

Music Teachers'



Nine work-every-time ideas for teaching music.

Get to know class and beat development

1. Steady Beat Name Game

If it's your first day of a music class, no matter what age, one thing you'll definitely want to do is learn your students' names!

And if you're teaching music, why not turn this into an opportunity for learning music at the same time?

This game is customisable for any age from kindergarten through to upper primary/elementary, and there are many different versions for different ages.

In the simplest form, have children sit in a circle on the floor and play the repetitive pattern below by patting their laps and clapping.



Once the rhythm is established, one person will say or sing, "My name is (name)," and everyone in the class responds with "Hello (name)." Begin by doing it confidently yourself as the teacher and having the class say or sing, "Hello (your name)," a few times, before going around the circle.



Leader:

My

name is

(insert name here)



Whole group response:

He llo

(insert name here)

Fun warm-ups for all ages!

2. Circle Beat Game - Zip-Zap-Zop!

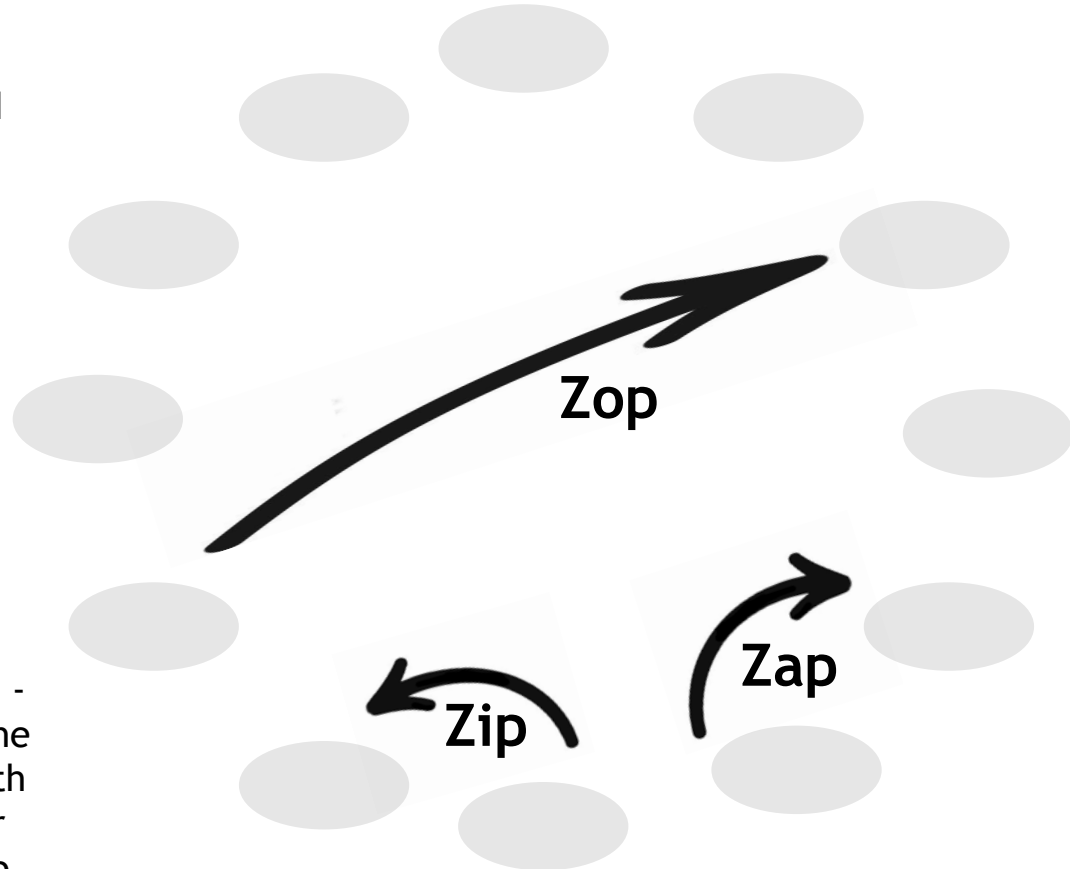
This is a classic warmup activity that has endless variations for loads of fun in the classroom.

The basic idea is that the class stands in a circle around the room, and then a beat moves around the circle, passing from one person to the next.

Begin by passing the beat to the left. Clap your hands and move your closed hand to the left while saying “zip.” Then the person to your left does the same, and it moves around the circle.

Then when your class can do that, someone can decide to change the direction of the beat by saying “zap” - and then the beat moves to the right.

When the group can effectively do zips and zaps - you can add a “zop,” where a player can send the beat across the group by making eye contact with any random player and saying “zop.” This player must then catch the beat and proceed with a zip, zap or zop.



A fun warm-up while developing rhythm and composition skills

3. Circle Rhythm Game - Musical Pizza






What is great about a pizza as a metaphor for music? It has toppings!

We can use the rhythm of the words for pizza toppings to create musical compositions as a class and teach rhythm skill development at the same time.


You can do this as a warm-up while standing in a circle, or you can do it sitting on the floor.

Begin by clapping, or stamping the beat strongly saying “base”, then try clapping and saying some of the other “toppings” listed below.

Students can then make up their own four-beat rhythm, and the class can copy their rhythms.

					
Base or Ham or Cheese	Mush-rooms	Cap-si-cum	An - cho-vies	Pep-per-o-ni	piz-za sauce

Example four-beat rhythms:



base base base base



mush-rooms with piz - za sauce



Ham and cap-si-cum piz - za



Ham mush-rooms cap-si-cum



piz-za with pep-per-o-ni

Aural and rhythm skills development game

4. Rhythm Development - Poison Rhythm

This is a listening and echo clapping game, where students have to listen and echo rhythms that the teacher claps, except if the teacher claps the “poison rhythm.”

Everyone has seen teachers clap a rhythm to get a group of children’s attention - so it really isn’t difficult to clap a random pattern and have a group of children echo clap a rhythm in response.

We have many different versions of these exercises throughout the Fun Music Company curriculum program of various levels. You can use whatever rhythms you feel comfortable with, depending on your experience with teaching music.

The poison rhythm is this one:



Begin by randomly clapping rhythms like the examples below, and then randomly play the poison rhythm ... and if they copy it ... they’re out! They will also be out if they don’t play one that wasn’t the poison rhythm.

Children will get very good at this quite quickly, so you may wish to make it harder by varying the dynamics (volume) and the tempo (speed) to make it more difficult to spot the poison rhythm.

Example rhythms to clap:



Rhythm development fun!

5. Rhythm Development - The Cup Song


The “Cup Game” or the “Cup Song” is a game that involves tapping and hitting a cup in a defined rhythm. It is often played by many players sitting in a circle and the rhythm can involve passing the player’s cup to the next person in a line.

The rhythms can be performed non-competitively, just by playing the rhythm in time and passing cups around a circle, or if you wish to turn it into more of a game, then the rhythm can continue to increase in tempo until a player makes a mistake, and then that player is out and must drop out of the game.

There are many different variations of the rhythm and the song, and it was most famously used in the 2012 movie “Pitch Perfect”, but it actually originated well before that, back in the 1980s.

If you wish to learn the original version from “Pitch Perfect” you can find many tutorials and instructions on the internet, however here is a simplified version just about anyone can do that is perfect for classroom instruction for early grades:

4/4

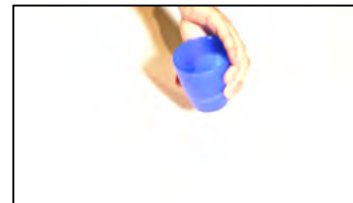


Rim Rim End End Tap Slide Pass it on



Rim

Hit cup on floor or table with the rim side down.



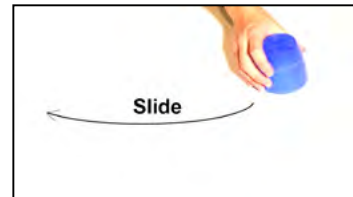
End

Hit cup on floor or table with the base side down.



Tap

Hit cup on base with the other hand. (Optional: younger students can simply do another rim hit.)



Slide

Slide across in front right to left in order to pass to the person on the left. (Or it can be done the opposite way if desired.)



Pass the cup to the person on the left, and hopefully the person on your right has passed a cup to you!

There is an instructional video and music track available for this simplified version at <https://funmusicco.com/simplified-cup-game/>

A fun vocal warm-up and pitch development exercise

6. Vocal Game - The Roller Coaster

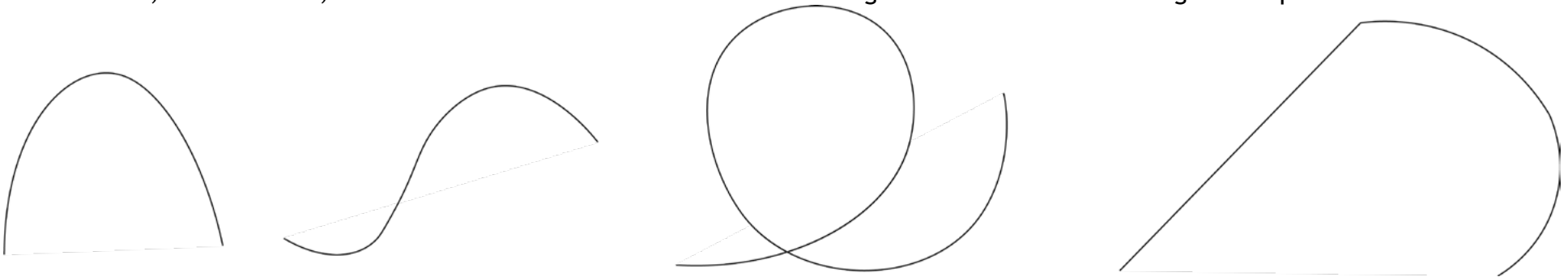
The roller coaster vocal warm-up is a wonderful way to help children explore pitch with their voices.

The basic concept is using a “siren” in the voice and sliding up and down pitch, matching the shape drawn on the board or in the air.

Option 1 - Shapes on the board.

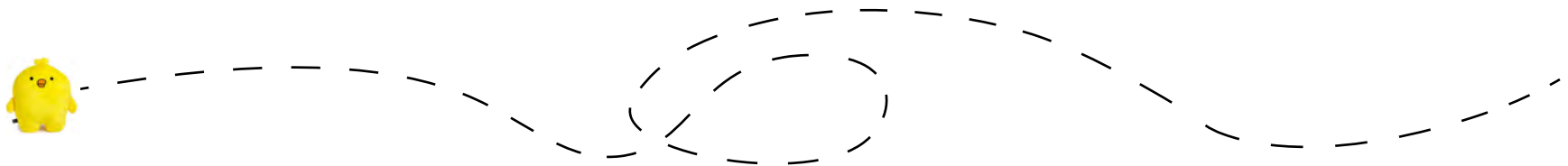
Drawing shapes on the board, and tracing with a finger:

Draw some “roller coaster ride” shapes on the board like these ones, and then the class sings as you trace them with your finger. Try fast and slow, soft and loud, and then have the children take turns in being the conductor and tracing the shape on the board.



Option 2 - Shapes in the air with a prop.

Choose a stuffed toy or matchbox car to be the roller coaster car, and trace it around in the air in front of the students. You can then pass the toy onto one of the students to be the leader, and then encourage them to try new ideas.



Idea for organising classes and avoiding turn-taking dramas!

7. Popsicle Sticks for Classroom Management

In music class there are many times when students have to take turns or need to be arranged in small groups. For example, students may need to be grouped into those playing different instruments or those who will be singing or playing instruments.

This simple idea of using popsicle sticks can really help. These colourful popsicle sticks are readily available from craft supply stores for a few dollars. Each popsicle stick has a colour, a number labelled from one to thirty (or however many students you have in a class) and each colour also has a letter from A to F.

Upon entering the room, each child picks a popsicle stick at random from a cup or a bag, and they remember their letter and number for the class.

Please see the next page for instructions on how these groupings can be used in a class.



Five ways to use the popsicle sticks in the classroom:

Colours determine seating positions.

Children sit with their colour group when entering the classroom. This can avoid children sitting only with their friends, and allows for them to make new social connections with other children they may not know as well.

Numbers determine who answers a question.

Instead of randomly asking the class a question and having them put up their hands if they know the answer, directly ask each child a question based on the number on their popsicle stick.

“Who has stick #1 today?” (Jane puts her hand up.) *“Jane - what is the name of the piece we worked on last week?”* The next question goes to stick #2 etc.

This means that you won't fall into the trap of only having some children answering questions, and it makes sure that everyone in the class is contributing to the discussions.

Colours organise into instrument groupings.

When assigning instruments to the class, you can say: *“Red group, today is your turn to play the xylophones, so whoever has a red popsicle stick please move over to the xylophones.”* This can avoid issues over who plays which instrument.



Letters can determine partners.

There are many times when you will need to have partner activities. You can determine a rule in your class such as *“A always goes with B; C always goes with D and E always goes with F.”* Therefore, you never have to say *“find a partner”* and have a child feel left out because they don't have a partner. If they are already sitting with their colour group it will be easy for them to find their partner quickly.

Letters can assign a “captain” of the group.

If you have a behaviour management issue, the use of a *“team captain”* where students can take responsibility for each other's behaviour may be helpful. The person with the *“A”* in the colour group may be the team captain, or randomly choose another letter to be the team captain for the day. Remind that student that they are responsible for the behaviour of their whole team and the whole group may have a consequence if there is any misbehaviour.

Idea for turning learning theory or memory concepts into a game!

8. Classroom Tic-Tac-Toe

Step 1 - Prepare in advance a set of flashcards of whatever music theory or musicianship topic you are working on. For example, for younger students a set of pictures of different musical instruments, or for older students some music theory symbols.

Step 2 - Draw a classic “tic tac toe” grid on a whiteboard. You can use whiteboard markers or if you happen to have magnets you can use them for this activity.

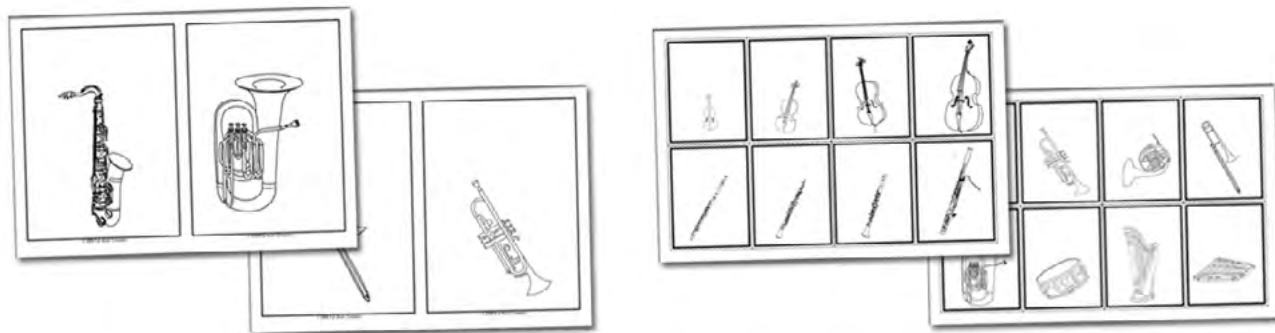
Step 3 - Divide the class into two teams, assign one team to be the “X” team, and one team to be the “O” team.

Step 4 - Call a student’s name and show them a flashcard. If they can name the picture or symbol correctly, they earn the right to place an “X” or “O” on the grid for their team. If they don’t know the answer, they lose their turn and someone from the other team gets the opportunity to answer.

Step 5 - Play continues until a row is completed and the round is complete.

Tip: It is always a good idea to alternate which team gets to go first!

Example flashcards:



Flashcards in many different styles are available free on the Fun Music Company website:
<https://funmusicco.com/resource-archive>

Making music listening consistent and effective

9. Direct the listening with SQUILT

SQUILT is an acronym for *Super Quiet Uninterrupted Listening Time*. This is a time where you can play the class any excerpts of music of just about any genre and have children focus on listening to it with intention.

We suggest using a SQUILT worksheet with some age-appropriate guided questions that the students can fill in while they listen. We have many examples of SQUILT worksheets on the Fun Music Company website, or you can create your own class discussion questions on the whiteboard.

Students should remain quiet and listen carefully while the music is playing, and then have a discussion as a class afterwards.



Search the Fun Music Company resource archive for SQUILT-related listening lessons:

<https://funmusicco.com/resource-archive/>

Example SQUILT Listening Journal worksheet:

S.Q.U.I.L.T Listening Journal

Title of Music Selection: _____
Performer: _____
Composer: _____

This music is an example of which style or *genre*: _____

What sort of band or ensemble is playing? _____

Instruments: Check all the instruments you hear in this music:

<i>Woodwind</i>	<i>Brass</i>	<i>Strings</i>	<i>Percussion</i>	<i>Contemporary</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Flute	<input type="checkbox"/> Trumpet	<input type="checkbox"/> Violin	<input type="checkbox"/> Timpani	<input type="checkbox"/> Drum Kit
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarinet	<input type="checkbox"/> Trombone	<input type="checkbox"/> Viola	<input type="checkbox"/> Tambourine	<input type="checkbox"/> Acoustic Guitar
<input type="checkbox"/> Oboe	<input type="checkbox"/> French Horn	<input type="checkbox"/> Cello	<input type="checkbox"/> Snare Drum	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric Guitar
<input type="checkbox"/> Saxophone	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuba	<input type="checkbox"/> Double Bass	<input type="checkbox"/> Bass Drum	<input type="checkbox"/> Bass Guitar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Harp	<input type="checkbox"/> Cymbals	<input type="checkbox"/> Keyboard
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Xylophone	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/> Vibraphone	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/> Conga Drums	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/> Bongo Drums	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mood: Think about the mood of this music. Check off all the words you think describe this music.

<input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/> Dark	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Passionate	<input type="checkbox"/> Rowdy	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong
<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Delicate	<input type="checkbox"/> Gentle	<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweet
<input type="checkbox"/> Brave	<input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic	<input type="checkbox"/> Gritty	<input type="checkbox"/> Plain	<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful
<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Dreamy	<input type="checkbox"/> Grouchy	<input type="checkbox"/> Playful	<input type="checkbox"/> Silly	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm
<input type="checkbox"/> Cold	<input type="checkbox"/> Energetic	<input type="checkbox"/> Happy	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleepy	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Complex	<input type="checkbox"/> Fiery	<input type="checkbox"/> Magical	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/> Smooth	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> Nostalgic	<input type="checkbox"/> Romantic	<input type="checkbox"/> Soothing	<input type="checkbox"/>

If this music was used in a movie, what would be happening on the screen?

How would you describe this music to a friend?

Get access to complete program of lessons for K-6 music, prepared and ready to use.

What you've seen in this e-book is just a tiny sample of the hundreds of ideas, activities, songs and lessons that are part of the [Fun Music Company curriculum](#) program. This is a complete platform for teaching K-6 music, which helps teachers make music teaching more fun and fulfilling, while simultaneously reducing the amount of preparation time required.

Three easy steps to reducing lesson preparation time with the Fun Music Company curriculum program:

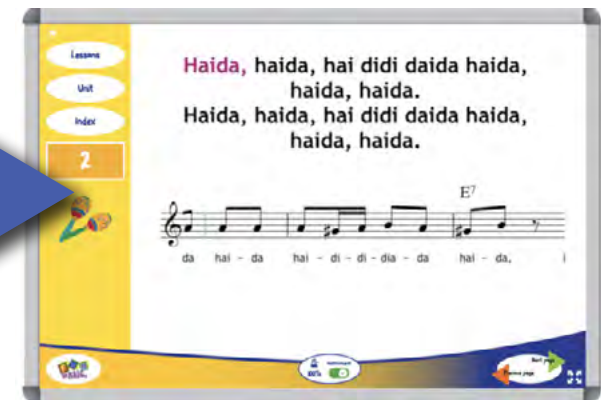
1. Select your lesson.



2. Quickly review.



3. Teach with engaging and interactive materials.



“Having access to the Fun Music Company online lessons over the last couple of years has made the teaching and planning of my music lessons SO much easier”

Check out the success stories here of teachers who have reduced their stress, and made their classes more fun and fulfilling.

<https://funmusicco.com/fun-music-company-music-curriculum/>