

USING MUSIC, CHANTS, AND MOVEMENT

This month's Teacher's Corner has emphasized the need for young learners to have many opportunities to move around and interact in the classroom. This final week will discuss how to use music, chants, and movement to create a lively, engaging classroom that appeals to multiple learning styles.

BACKGROUND OR TRANSITION MUSIC

Perhaps the easiest way to begin using music with your students is to play it in the background during times when you are not providing direct instruction. Soft, instrumental music works nicely to create a calm atmosphere when students first arrive to your classroom. You can also play this type of music when students have time to work independently. Free music streaming services are a great resource to use for this purpose.

Another simple way to use music is during transitions. You can use specific songs (or portions of them) to signal students that it is time to change activities. For instance, if your students have been working independently, you could play a minute of a certain song each time you expect them to begin cleaning up. If you do this consistently, the song itself becomes a signal to students, and they will be familiar with how much time they have to straighten their area and/or move to the next appropriate location in the classroom. Using music like this is also great for getting students in line, packing up materials at the end of class, or any other transitions your young learners have to make. It is much easier and more effective than verbally telling students how much time they have left to complete a task, a concept that can be difficult for young learners to understand.

MUSIC FOR TEACHING CONTENT

A great way to teach young learners content that you include in your daily routine is to use songs. For students learning the alphabet, letter sounds, numbers, shapes, colors, or other basic vocabulary, there are many songs available on the internet for free. Some songs include visuals such as videos or pictures that you can use if you have a way to project them in your classroom. If not, you can still use the songs in combination with your classroom posters and materials. It is important to preview the content you plan to use in your classroom to be sure it is appropriate.

Another great resource for teaching with songs is the [American Rhythms](#) collection from American English. The songs are available to download for free from the [American English website](#) and cover a wide range of content such as gardens, healthy foods, and social studies topics. Each song has an accompanying lesson plan including the lyrics and ready-to-use classroom activities that you can download for free.

USING JAZZ CHANTS

Jazz chants, created by educator Carolyn Graham, use the rhythm of spoken English set to a simple beat to teach pronunciation, stress, and intonation. As presented in this [Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinar](#), almost anything can be turned into a jazz chant. The webinar is a great resource if you are interested in creating your own chants to use in your classroom. Jazz chants are an excellent addition to a daily routine or your lessons for young learners.

The basic rhythm of jazz chants makes them easy for young learners to follow and learn. They also provide an opportunity to incorporate movements such as clapping, snapping, tapping on knees, or marching. You can also consider including instruments such as a drum or tambourine when you use jazz chants. For more information about how to use jazz chants with young learners, you can order a [free video](#) featuring Carolyn Graham through the U.S. Embassy.

INCORPORATING MOVEMENT

As noted above, jazz chants provide an opportunity for learners to move around and actively participate in learning. Songs with lyrics can also give learners a chance to move around with a bit of planning. You can create a few simple movements according to the lyrics of the song and teach them to learners ahead of time. Then, have students follow along and perform the movements with you each time they listen. Eventually, they will remember how to do the movements on their own.

The same strategy can be applied when you read stories and teach vocabulary. Choose a set of words you want learners to learn (5 to 10 works well) and assign a movement to each one. You can teach learners what the words mean, and choose a movement that illustrates the definition. For instance, if one of your vocabulary words is the verb *dig*, act as if you were shoveling dirt and tossing it backward over your shoulder. Learners can even help you come up with the movements as you teach what the words mean.

Review the list of words and corresponding movements several times. Then, when you read the text, have learners perform the appropriate motion each time they hear you say one of the words. You can also split your class into small groups and assign each group a word to listen for as you read. When a group hears their assigned word in the text, they are responsible for performing the corresponding movement.

The great thing about using music in your classroom is that the frequency and extent you use it in your teaching is up to you. It is a very flexible tool to use with students. Music addresses different learning styles, and young learners really enjoy it.