Jazz Chants

... how to use them to help your students speak more clearly, practice vocabulary, and learn and reinforce grammar patterns.

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Goals for this webinar:

• to introduce (or re-introduce) you to Carolyn Graham’s Jazz Chants.

• to show you how I introduce and practice chants in my classes

• to explore a variety of ways you can use jazz chants
  – to help your students speak with the natural rhythm and intonation patterns of American English
  – to practice vocabulary
  – to introduce and reinforce grammar patterns
What are Jazz Chants?

“Jazz Chants are Carolyn Graham's snappy, upbeat chants and poems that use jazz rhythms to illustrate the natural stress and intonation patterns of conversational American English.”

[from Oxford University Press]
Let’s listen to Carolyn Graham
tell how jazz chants
were born.
Carolyn Graham: “A jazz chant is really just spoken American English with an awareness of the natural rhythms.”

- Chants use **natural** spoken English
- Chants can be used in **classes of any size**
- Chants **don’t** require any special materials
- Chants can be used with **all age groups**
- Chants **do not** require musical ability
Let’s begin with the simplest of chants. Listen first. Then we’ll practice.

**Hi, how are you?**

1  2

**Fine, how are you.**

3  4
Advice from Carolyn Graham. . .

• A jazz chant has a **four-beat rhythm**: 1, 2, 3, 4,
• Each beat will be either a **stressed word** (or syllable) or **clap** (or tap or pause)
• The first **beat** is the first **stressed** word, which may not be the first word.

Example: Do you **like** it? (clap) Yes, I **do**.

1 2 3 4
Why is this focus on stress, rhythm, and grouping so useful?

For native English speakers, stress is key to meaning. It’s what we listen for to know what’s important and what to focus on.

Jazz chants are a fun, practical way to help students begin to notice and produce natural rhythm.
SYLLABLE-TIMED VS. STRESS-TIMED

Many languages are “syllable-timed”-- every syllable gets more or less the same stress or emphasis.

\[
ed u ca ti on = 5 \text{ staccato beats}
\]
\[
pa pa = 2 \text{ even, staccato beats, same vowel sound in both}
\]

But NOT English... English is a “stress-timed” language.

The rhythm is based on stressed words and syllables, not all syllables.

\[
ed u CA tion = 1 \text{ strong beat}
\]
\[
PA pa = 1 \text{ strong beat}
\]
Rhythm in Sentences
How many syllables? How many stresses?

Kids play ball.
3 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats
The kids play ball.
4 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats
The kids are playing ball.
6 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats
The kids are playing with the ball.
8 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats
The kids have been playing with the ball.
9 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats
The beat is set by the number of stresses, NOT the number of syllables. So, each line takes approximately the SAME amount of time to say. Let’s try it.

**Kids play ball.**

1 2 3  (clap = 4)

The **kids** play ball.

The **kids** are **playing** ball.

The **kids** are **playing** with the **ball**.

The **kids** have been **playing** with the **ball**.
The many levels of STRESS

• **Words** with two or more syllables will always have **one** primary stress.
  • *photograph, photographer, photographic*

• **Phrases** have stress.
  • an **excellent photographer** (unstressed, stressed, focus stress)

• **Sentences** have stress patterns.
  • My **grandmother** was an **excellent photographer**.

• We use stress **to focus attention and show contrast**, often to correct, contradict or disagree.
  – My **father** liked to paint, but my **mother** was a photographer.
  – She was a **photographer** not a **photojournalist**.
Stress in English impacts meaning.

(Other languages have stress, but often it doesn’t change the meaning.)

Word-level: REcord vs. reCORD

Years ago, I was teaching a speaking & listening class.
After class, a student approached me with his cassette tape in his hand...  

Student: I need to talk to you about my cassette.
Me: Do I know your cousin?

I misunderstood because the stress was incorrect even though he used the correct word.
Stress affects meaning at the phrase and sentence level.

A conversation in a bakery:
Customer: I’d like two large muffins, please.
Server: Here you are.

Can you guess what the problem is in each case?
1. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for two large muffins.
2. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for two large muffins.
3. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for two large muffins.
Regular focus on stress and rhythm will train your students to NOTICE stress in English – even if they don’t always get it right, at least they’ll be learning to listen for it!
Some general suggestions for using Jazz Chants:

Begin ORALLY. This forces students to listen to what you **actually** say and not what they think words should sound like based on the way things are spelled.

Be dramatic. Exaggerate and make it fun.

Have students listen to the whole chant first. Then have them listen and repeat each line several times together as a chorus.
1. Introduce the chant orally first. Explain any idioms. Discuss the context.
2. Begin with group (choral) practice. Then move to pair and individual practice.
3. Focus on stress, thought groups, and intonation.
4. For longer, more complex chants, after some oral practice, (group and pairs) show them the written chant. Go through it again several times.
5. Together, mark it to show major stresses, intonation, reduced sounds, linking and blending. [Visual learners will appreciate this!]
6. Review chants regularly! They make great warm-ups.
Do you like it?

• Do you like it? (clap) Yes, I do.
• Does he like it? (clap) Yes, he does.
• Does she like it? (clap) Yes, she does.
• Do they like it? (clap) No, they don’t.
• No, they don’t. No, they don’t.
Do you like it?

1  2  3  4

Do you **like** it? (clap)  Yes, I do.

Does he **like** it? (clap)  Yes, he does.

Does she **like** it? (clap)  Yes, she does.

Do they **like** it? (clap)  No, they don’t.

No, they don’t. No, they don’t. (all together)
How stress works in sentences. . .

- **content words** are usually **stressed** - nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, demonstratives (this, these, those) and negatives (can’t, won’t, never, no, etc.)
- **function words** are usually **unstressed and reduced** - a, an, the, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, most prepositions, etc.
- in unstressed words and in unstressed syllables, the vowel sounds are **reduced and often move to “schwa”**: “Do you like it?” *do* and *you* are reduced
- typically the **last content word** in each thought group receives the most stress:

  *I put the *g*roceries/ in the *b*ag / on the *c*ounter.*
Two groups: A – questions; B – answers. Last line all together.

What do you wear on your head? A hat.

What do you wear on your hands? Gloves.

What do you wear on your feet? Socks.

Shoes and socks, shoes and socks. (all together)
Do you think it’s going to rain?
   (first verse)
Do you think it’s going to rain?
   I hope not.
Do you think it’s going to rain?
   I hope not.
It looks like rain.
It looks like rain.
Do you think it’s going to rain?
   I hope not.
(from Small Talk)
It was raining when she saw him.
It was raining when they met.
It was pouring when they fell in love, the streets were dark and wet.

It was raining when they parted.
There were dark clouds in the sky.
It was raining when he left her, when he turned and said “Good-bye.”
Here’s another case where you could mark the rhythm in at least two different ways.

1                              2
It was raining when she saw him.
3                               4
It was raining when they met.
1              2            3               4
It was raining when she saw him. (clap)
1              2            3               4
It was raining when they met. (clap)
An easy jazz chant.

- Jazz chants can provide students with useful “chunks” of language – expressions they learn as a whole rather than word-by-word.
- Carolyn Graham’s chant, *How do you spell “dog”*? gives students a “template” for asking how to spell a word.
- Try beating out the rhythm by marching. You can have students march in a circle as they chant. It gets the rhythm of English into their bodies. (It’s specially great for kinesthetic learners.)

**How do you spell dog?** (clap, tap, or snap)

  - **d-o-g** (clap/tap)

**How do you spell cat?** (clap/tap)

  - **c-a-t** (clap/tap)

**How do you spell octopus?** (clap/tap)

  - **Don’t ask me!** (clap/tap)
In grammar classes . . .

• Whenever possible, introduce grammar points orally. Jazz chants are a fun and memorable way to do this.

• Focus on the individual sounds that matter most in English – sounds that indicate grammatical features such as third person singular, plural or tenses. For example:

  /s/, /z/, /t/ /d/, and /I/d/.
Here’s a jazz chant called “The Hungry Boy Chant.”

He wants:

One egg, two bananas,
Three hotdogs, four hamburgers,
Five cookies, six sandwiches,
(clap) He’s a hungry boy! (clap)

This provides practice with plural endings.

You can also use it to teach students to notice how stress changes to express different meanings. Make true and false statements and have students correct you. Or ask questions. Example:

- You: He ate three eggs. Student: No, he ate three hotdogs.
- You: He ate three bananas. Student: No, he ate two bananas.
- You: Did he eat three sandwiches? No, he ate six sandwiches.
Grammarchant: Irregular Verbs
from *Grammar Chants* by Carolyn Graham

*Say, said.*
*Stop on red.*
*Eat, ate.*
*Don’t be late.*
*Break, broke.*
*Have a coke.*
*Take, took.*
*Learn to cook.*
*Speak, spoke.*
*Tell a joke.*
*Write, wrote.*
*Get off the boat!*
Chants can be used to teach or reinforce grammar points while at the same time providing speaking & pronunciation practice. Student can quite easily absorb complex grammar points through this type of quality repetition.

**IF IT RAINS I’LL WEAR MY RAINCOAT** by Carolyn Graham

If it *rains* / I’ll *wear* my *rain*coat. (clap)
If it *doesn’t rain* / I *won’t*. (clap)
When it’s *cold* / I *always wear* my *gloves*.
When it *isn’t cold*, / I *don’t*. (clap)

If it *snows* I *won’t* wear *sandals*.* (clap)
If the *sun* comes *out* I *will*. (clap)
But if it *rains* I’ll *wear* my *brand new coat.*
If I *don’t* I’ll *get a chill*. (clap)

*When three content words appear in a row, we typically alternate the stress.*
Habits (excerpt)

Bob gets up at six o’clock.
He never wakes up late. (clap)
He always gets up early. (clap)
He never sleeps till eight. (clap)
He always drinks his coffee black.
He never uses cream. (clap)

... 
(from Grammarchants)
What’s Going on This Morning?

The earth is turning,
The toast is burning,
The water is boiling,
The tea kettle’s whistling,
The faucet is leaking,
(etc.)
More grammar with Jazz Chants

For this activity, give the students the written version of the chant before they hear it. See if they can apply the rules of stress. At the same time, they’re reviewing parts of speech.

• Have students identify all of the nouns, adjectives, adverbs and other content words that will most likely be stressed when you’re going to do a chant. Underline the stressed words.

• Then have them identify the function words that will be reduced. Draw a line through the unstressed words.

• Let’s try it.
Is the post office* open tomorrow?
  It’s open from nine to five.
Is the post office open tomorrow?
  It’s open from nine to five.
What time does it open?
  It opens at nine.
What time does it close?
  It closes at five.
  It opens at nine and closes at five.
  It’s open from nine to five.

Note: *post office* is a compound or set phrase and has one primary stress.
Is the post office* open tomorrow? rising intonation
  It’s open from nine to five.
Is the post office open tomorrow?
  It’s open from nine to five.
What time does it open? falling intonation
  It opens at nine.
What time does it close?
  It closes at five.
  It opens at nine and closes at five.
  It’s open from nine to five.

Note: post office is a compound or set phrase and has one primary stress.
Writing your own chants. . .

The language should be
• real
• useful
• appropriate for the level

Let’s begin with vocabulary chants.
Why vocabulary chants? Rhythm is a powerful tool for memory.
1. Have students make a list of vocabulary words from a lesson you’ve done.
2. Ask them to arrange them according to the number of syllables per word.
3. Choose a two syllable, a three syllable and a one syllable word to make a chant.
An example from Carolyn Graham
(you can see her perform this on the video)

ruler (2 syllables)
eraser (3 syllables)
chair (1 syllable)

The chant:

1  2  3  4
ruler eraser chair (clap)
ruler eraser chair (clap)
ruler eraser ruler eraser
ruler eraser chair (clap)
Make it more complex by adding adjectives.

1  2  3  4
purple ruler pink eraser
1  2  3  4
purple ruler pink eraser
1  2  3  4
purple ruler pink eraser
1  2  3  4
yellow chair yellow chair
**Vocabulary: places is my town**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD LIST</th>
<th>ONE SYLLABLE</th>
<th>TWO SYLLABLES</th>
<th>THREE SYLLABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drugstore</td>
<td>zoo</td>
<td>drugstore</td>
<td>train station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>train station</td>
<td>mall</td>
<td>bead shop</td>
<td>post office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bead shop</td>
<td></td>
<td>bookstore</td>
<td>hardware store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bookstore</td>
<td></td>
<td>hardware store</td>
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<tr>
<td>hardware store</td>
<td></td>
<td>zoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zoo</td>
<td></td>
<td>mall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post office</td>
<td></td>
<td>zoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mall</td>
<td></td>
<td>[clap]</td>
<td>(repeat)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE CHANT:**
- **drug** store
- **train** station
- **zoo**

[clap]  
(repeat)
More vocabulary chants – just for fun (using the 2 – 3 – 1 pattern):

Words to praise someone’s work:

perfect (2 syllables)
fabulous (3 syllables)
great (1 syllable)

The chant:
perfect, fabulous, great (clap)
perfect, fabulous, great (clap)
perfect, fabulous, perfect, fabulous
perfect, fabulous, great (clap)
Writing your own chants...

Once you feel comfortable using jazz chants, you may want to try writing your own. Start by listening to the rhythms that native speakers use.

Remember, it should be:

• real language,
• useful,
• and appropriate for the age group.

• And keep it simple.
It’s best to listen to something natural and unscripted as a model. Try National Public Radio, [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) and click on Storycorps. You’ll hear American telling stories about their lives using natural language.

Recordings are great because you can listen to them again and again until you hear the rhythm.
Let’s recap... the many uses of jazz chants -

• Use jazz chants to reinforce and practice vocabulary. Rhythm is a powerful memory tool. *ruler, eraser, chair*

• Use jazz chants to practice idiomatic expressions and “chunks” of useful language. *How do you spell ___? Do you think it’s going to rain? I hope so. I hope not.*
• Use jazz chants to practice grammar patterns and features.

  [If it _____ I’ll (future). vs When it _____ I (simple present).; Do you . . ? Does he . . .?]  

• Use jazz chants to help your students learn and practice producing the natural rhythms of spoken English. [Hi. How are you?]  

• If your students are shy and a bit timid about speaking English, use jazz chants to help them build confidence.
Thank you for joining this webinar!

I hope you’ll have fun with these chants!