

Quick and Easy Musical Games

Kids learn better when they are engaged both physically and mentally. That's why learning to play a musical instrument affects so many parts of our brains. Try these fun activities for reinforcing and enriching musical learning.

What's Missing Memory Game

Place a variety of music-related items like rhythm instruments, cards with musical symbols, a pencil, a music book, a CD, etc. on a table or in a tray. Use 6-8 items for smaller kids and a dozen or more for older children. Cover the items with a cloth and remove one while the kids have their eyes closed. Remove the cloth and ask them to tell you what is missing. Two people can play or use it with a group. Make it harder by using items that are very similar (like flash cards) or removing more than one item. Make it a stronger teaching moment by discussing the different items used in the game.

Musical Categories

This can be a pencil-and-paper game, a circle game or a team competition. The goal is to name as many things as you can that fall under different categories. For the pencil-and-paper version, draw a grid on a piece of paper with columns and rows. Label the top of each column with a different category. Race to see who can fill in the most items for each category before the timer goes off. For the circle game, kids sit in a circle. Choose one category and as you go around the circle, each person names something that fits in that category. If a player can't think of anything to fit the category, they are out. For the team competition, use the paper version, or adapt the circle version so that each team gets a category when it is their turn and all members name an item. Each item counts as a point, so the team with the most points wins. Suggestions for categories: parts of a piano, composers, musical instruments, musical styles, musical symbols, instruments in an orchestra

Hangman

Use the normal rules for Hangman: something to write on, two or more players, choose a word, draw blank lines for each of the letters in the word, players guess letters, correct guesses go in the blanks and incorrect guesses result in parts of a stick figure being added (head, body, two arms, two legs, two hands, two feet). You can write down any letters guessed that aren't in the word to make it easier. Players trade places after the word is guessed, or the stick figure is complete and a new game begins. Reinforce or practice music education by having the kids choose words that are music-related or have been used in a lesson. You can narrow it down to a specific category, limit the length of the word, etc. to adapt it to your learners.

Clapping Games

These are great ways to learn to identify and copy rhythms. One easy way is to have kids imitate a pattern they hear by clapping it. They can copy the teacher or pair up with another student. Start with short, familiar patterns and progress to harder patterns. A second way is to learn some of the clapping games we probably played as kids. Check out YouTube for "Rockin' Robin", "Down, Down, Baby" and "Bang, Snap, Clap" or just search for Hand Clapping Games. Some combine clapping with some other movements that stimulate even more brain activity and ear-eye-hand coordination. Also a great way to build memorization skills.

Visit the Piano Learning Center at www.ptg.org/learningcenter to find more free teaching resources.

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