

Unit 3 The long and the short of it

Exploring duration

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to discriminate between longer and shorter sounds, and to use them to create interesting sequences of sound.

During the unit children explore the duration of vocal and instrumental sounds. They play percussion instruments with control and sensitivity, paying attention to dynamics, tempo and pitch. Towards the end of the unit the children begin to organise their sounds within a steady pulse. They record their sound sequences using symbols.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links with the ongoing skills unit (unit 1). It leads to unit 4, moving from an open exploration of longer and shorter sounds to rhythmic patterns controlled by a steady pulse. The children's experience of handling instruments, introduced in unit 2, is extended in this unit, and taken further in unit 6 and unit 7. There are connections with science as the children explore ways of making and stopping sounds. It links to PSHE through developing children's ability to listen carefully and become aware of others in the class/group. They learn about appropriate behaviour.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- sung a range of songs at different speeds
- used a range of percussion instruments

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- duration, *eg long/short, longer/shorter, sustained, staccato, start, stop*
- pitch, *eg high/low, higher/lower*
- dynamics, *eg loud/quiet, louder/quieter*
- timbre, *eg smooth, scratchy, chiming, clicking*

RESOURCES

Stimulus:

- everyday situations and events
- stories and poems

Sound sources:

- sounds in the environment
- voices
- tuned and untuned classroom instruments

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

make and control long and short sounds using voices and instruments; work in partnership with another child to create a sequence of long and short sounds

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

make and control long and short sounds using voices and instruments; create a sequence of long and short sounds with help

some children will have progressed further and will:

make and control long and short sounds using voices and instruments; work in a small group of children to compose, perform and record extended sequences involving sounds of varying duration

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION: HOW CAN WE USE OUR VOICES TO MAKE A RANGE OF LONG AND SHORT SOUNDS?

- how to use their voices to make a variety of long and short sounds
- Talk about long sounds, *eg the noise made by a spinning washing machine, a hair dryer, running water*, and ask the children to imitate them with their voices. Ask the children to imitate some short sounds, *eg hammering, radio alarm, knocking, footsteps, ticking clock, dripping water*.
- Ask the children, in pairs, to create short vocal sequences combining long and short sounds, *eg hammering and sawing, ticks and chimes*. Sometimes the sounds will be heard one after the other, sometimes they will be heard together, *eg ticks keep going when the clock chimes*.
- Use voices to provide long and short sound effects for stories and poems, *eg ticking and chiming in Hickory dickory dock*.
- Listen for long and short notes in songs. Make a list of words that are sung with long notes. Highlight that long notes often come at the end of the song or each phrase. They also often match with words with long vowel sounds.
- Ask the children to make movements in response to long and short sounds played on a variety of classroom instruments.

- recognise long and short sounds and make longer and shorter sounds with their voices
- respond to long and short sounds through movement

- Children may define a succession of short sounds, *eg a series of rapid, short blasts of a car horn*, as a long sound. Make sure they understand the difference between a sound that continues without a break (sustained), and a succession of short sounds that follow on from each other so quickly that they give the impression of one long sound.
- Establish that both long and short sounds can follow on from each other very quickly, or may have long periods of silence between them. They can be regular, *eg a ticking clock*, or irregular, *eg hammering*.
- Encourage the children to constantly use the words 'long' and 'short' to describe a wide range of sounds and to use these terms correctly.

EXPLORATION: HOW CAN WE USE INSTRUMENTS TO MAKE LONG AND SHORT SOUNDS?

- how to make sounds of different duration on pitched and unpitched percussion instruments
- 'Long or short?': Sit in a circle and give each child in the class a percussion instrument. Ask each child in turn to produce either a long or a short sound. Allow the children a little time to practise. Concentrate on producing a good quality sound. Some instruments can produce both long and short sounds, *eg tambourine – shaken or tapped. Can a long sound be shortened (eg by touching the vibrating surface)?*
- 'Pass it round': Ask the children to play their instruments again – just one tap/shake/scrape – but this time they should make their sound as soon as the instrumental sound of the previous player has died away, *eg children following wood blocks would have to come in very quickly*. Play this game several times as it requires considerable skill.
- Group the instruments into three sets: long sound, short sound, both. Make two flash cards, one indicating a long sound, the other a short sound. Hold them up one at a time. The children play (quietly) when their sign shows. Some children (those with tambourines, maracas), can play when either sign is showing.

- explore long and short sounds on classroom instruments
- perform long and short sounds in response to symbols

- Children will need to be reminded how to hold instruments so that they can vibrate freely. Remind them to have a loose wrist when using beaters, and to let the head of the beater bounce off the vibrating surface. Triangles are notoriously hard to play – pinch the holder close to the apex of the triangle, but not actually touching it.
- When using pitched instruments, it is recommended that notes are put out in one chord, *eg Cs, Es and Gs*. This is easy on the ear if all the instruments are playing together.

- that music is made up of long and short sounds
- Long and short sounds in music are usually controlled by a pulse or beat. Listen to a selection of music, and listen for short and long sounds, *eg Serenade for Wind 3rd movement IC361 Mozart. Is the music fast or slow? Can you identify the instruments?*

- identify long and short sounds in music

- Some children will be able to understand that the sounds are controlled by a pulse or beat. Some of the musical sounds will be the same as the pulse, others will be shorter (and usually quicker) than others, some will be longer. Listen out for the longest note.

- how to combine long and short sounds to fit in with a steady pulse
- 'Count four': Ask half the children in the class to choose an instrument. Divide them into two groups – long and short sounds. Tell the children that you would like them to play their instruments, one group at a time, to fit in with a steady pulse: 1,2,3,4/1,2,3,4, etc. The short duration instruments should be played on the beat. The children playing instruments with a long duration should make their sounds last for a full four beats. Play quietly. The listening children can tap a quiet beat on their thighs. Swap over.

- create long and short sounds on instruments

- Try counting in twos/threes/sixes. Vary the tempo. Combine long and short sounds, *eg*



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: CAN WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE EXTENDED SEQUENCES COMBINING LONG AND SHORT SOUNDS?

- how to use instruments to make sequences of long and short sounds
- Ask the children, in pairs, to think of two sounds, one long, the other short, that might be heard either at the same time or one after each other (*see 'Introduction' above*). Talk about the two sounds. *Should they be loud or quiet, high or low, regular or now and then, with long or short silences between them?* The children, in pairs, should then select instruments to match their sound and make up a sequence to perform for the rest of the class. *Can the listeners guess what they are describing? Can they improve on their performance?*

- create a sequence of long and short sounds

- Some ideas: Sawing and hammering; ticking and chimes; running water and drops; lawn mower and garden shears; bee and cricket/woodpecker, fire alarm and running footsteps, barking and growling.
- **Extension activity:** The children could work in threes, two to play instruments, the third to lead or conduct. They should change over so that that each child has the chance to do everything.
- **Extension activity:** Some children may be able to record their sound sequences on paper so that others can try them. Their scores should clearly show the two sounds and indicate how they should be made.

EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

In addition to the examples given in the 'Points to note' section, children could go on to:

- play and compose sequences of long and short sounds using combinations of instruments
- refine the scoring of long and short sound sequences, devising symbols to represent the sounds
- listen to recorded music and identify which instruments can make long and short sounds
- learn about Morse code, which uses long and short sounds

ENRICHMENT

- The children could listen to instrumental ensembles and focus on one or two instruments and their use of long and short notes. *What has to be done by the players to produce long and short notes?*
- Listen to visiting singers, solo or in a group. Be aware of the long notes. *How do the singers make them last for a long time and sound pleasant? How do singers ensure that the words that go with short, fast notes are clear?*