

## Topic: Rhythm

1. **Imitation:** One of the easiest ways of working with rhythm is imitation -- either children imitating the teacher/para, or vice versa. This could be done with clapping, vocalizing, playing instruments, etc.

2. **Improvisation:** Using body percussion or instruments, children take turns improvising a rhythm over a steady beat. The beat can be provided by the teacher/para, a metronome, other children, a recording, or a keyboard with electronic drum options.

### 3. Teaching traditional rhythmic notation:

a) Three “sound” symbols, one “silence” symbol. Remember, each word takes up the same amount of time (one beat). Of course, others can be added according to children’s level of advancement.

- i. “yum” 
- ii. “hot dog” 
- iii. “shh” 
- iv. “watermelon” 

b) Start with just one symbol -- “yum” . Make a “musical sentence:”   
-- say it (“yum, yum, yum, yum”), say it and clap it, say it and play it on instruments, program “yum” into switches and have children play it.

c) Once children grasp “yum,” move on to “hot dog,” first by itself, and then mixed with “yum.”

d) The concept of a rest is tricky! When introducing “shh,” combine it only with “yum” at first. It may take a long time for children to master the concept of *not* clapping or playing on a beat. “Hot dogs” can be added if/when children are ready.

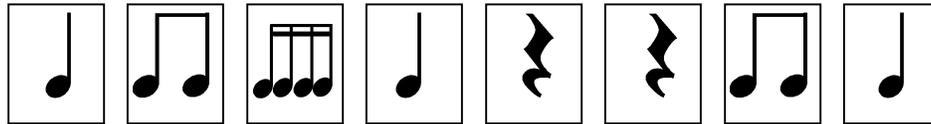
e) “Watermelon” may be too advanced for many children; their level of physical coordination may not be sufficient to clap or play 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Use your own discretion.

f) Words can be found to match other rhythmic figures, if children have advanced to that point.

#### 4. Compose music using traditional rhythmic notation

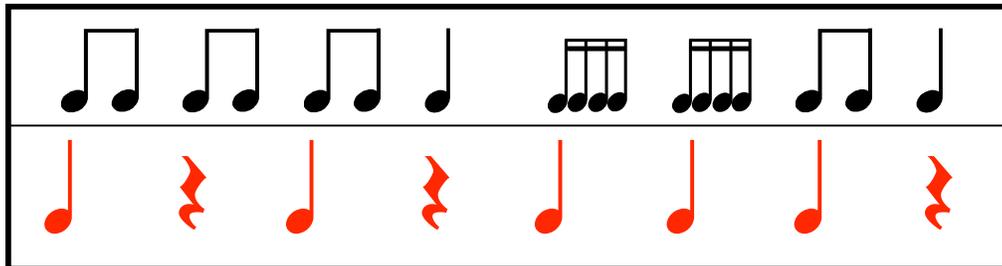
a) With Rhythm Cards: Create cards with the different rhythmic symbols on them. Children arrange cards in the desired sequence, then practice and perform.

==> **TIP:** Cards can be laminated and Velcroed for ease of use. Bulletin boards and thumbtacks work for some populations as well.



b) Create a score on chart paper: Children write down a rhythm on one line of a paper. Practice and perform.

c) Compose poly-rhythmic music: Each line of music gets its own color. Lines can be performed simultaneously by dividing performers into two groups, each group using a different instrument or body percussion sound. Add additional lines as desired, depending on level of students. (This is not to be confused with using different colors for different pitches, discussed below.)



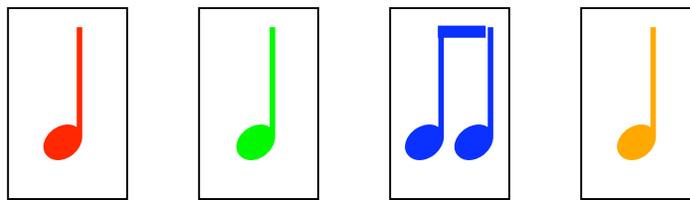
Variations:

- i. One of the lines could be a BEAT (all “yums”)
- ii. Create an OSTINATO (a short rhythm that is repeated over and over); you can put more than one different ostinato together to see how they sound, or play a rhythmic ostinato while another child improvises a rhythm.

5. **Compose music combining rhythm and pitch (melodies):** Use pitched percussion instruments with different colors for each pitch; for example, resonator bells, Remo Sound Shape drums, or Boomwhackers. (SEE ALSO “Topic: Pitch”)

==> **TIP:** Please remember that at the beginning of any new activity, LESS IS MORE. In the following examples, a step-by-step approach to mastery would mean that very few choices would be presented at the beginning; for example, in activity 5a below, one might begin with all “yum” cards and the choice of only two different pitches. More rhythmic and pitch choices would be added gradually as students mastered previous stages.

- a) With Pitched Rhythm Cards: Create cards with notes on them that match the colors of the instruments you are using -- for example, if C resonator bell is red, a red “yum” card means that a quarter note is played on a C bell. (“Shh” symbols can remain black, as they do not require a pitch.) Children arrange the cards in the desired sequence, then practice and perform.



- i. Music can be performed by one child -- for example, one child has all the resonator bells and plays the melody by themselves.
  - ii. Music can be performed by multiple children -- for example, children get one pitch each and wait their turn to play when it's time for their pitch.
- b) Create a score by writing the different-colored pitches on paper or chart paper. Scores can be played by one child or by multiple children, as described above.