off with ten points, you can represent them anyway you want e.g. as ten marbles in a jar or as a tally on the board.
- Every time they don't do as you ask you minus one point.
- Every time they do something well you add a point.
- At the end of the week, count up how many points they have. 2 points= 1 minute.
- You can reward them this time back by giving them some free time, allowing to play games, play on computers or draw.

*Gemma Saxty*

*Thank you to these three contributors for these excellent ideas on class and ensemble management games. These ideas are crucial to the effective running of our classes at times and can be used as you need them or as a routine strategy. You can get totally comfortable and familiar with one strategy or you can use a different one each term- the choice is yours.*

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2.

## On Learning

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## Mystery Musician

*Searching for great incentive to reward positive behavior for our music students can be an endless job. Let's face it - Music is not a quiet lesson to teach! Music Lessons are an "active" participation lesson each child armed with an instrument and as a result the kids get excited, busy and loud!*

*This incentive system would suit any classroom or studio music teacher with loud and excited children of any age. It could easily become a classroom management structure to be used day in, day out throughout many classes. Best of all -it's FUN!*

Most of my music students are between 5 and 10 years of age, and they LOVE a little incentive system I've devised. I teach in a public school, and my class sizes are large. Last year I had some sections of over 40 students! Even with large groups of students, my idea called "Mystery Musician" is extremely effective. I've stuck with it because unlike a lot of other incentive/behavior ideas, this one focuses on both group behavior (and thus their cooperation and teamwork skills because they're working towards a common goal!) and the behavior of the individual with a chance for a little reward. Here's how Mystery Musician works:

Prior to my students entering the room, I've randomly selected one student's name from the class. This will be the Mystery Musician for that class. It's a mystery because my students won't find out who it is until the very end of the class time.

When my students enter the room, the word "MUSIC" is written on the board. (Over time I made laminated magnetic letters that stick to my board - these are just more durable and stand out a little more than the hand-written letters.) The idea is that if my students collectively get too noisy, off task, etc. that they lose a letter. I always start by removing the letter C and work backwards. Sometimes I will announce that we've lost a letter, but most of the time I can continue with our activity without even having to stop to explain what has happened. The visual aspect of taking something away seems to have an impact all by itself. I love that it doesn't interrupt my teaching to take away a letter. It's a great non-verbal reminder to them to exercise good behavior and self-control. We continue in this manner, and the students know that in order to have their Mystery Musician for they day, they must have at least the letter M left when it is time to leave the music room. The U-C in music are just "reminder" letters with no consequence of their own.

Right before my student's line up to leave, I will announce who the Mystery Musician was for that day. Provided that student has followed directions with no problems for the day, he or she gets to select a little "prize" from the Mystery Musician basket. This is just a little container I keep on the piano (in plain view of the whole class) that is filled with little trinkets like music theme pencils and erasers, small sticker sheets, etc. Dollar stores and Oriental Trading ([www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com)) are perfect sources for Mystery Musicians prizes.

If the class loses all of the letters in music, there is no Mystery Musician for the day. In fact, I won't even tell them whose name was picked. I do this for two reasons.

1. It's possible that the Mystery Musician for that day behaved beautifully, and the class was just having a bad day. I don't want that "good" student to feel like he or she was punished by not getting to pick the prize.
2. Half of the fun is wondering if it's your own day to be the Mystery Musician. If the class hasn't earned finding out who the mystery musician is, then I won't tell them.

A few other thoughts on the “Mystery Musician” Management Strategy:

- There is no limit to the number of times a student can be the Mystery Musician. My reason is this:  
I don't want the incentive to be gone for those students who were already the Mystery Musician. Unfortunately some kids wouldn't care about Mystery Musician if they knew they had had their turn, and wouldn't be picked again any time soon. So while it would be extremely rare for the same student to be selected two music class times in a row, this would never be impossible. It keeps the incentive alive for them!
- Some classes ask me if they can earn letters back once they've lost them. My answer is always yes. If a class can correct their issues and get back on track, I love to put letters back on the board!
- You can adapt it any way you like. Some times when a class is particularly rowdy coming in the room, I'll make them a deal like, "Today we can have two Mystery Musicians if we keep ALL of the letters in music." This is great for the class that comes to music right after recess, before Winter Break, etc. Often on the last day of school, as an added treat, I'll give them a Mystery Musician for EVERY single letter in music that remains. Kids love the thought that they have 5 chances to be the Mystery Musician!

I know my students like this strategy because:

- 1) It's effective for me in terms of classroom management.
- 2) Every year on the first day of the new school year, one of the first questions to come out of their mouth is: "Are we going to do Mystery Musician this year? "

*Cindy Holzhauser*

*I love this idea because it exemplifies the fact that "actions speak louder than words". Very often the best classroom strategies don't require copious amounts of rules and regulations and no talking to make a point by a teacher. I can see this idea working in so many classrooms around the world because it doesn't require a certain personality by the teacher and doesn't require our students to have in depth knowledge of the game rules. It's such an easy, but effective strategy to implement all year round.*

*For our visually based learners, the bold MUSIC letters give a perfect indication and reminder of where they are and how they can win the game. The auditory component of the teacher not having to raise his or her voice, just lets them get on with the most important job of inspiring the students without any behavior distractions. And the teamwork element that this idea creates in requiring our students to work together to achieve a common goal and earning incentive makes everyone feel good and appeals to the kinesthetic side of all of our personalities.*

*Mystery Musician would appeal to any class out there of any ability. It's the simple things that are often the best!*



## SQUILT!

*Have you ever needed a different technique to encourage your classes to listen to a piece of music without all of the extra noise?*

*I always remember my first years of teaching and remember admiring other experienced teachers who could always do this without hesitation and seemingly without effort. They would be able to calm new noisy classes in a matter of minutes and would somehow get them all quiet and listening to a classical piece of music without any stress. Of course over the years, I did develop techniques to suit my teaching style, but I certainly wish I had this idea to use way back then.*

It used to be difficult to quiet down my students when I did listening activities with them. Now I tell them it is time for SQUILT! (Super Quiet Un-Interrupted Listening Time). I even have a poster in my room that says SQUILT!

The first time we do SQUILT!, I tell them what it means and explain it. I give them a SQUILT! sheet to guide their listening. I keep the listening examples short (30 - 90 seconds), and play it two or more times. They fill out their SQUILT sheet while they listen. If someone talks during SQUILT! I simply point to the sign. After listening, we discuss what we heard. I collect the SQUILT! sheets at the end of the activity and use it for participation points. I can also get an idea as to who is paying attention and who is not, or who "gets" it and who doesn't. My students love doing SQUILT! and if one of their classmates talks during SQUILT! the class will often correct the offending student. There are even times when we are not doing SQUILT! and my students will say SQUILT! when someone is talking while I am teaching.

This is not an original idea, but I have made it my own through experimentation with my students. It can be adapted to be longer, shorter, can be simplified or could be made for a different age level. The original idea came from the Idea Bank at [www.musicK8.com](http://www.musicK8.com).

*Pam Foldessy*

*Pam has kindly provided a SQUILT sheet which can be viewed and printed out at: [http://musicteachersblog.com/?page\\_id=71](http://musicteachersblog.com/?page_id=71)*

*This idea would be highly appropriate in the classroom for any teacher of any ability who needed a class to listen to a piece of music without interruption. I could imagine that it would be perfect for upper Primary/ Junior high school students and especially for those large mixed classes. Thank you to Pam, for her exceptional strategy to develop great music listening skills for a wide variety of music classes.*

## Score Study Idea

*If you've ever needed an idea to encourage your students to listen to classical music or read scores, then this idea is an absolute winner! This score study idea will encourage your students to become actively involved in listening for key themes in a really fun way. Children will be busy finding the information retaining it simultaneously. I really love the fact that the goals and outcomes are really clear and simple in this idea. It is a highly appropriate idea for junior students, but I'm sure that with a little restructuring of the goals and objectives, it could be easily adapted for older students up into junior high school levels too.*

Here is a lesson plan that worked very well for my 2nd and 3rd graders, and it would be a lot of fun for older kids as well.

### **Title:**

How many times did Beethoven write the four-note theme (Ti-ti-ti TAA) in the 1st movement of the 5th Symphony?

### **Materials Needed:**

1. Recording of the 1st movement to Beethoven's 5th Symphony
2. Copy the score to the movement (study scores are readily available at Amazon.com)
3. Each child needs a pencil

### **Objectives:**

1. Introduction to score study
2. Recognizing musical themes by ear and in a score

### **Lesson Outline:**

- Pair up students with a partner and give each child a page or two from the score. Write an example of the theme on the board or use an overhead projector to show an example in the score of the 4-note theme while listening to the opening measures.
- While listening to the movement, each child is to circle every occurrence of the theme. It is not likely they will recognize when their page of the score is being played, but if they are taught what to look for and how it sounds, they should have no trouble recognizing the theme in the score. Older classes may be introduced to the same theme occurring in sections of the orchestra while younger ones are not expected to differentiate such occurrences.
- After the recording is over, have each student count how many times the theme occurred on their page. Tally up the occurrences on the board and see what your students come up with. My classes have come up with anywhere between 300 and 2000 times! Of course, the correct number isn't really important.

Each class I have tried this with has really had a lot of fun and learned about themes and score study as well!

*Thank you to Nancy for her inspiring lesson outline and objectives. I love the way she has selected one piece of information for the children to easily identify both visually and aurally and has concentrated on that for the entire lesson. Children would be extremely clear on what they need to find and would not only achieve it, but would also retain the information well and would have a positive experience with score reading overall. A contribution with loads of substance!*

## Chair Train

*If you've ever needed a variety of different ways to help settle your classes while listening to a musical example, then this is an idea you may like to use.*

*Chair Train could be used with most classes young or and as Finnur suggests in his submission, this activity forces the students in the class to interpret the music without any teacher explanation required.*

Some students often find it difficult to sit quietly and listen to a piece of music. This little idea has helped me solve this problem.

When we are listening to a piece of music, the students form "a train".

They sit on chairs, behind each other. Then I ask them to draw a picture with their fingers on the back of the person sitting in front of them.

This makes them concentrate on the music, when listening. This also "forces" them to interpret the music.

*Finnur from the Faroe Islands*

*I have tried this idea in the past with younger students, they love their back being tickled and the sense of touch is meant to help internalize the music or concept more.*

*I always found this was a useful technique to use when teaching simple drawing concepts like drawing a treble clef for example. It just seemed to add a more kinesthetic dimension to the task and broke up the monotony. We used to draw in time to classical music, but try it for yourself and see what works best.*

## Under The Sea

*"Under The Sea" is one of those songs that children will be easily motivated to learn each and every word to. It's just a winner of a song. It's cute (but we won't tell the boys that!), is used in the "Little Mermaid" Movie that children and adults of all ages just adore. The song sets the scene wonderfully for a lesson at the sea for young classes.*

*In this contribution, Anne explains how she has based her lessons and some activities for her primary school students around this song. She details some lovely, simple activities to keep the children busy while they sing the song over and over again and learn it. It's a great way to keep the repetition of learning a new song fresh and fun for the children.*

As a relief teacher, I find that all primary aged children love to sing "Under the Sea" I show some pictures of sea creatures, the children listen to the song, sing along quietly and they close their eyes. Children share what they saw in their garden. They come up with everything from colorful coral to pirates treasure and mermaids.

I then bring out a blue queen sized silk sheet and small groups of children take turns being 'Under the Sea', while other children wave the sheet up and down slowly while we sing the song over and over.

The children just love this activity and learn the song quickly and enthusiastically. If I want a quieter, activity, I play sea sounds while the children are 'Under the Sea'.

*Anne Davis*

*Thank you Anne for documenting how to introduce the song and learn it all through all in one lesson. Her process really lays a strong foundation for learning this song meticulously and it even sets a process that you could adapt to many other themes. These activities would work time and time again, and the students would keep asking to sing that song every time they have a lesson!*

## Popsicle Stick Idea

*This Popsicle Stick Idea is a great way to encourage fair and active participation in your classes. You can use this highly effective management idea for just about assigning any task to individual classes or making fair class teams. In her contribution, Jill explains how she uses this concept with her classes of elementary students. I'm sure that this idea could also be adapted for many higher grades as well.*

I have taken an idea that I learned from the “Music Express Magazine” and have expanded upon it. I teach small elementary school children in-groups of 20 or more. I keep them focused by having them select Popsicle sticks each having a color and a number, as they enter the classroom.

They look at the stick they have selected and must remember the number on the stick and the color of it as well.

I have students collect the sticks in a cup. I use the sticks to call students up to demonstrate activities.

I discard each stick after they have been used. This ensures that the same children are not being called repeatedly. It also involves some students who are apprehensive to participate on their own to take part.

I play games and put the children on teams based on either the number or the color on their stick.

I have made six special sticks with the letters A-F that are rainbow colored. These are used to make team captains or group leaders.

The children never know before they come in to the room what stick they might pull. Every week the children ask if they will be pulling sticks. Once in a while I don't and that keeps them wanting it. It really works well.

You can make up any other ways to use the sticks. Your students will love it!

*Jill Grois*

*I love Jill's adaptation of this idea. Kids love the unknown and by using this process they feel actively involved in determining the events in their class for each lesson. It's also a great way to make sure that every child's contribution is valued and is equal. It's always so easy to focus just on the loudest kids, but in this strategy by discarding the sticks everyone in the class has equal contribution.*

## Musical Bag

*The Musical Bag idea is a great way of getting your students to feel in control of their learning. If they help you to select the tasks at hand at the beginning of your music classes, not only will they understand the structure and content of the lesson, they will feel part of the whole process in determining it. What a wonderful way to empower our children with jobs and responsibilities.*

*This task delegation idea would be ideal for most primary level classes and would work even beyond into junior high years. It can be used for music and could also be adapted for other curriculum areas as well. Overall Musical Bag is a great organizational tool.*

A brown paper bag can be a lifesaver!

I put titles of songs or musical activities on small slips of paper and place them in the bag. Students may then choose a title and we sing, etc. A Bag for each grade level K - 5 is a ready resource.

In the first class of a new school year, we may review songs from the previous year. The last class of school year could review all songs learned throughout the year. Sometimes the bag might have a new song or activity title.

A variation on this bag makes a great help for grades 6-8.

This bag might include the activities I plan for a in a specific lesson. Ideas may include rhythm reviews, song reviews, games and compare/contrast exercises. The students get to choose in which order we do the activities for the day.

This idea is also a great help for any substitute teacher taking the class.

*lmsmathis*

*In my teaching, I always had students who preferred some activities instead of others. While some students loved playing games, others would prefer to sing and play. It can be hard to keep balanced and equitable session. "Musical Bag" is a great solution in helping to keep that balance.*

## Queen Victoria Face

*Here's is a classic example of using your body language to speak for you. With a little practice, this strategy will work every time for any group of students of all ages.*

I learned this from the great Fred Jones in Santa Cruz, California. He calls it the "Queen Victoria Face."

When a class is noisy and you need them to get quiet, stand in front of them, relax your forehead, face, and jaw (keeping your mouth closed), and breathe slowly. Your hands can be in your pockets or behind you, whatever is comfortable.

Continue until the class is quiet. By doing this, your face will look stern to them, and they will think you are mad, but you are actually just standing there relaxing.

Some students will probably start "shhh-ing" each other, and soon they will get quiet, probably within 30 seconds. It only works though, if you are absolutely serious about it, so that's why it takes practice. It's good to practice it in front of a mirror before actually doing it in a class.

You can't laugh or smile or anything. It helps to try to emulate an indignant attitude of "how dare they!" Once the students are quiet, you can just go on like nothing happened, or you can say "Thank you," then go on.

*Nancy Moser*

*This simple strategy, especially with noisy, excited classes can be the difference between a successful and positive experience and a total flop! Let me explain: I'm sure you'll agree that sometimes if we don't catch the attention of the class early, then it just doesn't stop. It gets louder and louder until it gets out of control.*

*This simple strategy helps to control the situation into effective learning straight away – it's like the children know where they stand with you and it's a way for a teacher to set the tone and expectation of the session.*

*I've also found that this strategy also works really well with quieting down an audience before a performance.*

*Thank you to Nancy for helping us re-visit this important strategy.*

## Helping Young Children Remember Note Names

*Try teaching a young child about crotchets, semibreves and minims and you'll soon find that it will be way over their head!*

*They just can't connect with the concepts and names, it's all just a foreign language to them.*

*If you can find a way to link a known concept to the new information, then young children will not only have a positive experience, will learn more as well.*

*Here are some suggestions put together by a piano teacher who specializes in teaching young beginner students.*

*Just a note: If you teach American time names then this submission may not be appropriate to your teaching. However, you could still use the concept to create your own names for notation such as quarter notes, half notes and whole notes.*

When teaching children the notes & musical signs I give them funny names as memory hooks to make them easier to remember.

You can modify the names for the interest of the children or their age and you can add more names for additional notes as their music knowledge increases.

Here are some initial ideas that I find work with primary school aged children:

(Please Note: These are for the European Rhythm Name Notes, but you could make up your own for American Time Names as well)

- A Crotchet = "cranky crotchets" because they are black and cross.
- A Minim = "musical minims". This one has a rhyme... "Minims give music to me and you, they count 1, 2."
- A Semibreve = "Semibreve Saltanas" because they are fat like a whole saltana. I draw four pips inside so they can remember a semibreve has 4 counts. You can even have a sample to eat for this one which is fun.
- Quavers = "Quick Quavers" because of the way they are played more quickly than crotchets.
- Semibreve Rest = I show them that it is sleeping under the line (both semibreve & sleeping start with 's') & we say "sleep, 2, 3, 4" to show that it sleeps for 4 counts.
- Minim rest = a Mr Men hat sitting on top of the line (minim & Mr Men both start with 'm'.) I show them we can make a minim rest hat on our own heads (we make a pointy hat with our hands on our heads.) As we make it I say "minim rest 1, 2" to remind them this is a rest for 2 counts.



Here's a Game to Practice...

Once my students have mastered the names, I hold up the cards and give each one a special action.

They make the action & say the words as I hold up the card with that note or sign on it.

If you have a whole class you can make it into a competition and those that get it wrong or are too slow are eliminated.

Depending on the age & ability you can also break up into smaller groups to play.

The actions & words I use are:

- Crotchet = Cranky face with hands on hips & say "cranky crotchet"
- Minim = They say the end of the minim rhyme "minims count 1, 2" & for the action count 1, 2 on their fingers.
- Semibreve = Thumb and pointer finger making a circle for semibreve & say "Semibreve Sultana"
- Quaver = Running on the spot & say "Quick Quaver"
- Minim Rest = Hands to make a hat on head & say "minim rest, 1, 2"
- Semibreve Rest = pretending to sleep for semibreve rest & say "sleep 2, 3, 4".

After a while I modify the game so they say the correct name of the notes & signs instead of the memory hook. I then modify it so I just show the cards and the children call out the correct names.

*Vicki Kwan*

*Thanks to Vicki for these cute note character ideas and games. Young children will really enjoy drawing and being these characters and they are so easy to modify back into conventional terminology as the children get older.*

# 3.

# On Instruments & Ensembles

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## Band and Ensemble Management Strategies

*Here are three really interesting band/ ensemble tips and tricks to help develop great listening skills, intonation and balance in playing. These strategies are perfect for the band or ensemble that you want to reach higher standards with and will help to teach our students to play more musically rather than mechanically.*

Ever wonder why your band just can not play together or want a strategy to help your band get to the next level? Here are several methods that work really well.

### **Breathing Exercise:**

Explain: to the students that they are going to play and sustain a Bb concert with their eyes closed but I (the teacher) will give the instruction on when to do so. I will give several instructions. The first is sit up nice and tall, the second is close your eyes and the third is 'breathe' at which point you will give a nice deep breath and come in at the exact same time. You will sustain the note for 8 counts and end at the exact same time. If you are not finished counting and everyone else is finished you MUST stop. The tempo is determined from the Breath. You may need to demonstrate some how before you start.

NOTE: make sure that the students are listening to each other intently, and concentrating. If they are not, the exercise will not be successful. Also, it is very helpful to have the students make a nice release on the note.

If the students can do it perfectly or close to perfect with 8 counts increase it to 12.

Have the percussionists “breathe” with the band. When you go back to the piece that has been having trouble ask them to listen to each other the exact same way they just were with that exercise. If everything was going well, there will be instant results.

### **Chorale Exercise:**

This exercise is similar to the previous one but using a chorale.

- Have the students take out a chorale. Use one that they have either a) seen before or b) brand new to them.
- Run through the piece making sure they are listening to each other.
- If all goes well, ask the students to do the same piece un-conducted. (As the teacher you will still ask them to sit up nice and tall and then give the instruction to breathe). They should be able to start their notes at the same time. They will play through the piece un-conducted being forced to listen to each other. If they are having trouble starting at the same time, give them an up beat and then just sit back. The tough part will be the fermata's present in the chorales.

Over the period of a week, doing this on a regular basis there will be very obvious results in the way they listen to each other and play together. After a while, they won't need to run through the piece first, they will just do it un-conducted as part of the warm-up.

NOTE: try to rotate between different chorales so that they can do it all the time instead of for just one piece. The goal is to sound conducted without a conductor.

Third Exercise:

Simply tell the students that the goal of ensemble playing is to make the person next to you sound amazing. If you can do that it means that you are playing in tune, in tone and in time.

*Steve Giddings*

*I know that when working with ensembles or bands of any description, good warm up ideas and games to play to help improve intonation never go a midst and can be hard to find. Rehearsals without variety can be long, and more advanced bands need to be challenged in musical ways.*

*Steve's ideas will not only break up the monotony of rehearsals, but by incorporating these simple strategies, they are sure to reach higher standards quickly. Thank you for your informative and helpful contribution, Steve.*

## Memory Game Play

*Committing a piece of music to memory requires a set of many skills and brain functions. It's a learned process requiring loads of exposure and internalization of the piece of music.*

*Through playing this game, your students will start to develop excellent knowledge and confidence with repertoire pieces. Younger students just love to play this game and it works well in both private lessons or in larger groups.*

I teach violin, mostly I teach individually, but I also do group lessons as in the Suzuki method.

This is what I do with the group lessons when we are working on a certain piece:

- Depending on the number of the group I let them choose a note or finger on a piece (twinkle variations or just the theme), so every body plays their note(s) when is their turn. One student plays AA, another EE, a third one F#F#, again the second one plays E, etc, etc.
- A variation of this exercise is to have the students in a circle and play their single note one after the other. If you want to be more spontaneous you can point to each one who will play the next note. The aim is to keep the piece flowing without any stops.

You can toy around with this exercise as you can do it as a competition or just use it with any scale or piece. It is a lot of fun, and helps students to concentrate and memorize the piece.

*Hermes Mejia*

*Thank you to Hermes for outlining an effective, simple strategy to aid with developing a better understanding of a piece of music.*

## The Ultimate Recital Performance Technique

*How often do we find that our students can play something perfectly until a distraction sets in? Distraction can change everything and can devastate a child when it happens to them in their actual performance.*

*This teaching tip is a "how to" approach in getting students to be able to concentrate through anything and ready for a performance.*

*Through her entry, Regina has identified this skill as a learnable concept and gives us a strategy of practicing this coming up to a big event. This develops the confidence in our students and no matter what is happening around them, they will be able to keep going and will be able to create a positive outcome for themselves in a performance situation.*

When my students are preparing for a recital or competition I have a little trick I use to help them be ultra-prepared. As they play their performance pieces I do anything I can think of to make the break their concentration. Jumping Jacks, ringing a bell, shutting a door, crazy dancing, turning the lights on and off...you get the idea. The younger students always giggle the first few times I do it, but by the time they are older they think of it as a challenge!

The idea is to create the most unlikely, disruptive performance atmosphere as possible, so that on the actual performance day playing for an attentive audience is a piece of cake!

It works very well, and these kids are prepared for anything!

*Regina Zilani*

*We could probably write another book on 101 strategies to practice this one concept. My own distraction problem in performance was feedback of some kind. A microphone got moved for no particular reason and ended up close to a speaker somehow. It most performances I have "sound guy/gal" (another teacher or trained person to control the sound from the back of the room so that I can concentrate on the kids), but every now and again, even with someone doing the job - feedback just happened! My kids jumped out of their chair when it happened and some even stopped playing because it was distracting.*

*To try and help the children, I started practicing throwing this in coming up to a performance. Needless to say, once I started practicing it with the kids, the feedback problem never happened again since... Just Murphy's Law I guess. If you're prepared to cope with the problem, then it won't happen and if it still does you know the kids will cope.*

*Regina owns her own commercial Music teaching Studio and caters for a range of various lessons. She and her staff teach anything from one on one lesson's to group, band and choir. Among the many hats that she needs to wear in order to run her business, she also hosts her own recitals and concerts.*

*Thanks Regina for your timeless strategy to cope with distraction.*

## Candy /Coin Game for Piano Playing

*Here is a piano playing strategy that has been used successfully over generations and helps a teacher to make a point about technique without having to talk about it!*

*Appropriate to use for a student of many ability levels, this game could be used and adapted for students several times over their piano training.*

When people learn piano, their hand posture sometimes drops and their hands hang off the edge of the piano.

I have found that a good way to enforce this is to turn it into a competition between you and the pupil. You give them a sweet and get them to play you a five note scale and see if they can keep it balanced on their hand while they complete it. The sweet will only stay on top of their hand if their position is correct.

If they manage to keep it on their hand they get to keep the sweet.

If they don't - the teacher gets to eat it!

You can adapt this exercise by playing it 10 times in a row, speeding up and then extending it to an 8 note scale. Extensions of this exercise could include trying it on the other hand and then even hands together.

If children have allergies then maybe use a penny or other coin.

I have found this both enjoyable and beneficial in my pupil's learning.

*Angela Horwood*

*This idea is so simple while developing a more correct technique for piano students. Students will be so determined to earn their reward and their hand posture has to be correct in order to get it. Thank you to Angela for outlining this strategy which has really stood the test of time and has been so successful for so many teachers over the years.*

## Listening Cues For Ensemble Playing

*Listening cues can be a really handy addition to any teacher's "bag of tricks". These ideas are great for instances when young students are armed and excited about their instruments. The strategies save time over the long term and are effective in getting the attention of children quickly when practiced often.*

*Here are some cues you could use and adapt to your own teaching:*

### **A Rhythm Cue**

When students are noisy, sometimes yelling at them can just makes them louder. Start clapping a short rhythm until most of the students are paying attention and clapping it back. Now you have their attention and can proceed.

*Jennifer Foxx*

### **Using A Bell**

When teaching to a group of students who are all learning on an instrument of their own (like a recorder), I find it useful to have a small bell handy.

I show them how to play a note, then have them play a certain number of those notes to a specific rhythm. Sometimes children get excited and don't stop...that's when I ring the bell. When I ring the bell everyone is quiet.

If a student continues, his/her instrument (or privilege of playing) is taken from him/her for the next turn, then returned.

This is very effective and rarely have I ever had a student's instrument taken more than twice. Another reason it is effective is because it only keeps them from playing for a short time, in which they don't have time to get into trouble, another way. :)

It also helps us all to keep together on what we are learning. I can stop them easily any time I hear something incorrect.

A bell sounds much better than a raised voice and (for some of us) is generally louder and easier to hear than your voice when a nice sized group of students are playing their instruments at one time.

*Joanna*

*When Kevin and I ran our music school, we also developed a simple listening cue based on using a bell to use with younger children in our keyboard labs. At first we were skeptical that it was going to work. We thought that as the children would get older, they might think that it was silly or childish. Much to our surprise, we found was that they loved it. They loved the accomplishment of switching on together and we actually ended up having a bell in every teaching room because the children always asked for it! When someone in the class switched on before the bell, quite often other children would correct the situation. A simple bell became one of our standards. Even the older kids of 10 years + would still ask for it!*

*Jennifer's idea of clapping a rhythm back is also such a successful strategy for any teacher of any subject area. When practiced often, children immediately clap back the rhythm, changing their attention focus immediately. We thank both Jennifer and Joanna outlining these important management strategies.*



## Slow Practice

*Here is some timely advice on practicing. Slowly is the key to learning and passage of music well whether you are teaching beginner or more advanced students.*

I've been teaching How to Practice:

Play a piece VERY SLOWLY.....(slow enough to be accurate....don't practice errors.)  
Practice sections or pieces 5 times. (rather than TIME oriented..make it ACTIVITY oriented)

If an error is made, stop and go slow enough (extremely slow if needed) to get it right. (often we practice errors, reinforcing them.)

I have begun to model more....rather than talking..... for visual learners. . . and we are all visual.

*Edith White*

*This advice never dates and is crucial to development in playing. There are no “quick fixes” when it comes to teaching a student new or difficult passage. Modeling how to practice teaches our students to learn the process over time. Thanks Edith for the input.*

## Vocal Warm Up's

*Just as warming up before sporting activity is important to prevent over-extending and damaging muscles, the same is true for singing or any vocal activity. If you are about to get your students into a heavy rehearsal, gig or singing session, then warming up will prevent them from overextending their voices and will give them more vocal stamina.*

*Here are a group of singing warm up exercises that you could use with any choir or musical theatre group and could easily be used for groups with little or no prior knowledge in music.*

Here's an exercise that I use to help my musical theatre students learn to recognize and sing intervals correctly and in tune:

Singing an 8-tone major scale by degrees:

1: Start with students singing up an 8 tone major scale using numbers for each note.  
ex: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8

2. Then have students sing each interval in the scale, first singing up to the intended interval from the tonic, and then just singing the tonic and jumping to the intended interval, and returning to the tonic.

ex: 1, 1-2-1, 1-2-3-1, 1-2-3-4-1, 1-2-3-4-5-1, 1-2-3-4-5-6-1, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-1, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-1.

I Use this as a daily warm up exercise to help improve the ear training of the students.

3. Once students are comfortable with format of numbers, substitute sol-feg syllables for the numbers and repeat.

ex: do, do-re-do, do-re-mi-do, etc.

4. I also teach the Kodali hand signals for each of the 8 tones, and then have students "sign" the intervals as well as sing them, and then "sign while singing". If you are not familiar with the Kodali system, there are charts available on different websites explaining them.

This small exercise, taken from a Sweet Adeline Vocalese, has helped my students to understand what intervals should sound like, and has improved intonation in the group.

*Floyd Nash*

*Thankyou to Floyd Nash of the Dillard Center for the Arts, Ft. Lauderdale, USA. These ideas are so useable to many teachers worldwide may give many a new perspective to singing warm up exercises.*

## Last Man Standing

*If you are looking for a fun, but challenging way to perfect a piece or a passage in your ensemble groups, then this game would be perfect. It has all the hallmarks of a success. It's easy, requires no set up and makes the members of the ensemble think. Perfect for groups who need a competitive challenge.*

Play a game called 'Last Man Standing' which gives a challenge to achieve a task. Whenever you make a mistake, you're out and the last person standing is the winner.

*Leonie Gilby*

*Thanks to Leonie for her contribution. I'm sure that all the band and ensemble leaders will appreciate a new game idea to break up a rehearsal and to provide an extra challenge.*

## There's an Instrument in Your Cupboard!

*Musical instrument ideas requiring little set up and small cost can be hard to find. In this contribution, there are six different cost effective instruments to make each with easy to follow instructions.*

*These ideas would be great to use for classes of upper primary and early secondary students. Whether you and your students make one or make them all, the choice is yours!*

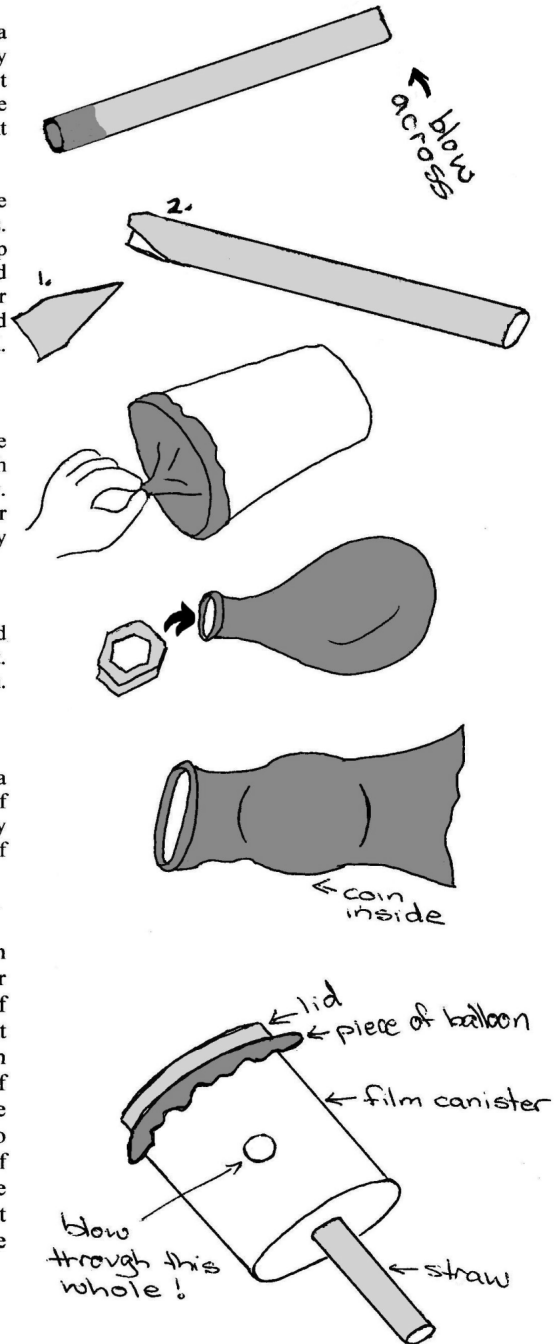
This is a sheet I put together recently, when I presented a music workshop to Joey Scout Leaders. I wanted to demonstrate that every Scout Leader or other crafty person has an orchestra in their craft cupboard waiting to be let out. The conference all made the instruments, then divided into sections to play Row Row Row your boat, then combined to play it together. It was a great hit and would work well with kids as well.

## 6 easy noisemakers for less than 50c

Cassie Rec 1<sup>st</sup> North Rocks

**Materials needed: 3 balloons, 1 straw cut into 3 equal pieces, 1 35mm film canister, 1 metal nut, 1 plastic cup**  
You'll also need scissors, blue tack or plasticine and a coin.

- 1. Straw Panpipe** – plug up one end of a piece of straw with a small amount of plasticine or bluetack. Test the panpipe by blowing gently across the open end of the straw. Make a t sound as you blow. You may need to trim the length of the straw until you get a clear sound. (glue pipes with different lengths across a paddlepop stick to make a set of panpipes)
- 2. Straw Gazzo** – take a piece of straw and flatten 2cm at one end, by creasing it between your fingernails, on both sides. Take some scissors and cut the flattened end into a V. Snip the point off the V so it's not sharp. To play put the pointed end in your mouth and close your lips past the V. While your lips are closed blow quite hard. If you do not make a sound check that the pointed end is still flattened, but not closed. Make different length gazoos for different sounds.
- 3. Cup Drum** – take a balloon and cut off the neck. Stretch the bottom of the balloon over the top of a cup. To play pinch the balloon in the middle of the cup and pull up slightly. When you release the balloon there should be a loud bang or pop noise. The sound can be varied by changing how tightly the balloon is stretched across the top.
- 4. Balloon spinner** – take a metal nut (as in nuts and bolts) and put it inside a balloon. Blow up the balloon  $\frac{3}{4}$  and tie a knot. To make the noise spin the nut around inside the balloon. Warning – the nut will eventually cause the balloon to pop!
- 5. Balloon Gazzo** – take a balloon and cut off the neck. Place a coin inside the neck of the balloon. Blow through the top of the balloon to hear a gazzo noise. Change the sound by changing the size of the coin and the length of the piece of balloon.
- 6. Air Horn** – Take a film canister and make a whole in the bottom that a straw can fit snugly into. Make another whole, the same size, along one side. Take the piece of balloon left over from the balloon gazzo and stretch it across the top of the film canister. Replace the lid on top of the balloon to hold it securely. Insert a piece of straw through the whole in the base. The end of the straw needs to sit, just touching the balloon inside. To play the Air Horn blow through the whole on the side of the canister quite strongly. If you don't make a noise check the straw is touching the balloon, not too tight though. Check that no air is escaping out around the straw or through the lid.



Cassie Rec

*Thank you to Cassie for providing some simple, effective solutions to instrument making. This sheet allows you to focus on one idea or you could have your students and classes making all six quite easily and quickly. Having more ideas on the fact sheet rather than less could really help provide extension materials for the fast workers.*

## Junk Percussion

*Kids and adults alike just love junk percussion and it can be just amazing to see what children will come up with when they can let their imaginations go wild.*

*This simple idea would best suit primary level students and could easily be completed within 1-2 lessons. If you could get the students playing an ensemble piece with the instruments they create it could become a whole module or even a term's work project.*

Ask each child to create their own music kit with 3-4 pieces using their snack trashables. Things like their “pringles” chip packets, plastic drink bottles some hair beads and so on. Each could use a box of their choice to keep these in.

*Charmaine*

*While Junk percussion is a very popular among students and adults, there is certainly no shortage of information about it on the Internet.*

*Just key the term "Junk Percussion" into a Google search and you'll find information on how to build junk percussion instruments, music to play and loads of junk percussion video clips.*

*Thanks to Charmaine, she has given us an initial idea suitable and adaptable to almost any level. Teachers can easily supplement her idea with other resources and the idea can be tailored and adapted for each individual class situation.*

## Some Ideas for the Studio Teacher

*Managing a music studio at peak times can be hectic. You need to constantly be aware of the time and need to figure out techniques and organizational skills to help impart the most information in the shortest amount of time.*

*It's such a specialized job, because it requires the teacher attention to be focussed on so many areas at the same time.*

*This contribution contains some ideas for managing your music studio. These organizational ideas include practicing techniques, practice song routine and a unique idea using a gong as a doorbell! These strategies could be used for any music studio with students of any ability or age.*

- 1) Stop & Prepare - I learned this technique at a Suzuki teacher's workshop. I only wish I had known about it when I was a student. Here's how it works: When a student has mis-learned a passage, I ask them to play it again, but to "stop" before they make the mistake to "think" about how to do it correctly and then continue playing. If they do this until it becomes an automatic response, this fixes problems so much faster than just repeating it over and over until it is finally mastered.
- 2) Another technique is to ask students to stop as soon as they make a mistake and then to try to figure out "why" they made that mistake and then think about how to fix it. It might be a fingering problem, it might be a case of misreading the note or interval. Figuring out the "why" generally puts them back on track for fixing almost any problem.
- 3) When a student is working on a passage and there are errors and you have asked them to slow down, but they can't manage that, then I get an index card and cover all the notes except for the first one. When they play it correctly, then I uncover the next note and so on. I ask parents to help do this at home until the student is reading correctly.
- 4) My students work with five songs at a time on a repertoire list. They can choose what pieces go on the list and when they learn a new one, they can eliminate an old song and replace it. We keep this list written inside the cover of one of their music books. Each day they are expected to "review" each song and on one day of the week, they are to play their review. At the end of each lesson, I ask to hear one of the songs at random and after they play it, they are rewarded with beads. If it is a level 1 piece, then they get 1 bead for playing it perfectly, 2 beads for level 2, etc. If it is not perfect, they may only get a partial number of beads. Each student has a "cubby" in the Studio with a container to keep their beads. I maintain a "store" where students can buy things with their beads. Students can also earn beads for memorizing songs after they are passed off. This prevents students from memorizing all their lesson music in an attempt to keep from reading.

- 5) I have a large Chinese gong in the studio. When students arrive on time for their lesson and see that I am still teaching the previous student, they are allowed to ring the gong 1 time to let me know they are ready for their lesson. This serves two purposes. It reminds me to quickly finish the lesson and it reminds students and parents that I cannot take time to talk. There is always a parent or 2 who will wait until their child is finished and then ask questions or just start talking, when another student is patiently waiting for their lesson. And the students love to ring the gong!

*Laura Seifert*

*Organizational skills are paramount to running an effective music studio. No one wants to be sitting around waiting for their lesson because someone else is running late and students of all ages really respect a teacher who can project a clear understanding of what is required to become a successful player.*

*Thank you to Laura for sharing her experiences and ideas for others to adapt to their own situations and teaching programs.*



## Conductor Demerits

*Have you ever needed an incentive in a band rehearsal that will keep your students really noticing the conductor?*

*Let's face it- Kids are can be so engrossed in their music, they often forget to notice what it is that a conductor is actually doing. It can seem like you are playing entirely different pieces at times with some groups!*

*This is a game that will challenge students to watch the conductor intently. It requires a high degree of competency in conducting on the teacher's part and will definitely get those heads out of the music and onto the conductor. This idea would be great to use with intermediate band levels needing challenge.*

I have always had great success in my middle school teaching with the use of Conductor Demerit Points.

This is a tally of my conducting mistakes made during a given practical music lesson, written on the whiteboard. When I have made 10 conducting mistakes, I owe the class 1 chocolate frog each. This keeps me on my toes and honest, but more importantly it keeps the kids focused and engaged. There have been times when I catch my mistakes before they do and when I put my demerit on the board, they kids want to know why. When I tell them, they learn more about the music and the role of a conductor. Sometimes we even have debates as to whether I deserved the demerit or not!

By me being honest and responsible, my young musicians-in-training become more so as well.

*Rachel Yadin*

*Sometimes giving our students a "teacher challenge" can really motivate and can encourage participation to extremely high levels.*

*Conductor Demerit Points is a great way to get some feedback on what the kids really notice and as Rachel suggested, it keeps you "honest and on your toes" Thanks for this unique, fun approach Rachel.*

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# 4. Inspiration and Incentive

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## Eternal Youth

*This game comes from a piano teacher in Ireland. She's witty, fun, has a great sense of humor and is an inspiration to us all!*

*From reading her entry you can tell that she just has great time and that her lessons are great fun. Learning means having fun. If it's not fun why would you do it?*

A bit about teaching two against three. Clapping hands with pupil doing 2 against your three, facing each other and clapping each other's hands. Continue until you fall apart laughing. Swap over of course.

Another co-ordination trick is to clap a continuous quaver -semiquaver rhythm while reciting the alphabet as fast as possible out of time.

This also creates hilarity, and a determination to master the trick.

*Jenny Iles*

*The most inspiring part of Jenny's entry is her story. Jenny has written her story as if has just had her first day of teaching and is "riding the high" of her new journey in teaching.*

*But as you read her opening statement to her contest entry, you'll notice that she's always had this energy!*

*Here's what she wrote to me as an introduction to her contest entry.*

*"I'm 72 years old now and still love piano teaching, although I no longer teach classes, only individuals."*

*You can just tell that Jenny is one of those people who has positive stories and experience's for every occasion and seems to have this absolute eternal youth to go along with it.*

*We can learn a lot from the wisdom that Jenny has to offer. She's a model to us all because of the passion and sense of humor she encourages in everyone she meets and we thank her for her contribution and insight to this book.*

## Bookmark Idea

*If you've ever needed a way to notice and positively reinforce the work ethic of students in your classes, then this bookmark idea is perfect. Lisa suggests that this particular wording on the bookmark worked best for her with younger classes, but I'm sure with some re wording and design changes it could also be adapted very well for upper level students too.*

*I really love this thoughtful idea because of it's subtle way to reward those children who do the right things and it gives a clear strong message promoting positive behavior to others.*

Some of my younger students were having trouble staying on task. I printed out some bookmarks on card stock that said, "I was caught being good in music class!"

I made sure they were very colorful and included pictures I thought young students would like. Most of my younger students really worked hard to earn one of those bookmarks.

*Lisa Bloodworth*

*Children love positive "feel good" things that they are given by their teacher. I know this because as I was reading Lisa's submission it made me think of a collection of notes and letters from my own past school friends and teachers that I still keep in my top drawer!*

*I have often wondered why I still kept them, because I hadn't looked at them often. After thinking about it, I realized that the reason I keep them is because they bring back positive thoughts and feelings to me. In short they make me feel valued (even now, many years later) and great about myself!*

*I wonder how many teachers out there also have a collection of positive notes and other memorabilia from past school friends and teachers. Therefore why wouldn't our student's keep them as well?*

*Overall, Lisa's bookmark idea makes a fantastic "feel good" keepsake!*

## Teaching in the Middle East

*This submission is an extraordinary story of a lady who teaches in a place of extremes, which are unimaginable to most people. In spite of all this, she creates lesson experiences and strategies that would work with most children and are careful not to cross or harm any religious or language boundaries.*

I teach in an International School in the Middle East. 60% of my class are local Emirate children. The other 40 % consist of children from 53 different nations. They all must have some proficiency with English.

To teach the little children (ages 4 - 6) I had to come up with new strategies as:

- a) not all of them spoke fluent English
- b) some of them come from cultures that do not value music (indeed some are actively discouraged from participating)
- c) this is a new school and resources are scarce
- d) I had to be sensitive to all religious and cultural exclusions (in particular those offensive to Islam).

I found these activities crossed cultural/linguistic boundaries and actively engaged even those children who have not been exposed to music previously.

### 1. I Can Sing A Rainbow.

I loved these lessons as much as the kids. All I needed was the song "I Can Sing A Rainbow, some colorful ribbons and paddle pop sticks.

Make up the ribbon-sticks by cutting 1 - 1.5meter lengths of different colored ribbons (at least 3 cm wide). Have the colors red, yellow, pink, green, purple, orange, and blue. Wind one end around a paddle pop stock and industrial staple to secure (I had to make these in a hurry and all I could find to secure them was the big stapler in the print room. I hesitated cause I thought the kids might prick themselves but in a year I have not had a singly injury). You will need 1 per child but it is handy to have spare.

Lesson Ideas:

- Sing the song for the children. Have them sing along - the ESL kids love it because they get to practice their colors.
- I then bring out the rolled up ribbon-sticks and place them in front of me in a row pointing to the colors as I sing. Sometimes I will also use sign language when I sing this song to keep them visually engaged while listening.
- Have the children come up and choose their color (it's a good way of rewarding good behavior to allow the angels to choose first - watch how well behaved they all are next lesson!).

- Once they all have ribbons give them plenty of time to play with them and get used to holding and twirling them. I like to put on a bit of classical music for them to just play with the ribbon-sticks.
- Have the students make a circle. You can choreograph this song as you like but I like to have the children hold the stick in one hand and the other end of the ribbon in the other (like a big U). As their color is "sung" they throw the non-stick end into the middle then snake it back towards them. For the rest of the song try different moves like big arm circles, corkscrews in front of them, turning their body and waving the stick up and down, figure of eight's- it's endless.
- Five minutes before the end of the lesson have them sit and wind up the ribbon onto the stick (great for fine motor).

I find this lesson is wonderful to gauge their level of learning; whether they can sing and use the ribbon simultaneously; actively listen to the song for their cue; change action with the changes of the song.

Be warned - you will be very active during this lesson as they get the ribbons into the most amazing knots!!!!

It can also be used for higher grades as I tell the kids in year 4/5 that this is an Olympic sport. The boys seem to become more willing to do it this way.

## 2. Peer Gynt - In the Hall of the Mountain King

This is a fabulous lesson that just requires the song and some space

Tell the story of The Hall of the Mountain King in your own words (I am happy to give you the "script" I use). We have the book at school but I prefer to just tell it as if it is a legend. Ask the children what a Troll looks like- they come up with the most adorable things! This really involves them in the action.

Put the music on - and tell the story of the chase through the music.

Younger classes 4-8

Put the music on again and this time have the children get up and be the trolls. The kids LOVE this. They start off sluggish and slow and end up racing around the classroom.

Older Classes 9-15

After the first listen, ask them what happens in the music to show the Trolls running (tempo), how do we know more trolls are joining the chase (instrumentation), how can we hear it is getting more frantic (tempo and volume). They may need a second listen.

Third listen: have them beat the rhythm on their knees.

Extension: name the instruments and do a rhythmic notation.

In this lesson children actively feel an increase in tempo. They become engaged with the music and a part of the story. I have the younger kids begging me to put on the "Troll song". And inevitably I have to do it twice. It is a great piece of music for a range of music levels.

### **3. Claves In The Classroom**

I have a set of 60 claves in my classroom. I have found these invaluable as I teach children from 54 nations and I can guarantee that each of those cultures has a set of sticks as a musical instrument!

It is one of the few things each culture has in common.

As 90% of my kids don't play ANY instrument I had to start out with percussion. Using a song as simple as "Gadi Gadi" (Torres Strait Island folk) in 2/4 I was able to get classes of 24 students from ages 6-16 (grade 1-9) sitting in a circle singing in TI and performing a stick dance.

Further along I had the students using the sticks to 'nut out' a junk percussion ensemble. They can't break and they keep idle hands busy. Except I am yet to work out how to stop the little boys from making 'towers' with their sticks.

*Thank you to Kairi for providing her story of inspiration and for providing ideas, which encourage maximum participation and enjoyment. We wish you all the very best of success and achievement with the children you teach in the Middle East.*

## A Sticker Incentive Idea

*This idea is a simple, unique little tip that a grandmother used when trying to get her grand daughter to practice. A great perspective on using stickers to get our children to practice more.*

I was only using the piano service cause my granddaughter was living with us for a few months. I am not a piano teacher-wish I was. I studied piano for about three years and always think I would love to get back at it.

The best trick I did was a poster with stickers. She got a sticker that spelled a groovy word for every time she played a piece through.

I bought stickers of the letters of the alphabet. Every time she played the piece, she got another letter for the word, like "fantastic" or something. It worked well until she got over the hump where she hated to practice.

She actually got the trophy for the most improved student this past year. There were about thirty or so students. It was mostly stickers that started it. Nothing very sophisticated, but it worked.

*Linda Toth*

*Kids just love stickers and the way that Linda has used stickers in her idea is not only fun, but also unique. A great solution for any one who needs variety with using stickers.*



## Star Charts and Other Ideas

*Have you ever noticed that a simple incentive chart or a promise of a game at the end of a lesson can really make a difference in the productivity of your classes?*

*If your children, particularly in young primary years, know that something great comes from working hard it keeps them on track and enjoying the tasks at hand. Here are some incentive ideas to help keep our children on task and focussed.*

How about using a star chart (for primary schools in particular). Each time they make an achievement they gain a star. Big achievements like playing in assembly or passing an exam with merit or distinction may get two stars. At the end of the term the person in the group with the most stars gets a prize like a fun size chocolate bar or anything else you can think of the children may appreciate-maybe even something musical

At the end of a lesson why not play a game!

I have a set of Musical Dominoes that my pupils enjoy playing with. I have also made my own games. We play “Musical Pairs” and “Who wants to be a Millionaire” The children enjoy using their musical knowledge in a competitive way.

*Alicia Fletcher*

*These have been great insights into some incentives to use with children. Ways to keep our classes on task from lesson to lesson and term to term. Thank you to Alicia for her ideas on these incentives.*

## DIY Music Teaching Resources

*Here are some great ideas from two participants on how to make teaching resources. Often it can work out much cheaper than buying a commercial product and because the resources are tailored exactly to your own needs, they will be used so much more often. Use them and adapt them to your own teaching situations. These are great projects to get into over the holidays or to get you tech departments involved in.*

### **Magnetic Music Boards:**

I built a simple, light chart stand with plastic tubing and attached a piece of magnetic material to it (magnetic board) in order to have a large space to display musical notes. It is so light that I can carry it wherever I want to go and is also my chart and lyric stand as well.

### **Water Bottle Xylophone :**

Instead of purchasing xylophones or keyboards, I have used glass bottles filled with water (colored with food coloring - same colors of the xylophones) . You can play different melodies as in those known instruments and you can find the appropriate bottles in a recycling lot.

*Vanessa Poveda*

### **Student Whiteboards:**

Save your paper! I bought some marker board (dry erase) which cost approximately \$10.

I had our maintenance crew from our school district, carefully cut the board down into paper sized boards for students in my class. (I made 32.) In class, We use them for music notation, worksheets, drawing, journalizing, you name it!

So you don't make the same mistake that I made, the marker board will break, or splinter if you don't cut it with a fine saw. I was told to tape the white side of the board, where you need it cut. That should eliminate splintering!

*Aariss Curren*

*Thank you to both contributors for their money saving advice. These ideas would be perfect for use in places of limited budget and resources.*