

LESSON PLAN: RHYTHMS WITH WORDS

Objective:

Students will be able to play complicated rhythms by associating them to commonly used words.

Resources:

None required!

Procedures:

- 1 Establish a back beat. You can use the Little Kids Rock website to play a basic back beat or have the class manufacture one (see lesson plan “Classroom As Drumset”).
- 2 While the beat continues ask students to join with you in playing the rhythm of words you say. Start with “Dis-co” saying it over and over in as 1/8th notes: “dis-co dis-co dis-co dis-co” (you’ll say the word 4 times in one measure. If you prefer, you can substitute the word “coun-try”)
- 3 Again with the continuing beat say the words “hea-vy me-tal”. We’re using these words as 16th notes, so you’ll say it four times in a row to complete one measure: “hea-vy me-tal hea-vy me-tal hea-vy me-tal hea-vy me-tal”.
- 4 The word “rock” will stand for a full beat quarter note. Mix this alternately with the other two rhythms saying “rock dis-co rock dis-co” or “rock hea-vy me-tal rock hea-vy me-tal”. Using this word for a quarter note while contrasting it with words we’re using for 8th and 16th notes will help students focus on these rhythms while developing a good awareness of time keeping.
- 5 Do call and response by mixing up these words and rhythms in various ways. You might do “rock dis-co dis-co hea-vy me-tal” or “hea-vy me-tal dis-co hea-vy me-tal rock”. Repeat a few patterns until this feels easy for everybody. Invite other students in the class to lead the call and response.
- 6 Continue as before except this time use your hands to play the rhythms on your desk or on your lap. Alternate right and left hand for each rhythm, but make sure to start each rhythm with the right hand.



National Core Arts Standards (Music):

National Core Arts Standards (Music): Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Example: General Music MU:Cr1.1.3 b. Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter. Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. Example: General Music MU:Pr5.1.5 b. Rehearse to refine technical accuracy and expressive qualities to address challenges, and show improvement over time. Anchor Standard 11: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. Example: General Music MU:Cn11.1.(PK-8) a. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life. Common Core Correlation: [CCSS.Math.Content.3.NF.A.1](#) Understand a fraction $1/b$ as the quantity formed by 1 part when a whole is partitioned into b equal parts; understand a fraction a/b as the quantity formed by a parts of size $1/b$. (fractions as subdivision of beat)



LESSON PLAN: DRUM FILLS AND A CRASH

Objective:

Students will be able to play complicated rhythms by associating them to commonly used words.

Resources:

Any song recording

Procedures:

- 1 Listen to the recording of a song you're working on in class, or a favorite of one of the students. Notice where the cymbal crashes are in the song. They almost always occur at the beginning of a verse or chorus, or the repeat of a part of the chorus. After observing this in a couple of songs, point out that a cymbal crash is a way for the drummer to say "We're at the beginning of a new section!"
- 2 Listen to a progression that repeats over and over, like the "Axis of Awesome" progression. This is a really good one to use because there is a different chord in every measure before it repeats, therefore making the return to the beginning more obvious. You can play this progression for them on a guitar, keyboard, or use a jam track. If you have a student who can play a chord progression over and over while you teach this concept that would be even better.
- 3 Tell students that when it comes back to the beginning each time you'd like them to use their right hands to hit an imaginary crash cymbal in the air while saying "crash". As the progression continues cycling around to the beginning, imitate this exaggerated crash cymbal motion while saying "crash" each time you get back to the first beat of the first measure. Repeat until it's obvious they are aware of where this is.
- 4 Describe a fill as something that leads to a crash, helping "build up" to the crash. Use words from the lesson plan "Rhythms Made Easy With Words" and imitate what a couple of fills might sound like leading to a crash. For simplicity begin each fill on beat 2 of the last measure in the progression, and just like in the other lesson plan use the right and left hands on the desk or your lap to "play" the fill.
- 5 Invite volunteers to make up their own "drum fill" using these words. At this point you can invite the entire class to do "Classroom as Drumset" (see lesson plan) in accompanying the fills your students create. This activity is great ear training, as it makes everyone who participates aware of fundamental structures happening in music.

National Core Arts Standards (Music):

National Core Arts Standards (Music): Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Example: General Music MU:Cr1.1.3 b. Generate musical ideas (such as rhythms and melodies) within a given tonality and/or meter. Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation. Example: General Music MU:Pr4.2.4 a. Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, and form) in music selected for performance. Example: Harmonizing Instruments MU:Pr4.2.H.1a Identify and describe important theoretical and structural characteristics and context (social, cultural, or historical) in a varied repertoire of music that includes melodies, repertoire pieces, improvisations, and chordal accompaniments in a variety of patterns (such as arpeggio, country and gallop strumming, finger picking patterns). Common Core Correlation: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.



LESSON PLAN: DRUM FILLS ACCOMPANIED

Objective:

Students will be able to use “call and response” to communicate a drum fill from either guitar or keyboard to the drum set.

Resources:

Only a drum kit!

Procedures:

- 1 After completing the lesson plans “Rhythms Made Easy With Words” and “Drum Fills That Lead to a Crash”, students will be aware of using these rhythms. Review them with your guitar or keyboard students having them play them with strum patterns or piano chords using “call and response”.
- 2 Similar to what we did in “Drum Fills That Lead to a Crash”, the drum fill will be in the same place—the last measure of a four measure chord progression. Only this time, the guitar or keyboard player will play the fill first on his instrument in the third bar while the drummer listens and then attempts to play the same fill he just heard in the fourth bar! It’s a good idea when starting this exercise to have the students say the names of the rhythms as they use them so that communication is very clear. As a teacher you can hear if they’re having a problem with a particular rhythmic concept, and at the same time the words allow students to not take themselves so seriously when trying this.
- 3 Once students get the hang of this, have the drummer end HIS/HER fill with a cymbal crash. If this is difficult the first couple times you can add it later, but keep in mind that fills almost always lead to a cymbal crash. Any one of us would be hard pressed to find an example of one that doesn’t. In this exercise the cymbal crash will always correspond with beat one of the first measure, “announcing” the beginning of the repeat—which is what cymbal crashes are SUPPOSED to do!
- 4 Tell the guitar or keyboard player to reinforce the rhythm of the fill by playing it along with the drummer in the fourth bar. This helps exaggerate the sound of the fill, giving music a sense of tension that MUST resolve with a cymbal crash and then two measures of CALM! This exercise uncovers one of the things about instrumental music that draws us in—the constant cycle between tension and resolution—two measures of boringness followed by two measures of chaos, injecting music with the illusion that it MUST continue! We’ve got to hear more and we have no idea why! What fun!

National Core Arts Standards (Music):

National Core Arts Standards (Music): Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Example: General Music MU:Cr1.1.1 a. With limited guidance, create musical ideas (such as answering a musical question) for a specific purpose. Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation. Example: General Music MU:Pr4.2.6 a. Explain how understanding the structure and the elements of music are used in music selected for performance. Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work. Example: Harmonizing Instruments MU:Re7.2.H.8a (Intermediate) Describe how the way that the elements of music are manipulated and knowledge of the context (social and cultural) inform the response. Common Core Correlation: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.



LESSON PLAN: CLASSROOM AS DRUM SET

Objective:

Students will be able to play a drum set by learning the fundamental coordination involved in playing it. This gives a teacher more resources in arranging songs by allowing more students to participate in the percussion part. It also allows classrooms without a drum set to add these sounds with improvised instruments.

Resources:

Sheets of paper, cardboard boxes, shakers or home-made shakers, handout titled “Drum Patterns”

Procedures:

- 1 Demonstrate playing several of the drum patterns from the handout. Place a piece of cardboard underneath of your right foot to imitate the sound of a kick drum and a piece of paper on your lap over the right leg to imitate the sound of the snare. When you demonstrate these patterns, use only the kick and snare part, no cymbals. Therefore you'll only be using your right foot and left hand.
- 2 Ask students to put a piece of cardboard underneath their right foot and a piece of paper on their desk or lap on the left leg.
- 3 Count everyone in with a subdivided beat, saying “1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +” over and over. Play a couple of the patterns on the handout using just the kick and snare parts. Repeat each pattern at least four times to help everyone get the hang of this simple coordination.
- 4 If you have a drum set, go over to it and demonstrate playing these patterns they are all now familiar with using your right foot for the kick drum and left hand for the snare. Invite a couple of students to come up and try out playing some of these basic patterns as well, to see how easy it is now that they've got the basic coordination down.
- 5 Once they're comfortable playing patterns this way, run down all of the patterns on the handout, playing each one twice.
- 6 Adding a cymbal (high hat or ride cymbal) with the right hand to this patterns is difficult at first. It's a good idea to divide the class for this, having one half play the cymbal part (on a shaker, a home-made shaker, or by tapping their guitar picks or pencils on the metal leg of their desk or chair) while the other half does the kick and snare part. This is an outstanding listening activity for them to coordinate with each other.
- 7 Have kids try playing the cymbal, kick and snare parts altogether. You may want to break this down by adding one beat at a time in the first pattern you try this. After they can play their first pattern this way, the rest will be easy. Everything they've learned to do here will easily transfer over to the actual drum set, allowing students to take turns playing the drums on different songs.



National Core Arts Standards (Music):

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation. Example: General Music MU:Pr4.2.4 b. When analyzing selected music, read and perform using iconic and/or standard notation. Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. Example: General Music MU:Pr5.1.3 a. Apply teacher-provided and collaboratively-developed criteria and feedback to evaluate accuracy of ensemble performances. Common Core Correlation: Generate and analyze patterns. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.4.OA.C.5 Generate a number or shape pattern that follows a given rule. Identify apparent features of the pattern that were not explicit in the rule itself.

