

Unit 6 What's the score?

Exploring instruments and symbols

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to recognise different ways sounds are made and changed and to name, and know how to play, a variety of classroom instruments.

During this unit children explore classroom instruments and learn that instruments that make sounds in similar ways can be grouped into families. They create symbols that represent the various ways an instrument can be played and use these to help create a sequence of sounds. This unit should be revisited during the key stage.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links to the ongoing skills unit (unit 1) by reinforcing understanding of the voice as an instrument and how instruments make and change sounds. This unit also builds on the learning developed in units 2, 4 and 5. It leads to unit 11.

This unit links to science – discussing vibrations and how sound travels and recognising and naming the materials used in each instrument.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- used a range of percussion instruments

VOCABULARY

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

- dynamics, eg *loud, quiet, louder, quieter*
- pitch, eg *high, low, higher, lower*
- timbre, eg *bright, hollow*
- how sounds are produced, eg *shake, scrape, hit*
- classroom instruments, eg *triangle, maraca, guiro*

RESOURCES

Stimulus:

- musical instruments
- symbols

Sound sources:

- tuned and untuned classroom percussion instruments

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

<i>most children will:</i>	identify and control a variety of sounds on musical instruments with confidence; perform with others; take account of musical instructions
<i>some children will not have made so much progress and will:</i>	identify ways in which sounds are made and changed; follow instructions
<i>some children will have progressed further and will:</i>	suggest how different sounds can be organised; make improvements to their own work; direct others

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION: WHAT SOUNDS CAN BE MADE BY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS?

- about classroom instruments
- Give the children the opportunity to practise handling classroom instruments correctly. Ask them to identify the instruments by name. Discuss the playing techniques required to produce quality sounds, eg *loose wrist, bouncy beater*.

- identify instruments and the way their sound can be changed
- The main emphasis should be on producing high-quality sounds, that is, sounds that are made correctly so that they are pure and controlled.
- For those teachers for whom it is practical to have one half of the class playing instruments at any one time, the following approach may be helpful. Sit half of the class on chairs in a circle and ask the rest to sit on the floor in front of another child. Each child then has a partner with whom to share instruments.

EXPLORATION: WHAT SOUNDS CAN WE MAKE?

- to identify different ways instruments make sounds
- Focusing on classroom instruments, discuss how sounds are made, eg *by tapping, scraping, blowing, vibrating strings*, and changed, eg *using a range of beaters, varying the force of playing, tapping in different places*. [Link to unit 1: Listening]
- Ask the class to sit in a circle and invite each child to take an instrument and, where relevant, a beater, from a central pool. This should be done carefully and quietly. Name each instrument as it is selected. Listen to each instrument in turn and discuss with the children how the sound is produced.

- identify different groups of instruments
- Children must learn to hold instruments quietly. When talking to the children, first make sure they put instruments down on the floor in front of them.
- **Extension activity:** Ask about other instruments and how they make sound. Talk about the voice. *How does this make a sound?* Ask children or others who play instruments to demonstrate.

- to identify different groups of instruments
- to understand how symbols can be used to represent sounds
- Divide the children into groups according to one, or more, of the following criteria, depending on what instruments they have: instruments that are made from similar materials, eg *wood, metal, skin*; instruments that are played in similar ways, eg *tapping, shaking, scraping, blowing, striking against each other* (some instruments, eg *tambourines*, will fit two categories); instruments that make similar sounds.
- Make a picture label for each group of instruments.



- Choose a leader. Ask him/her to hold up the picture symbols one at a time to indicate which group of instruments should be played. The players produce sound for as long as the symbol is displayed.
- Make a strip of four or more individual picture symbols, eg *shakers, tappers, scrapers* (you will need more than one of each symbol) and display them. One person, the conductor, points to them in sequence. Vary the speed of pointing. Symbols can be repeated.
- The children make their own short sequence of sounds, and then write it down using the symbols. They can then play each others' music.

- perform together using symbols as a support
- Teach the children to handle instruments carefully at all times. They should be picked up and put down carefully. Special care should be taken with instruments with a skin, eg *tambours, drums*. They should never be tapped with anything other than hands/fingers and approved beaters, and should never be hit very hard.
- The drawing of symbols will reinforce the fact that different instruments have similar ways of making sound (drums and glockenspiels are both tapped) and encourage the children to use symbols that describe how they are played rather than what is being played.
- **Extension activity:** Try this activity in smaller groups with one child as the conductor.
- Always use the correct names for the instruments and encourage the children to do the same. It will take some time before all are learned. Remember to ask the children what the instrument is called when they select instruments for the task.

- to identify how sounds can be changed
- Ask the class to sit in a circle and pass around one instrument and see how many different sounds can be made with it. Talk about louder/quieter, higher/lower, faster/slower, longer/shorter, and different timbres, eg *tinkling, rattling*. *Can you match the sounds made on the instruments using your voice?*
- Ask each child to match their playing to spoken instructions, eg *play quietly, loudly, get louder*. Match the spoken instructions with a gesture, eg *fingers on lips for quiet, arms moving apart for getting louder*.
- Another time, focus on tempo, eg *play quickly, slowly, getting faster*. Add gestures.
- Finally, using tuned percussion, focus on pitch, eg *play high, low, getting higher*.

- identify how sounds can be changed
- Discuss ways of improving the quality of the sounds. Ask the children to go round the circle again, this time trying to make a different sound – this can be achieved by striking in a different place, playing more quickly/slowly, using more or less force, shaking instead of tapping (tambourine). Do not forget that fingers can be used effectively as beaters on tambours, drums and tambourines.
- This work has a direct link to the science scheme of work units on sound.

- to listen carefully and respond to sounds using movement
- Use classroom instruments as a stimulus for movement and dance. Use three contrasting instruments and ask the children to make up a movement for each sound, eg *maracas played quietly (small trembling movements), Indian bells (quick single jump with hands and fingers outstretched)*. Play each instrument in turn and let the class practise. Then ask the class to create sequences of movements using the sounds as the stimulus.

- identify different sounds by matching movements to given sounds
- **Extension activity:** Use more sounds and make more subtle changes. Invite children to lead the class.
- This activity is linked to unit 1: Listening 'Physical response' and relates to the dance units in physical education.

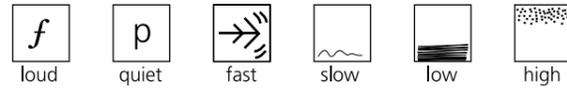
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- how symbols can be used to describe changing sounds

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

- Make four sets of music instruction cards. Use a different colour for each element, *eg blue for dynamics, yellow for pitch, green for duration, pink for tempo*. Each card then shows a different way of producing sounds, *eg loud, quiet, fast, slow, and getting louder, faster, etc*. Use these cards with different groups of players. At first hold one card up at a time. Later hold up two different cards together, *eg fast and quiet (this is much harder than fast and loud)*.



- Play this game in groups of four or five, one child being the conductor with the symbols.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHILDREN

- perform together and follow instructions which combine the musical elements

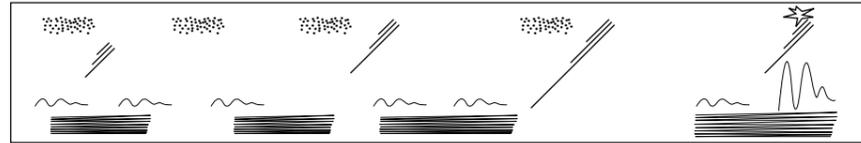
POINTS TO NOTE

- **Extension activity:** Ask children to hold up or display three symbol cards, one for each colour.
- Hoffnung cartoons can be fun to use. Discuss how he described different sounds.
- **Extension activity:** Add more complex instructions so that the class is constantly challenged. Always build from previous work so that learning is reinforced first before moving on. It is better not to move on if the prior learning is not secure.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: HOW CAN WE USE THESE DIFFERENT SOUNDS MADE ON CLASSROOM INSTRUMENTS?

- to compose a class composition and make a score

- Ask the children to make sounds to describe an image, *eg creeping round a scary castle – quiet, slow creeping, fast running away, quiet, high mouse/bat squeaks, loud slamming doors, low, loud groans*. Choose a scenario which will include a range of timbres, dynamics, tempo and pitch.
- Allocate one instrument to each sound (do not forget the voice) and the class decides the way to produce each sound.
- Put these together into a class score showing when, and how, each sound is to be played, *eg a child making the sound for a squeaking bat could draw their own mini score showing a picture of the bat, the instrument used to depict it, and an indication of volume and pitch*.



- contribute to the creation of a class composition and make their own symbols as part of a class score
- choose sounds and instruments carefully and make improvements to their own and others' work

- Silence is a vital part of the performance and may be the hardest part to achieve! Children must learn to hold their instruments quietly when they are not required to play.
- **Extension activity:** Working in groups, the children decide the order for the cards. One member of the group can indicate when to start, when to move to the next card and when to stop. They could also indicate louder/quicker.
- The score may need to be more concrete, that is, using picture symbols related to sound effects, *eg footsteps*.
- Encourage the class to use more abstract sounds and symbols and to really concentrate on playing the sounds at exactly the right time.

EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

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

- explore both pitch and rhythmic patterns
- create their own performance piece in a group and perform to the class
- use both rhythmic and melodic ideas in the coloured card activity
- use symbols that define more subtle changes in sound – not just louder/quieter but different timbres, *eg using harder or softer beaters*
- identify music performed by different groups of instruments and bring some examples to school from home
- create dances that reflect the sounds made by different instruments
- children, including older children, who learn to play instruments could be asked to show and play their instrument to the rest of the class
- celebrate their work in this unit by performing their class composition to other classes, the school and/or parents

When this unit is repeated, the focus will remain the same, that is, exploring instruments and symbols, but the content and the expectations should change. The content is changed easily through the use of different examples, images and other stimuli that could be used to explore instruments. Expectations are changed by expecting more of the children to achieve the 'most children' and 'some children will have progressed further' statements and by placing greater emphasis on the extension exercises in the 'Points to note' section.

ENRICHMENT

- The class could attend concerts where the ensemble talks about the different instruments before the music is played.
- Visiting musicians could come to the class and perform a number of contrasting pieces showing the range of sounds and technical possibilities of their instruments and demonstrate how the sounds are produced. New work could be created, with children playing classroom instruments.

