



Lesson Fillers for Secondary Students

27 ways to fill in 10 minutes

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Rhythmic Ideas

1. Tap the rhythm to a known folk song. Ask someone to guess the song.
2. Tap the rhythm of a known folk song with one or two deliberate mistakes. Ask a partner/class to identify where the mistake occurred. (i.e. a phrase number or beat number)
3. Tap only the opening phrase of a known song. Class completes the song.
4. Agree on a forbidden rhythm pattern. Teacher improvises various rhythm patterns that are echoed clapped or played by students. If teacher performs the forbidden pattern, it must not be echoed.
5. Spot the difference! Tap a 4 beat (8 beat) rhythm pattern twice changing one (two, three) beats on the second time. Ask a partner to identify the beat numbers where changes occurred. Or, harder, ask the partner to identify the actual changes.
6. Rhythm snap. Teacher improvises a series of 4 beat (8 beat) rhythm patterns. The class says “snap” if teacher performs the same rhythm twice in succession.
7. Shopping game. One student claps a single beat of rhythm. Next student claps this beat and adds one of their own. Next student claps the last two beats and adds one. Etc... How many beats can the class complete without a mistake?
8. Student improvises a four beat (8 beat) rhythm pattern. Next student must use the last 2 beats of that pattern as a starting point and improvise a further 2 beats (thus creating a new 4 beat rhythm). Continue this around the room.
9. Lucky dip. Student selects one (two, three) cards from a prepared set of rhythm cards. Student must perform the rhythm selected (rhythms in the order selected).
10. Rhythm noughts and crosses. Each square of the noughts/crosses board is covered by a rhythm flash card. When card is performed correctly, it may be removed and exchanged for a nought or cross. Play between pairs of students.
11. Chinese whispers. An unseen rhythm is tapped on the palm of a neighbour's hand and then passed along the line/circle.
12. Clever echo. Teacher claps a 4 beat (8 beat) rhythm. Class (one student) echoes giving the correct rhythm syllables.

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Melodic ideas

1. Sing a pentatonic melody. How many times does so (re, do, la, etc.) occur?
2. Singing from notation. Students alternate every bar (every two bars, every beat) between solfa and song lyrics (scale degree numbers, letter names).
3. Lucky dip. Student selects one (two, three) cards from a prepared set of melodic flash cards. Student must perform the rhythm selected (rhythms in the order selected).
4. Spot the difference. Sing a phrase twice changing one (two, three) of the pitch sounds the second time. Ask students to identify the mistakes.
5. Using only two (three or four) pitch sounds, improvise a melody. Partner sings the melody in canon.
6. Using an agreed tone set, teacher improvises a melody on a single vowel sound. Class repeats melody but adds in solfa.
7. Recognise a known folk song when the teacher points to a tone ladder on the board
8. Students rearrange melodic fragments into the correct order to form known folk songs.
9. Read a melodic exercise from the board and make several changes to create a new melody.
10. Warmer/colder. Send one student out of the room. Hide an object around the room. Ask the student back in to try and locate the object. Class gives warmer/colder clues by singing a song and use a crescendo for warmer, and a decrescendo for colder.
11. Clever echo. Teacher sings a melodic pattern on a single vowel sound. Class (one student) echoes giving the correct solfa (scale degrees, letter names).
12. Melodic Bingo. Students choose a number of melodic patterns from a list on the board. They write these onto a blank staff. Teacher randomly performs patterns from the board. Students cross off any patterns they hear the teacher perform until one student has crossed off all patterns.
- 13 Give students a very limited tone set. Students improvise (compose) a Christmas song, (advertising jingle, national anthem) using only the given pitch sounds.
14. Forbidden pitch. Agree on a forbidden pitch sound (solfa, letter name). Teacher improvises melodic phrases, students echo. They must not sing the forbidden pitch sound aloud even though the teacher will.
15. Make the lowest/highest sound you can.