

String Starter Activities

- “Silly” Rhythms

Students pick a colour, an animal, a verb and a place (for example, *Blue Leopard Singing in Asda*) and clap/play it.

This can be done with beginners, using first few notes (strings, using open strings) and at more advanced levels, such as playing between two difficult notes. The “silliness” of the rhythm can often distract the student from overthinking the action and can make it easier when they play it normally.

This can also be done with “what did you have for breakfast” and “using two/three words, what did you do over the holidays”, which can be useful for focusing the class.

Objective: - to cover technique and achieving focus in lessons

- Articulation exercise

Smooth Short Shaky – covers articulation, conducting/leading and creative thinking.

Three hands actions needed for smooth (palms down), short (chopping action) and shaky (waving hands). One student comes to the front and chooses different actions for the class to play, covering legato, staccato and trem./trill etc.

This can be done with beginners when introducing the techniques and with more advanced students, when they are trying to make musical decisions about their pieces (yellow award).

- Bow warm-up

Up like a rocket, Down like the rain

Side to side like an express train

Round and round like the big bright sun

Put it on your (head), just for fun!

Do the actions with your bow. This can lead on to pieces which require long bows and also when you teaching about down and up bows.

Objective: - to introduce correct and relaxed bow hold (some of these actions are difficult if bow hold isn't right). This can also help to focus the class.

- Rhythm cards

On one side of a card, draw four crotchets and on the other side, draw four flies (or whatever you use to help with crotchets). On another piece of card, draw four quavers on one side and four spiders.

Set a pulse, getting everybody to stamp their feet with you. Using the side with the pictures, hold up the cards for the students to chant – *fly fly fly fly spider spider spider spider.....*

After doing that once, repeat but this time, start turning the cards over to the other side to introduce them to related note value.

This can be made harder by using instruments playing on one note and using extra note values (caterpillar for semiquavers etc.), depending on what rhythms you are using your pieces. You can also split the group in two and have two different rhythms playing.

Objective:- pulse/rhythm and ensemble playing.

- **Rhythm composition**

Select four students from the group to come and stand at the front. They have to choose whether they want to be a fly (crotchet) or spider (quavers). Decide on different actions to represent each animal, for example, if they are a fly, they should stand straight with their arms by their sides and for spider, they can stand with their arms out. Once the students have chosen, the rest of the group have to clap or play the rhythm.

This can be made harder by adding extra note values or rests (children sit down if they are a rest). Once the students know what a crotchet looks like, they could hold cards up instead to encourage notation reading.

Objective:- pulse/rhythm, composition and notation.

- **Bee bee bumble bee**

Bee bee bumble bee

Stung a man upon his knee

Stung a pig upon his snout

I say you're out.

Lesson 1:- Tap the beat and then rhythm while singing. Try tapping beat and rhythm separately without singing.

Lesson 2:- Recap lesson 1 and play the beat and rhythm parts separately on the instrument.

Lesson 3:- Split the class into two groups with one group playing the beat and another playing the rhythm at the same time. Swap.

Harder activities (depending on ability levels):- splitting the group into four smaller groups. Group 1 loops the first line, group 2 loops the second line, etc.

Objective:- pulse and rhythm and ensemble skills.

- **Pitch and introducing fingers for string instruments**

Play the rhythm of the song on any string:-

Open strings – *I'm a little monkey*

One finger – *Climbing up the ladder*

Two fingers – *Climbing to the top to*

Three fingers – *Pick a big banana. I'm a little monkey*

Two fingers – *Climbing down the ladder*

One finger – *Climbing to the ground to*

Open strings – *Eat the big banana*

Objective:- introduces left-hand fingers and pitch and works on rhythm.