

SONGS AND INSTRUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Children are instantly intrigued and delighted by a glockenspiel, by a woodblock or any other classroom instrument. The instruments are child sized and easy to handle, a pleasant sound can be produced immediately, and its versatility ensures that no-one gets bored. Tuned percussion instrument with note-bars arranged so neatly and satisfactorily, provide us with a perfect visual aid for teaching our children about pitch in music with the name of the note marked on each bar, and the size and position of each note clearly visible, even children who find abstract concepts hard to grasp will understand the principles of high and low.

This section provides the vocabulary necessary to develop a lesson. It shows a selection of the pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments which are most likely to be found in a music classroom. It identifies the instruments and suggests ways in which to play them. Children should be encouraged to play the instruments correctly and with good control in order to produce the best sound quality.

Make a rule that instruments and beaters should be placed on the floor or a table when not in use.

Silence is an important component of music. Encourage the performers to be still like statues at the beginning and at the end of their pieces.

Musicians must be aware of and listen to others in order to play together as a team. Listening to others is a skill in its own right and some children will find it difficult at first. Point out that playing a musical piece is not a race or competition to win or to be the first to finish.

Pitched instruments

Pitched instruments should have different sized bars. Have a good selection of different beaters for all instruments so that various timbres can be produced.

They are categorised according to the pitch as follows:

Soprano instruments: smallest instruments, produce the highest notes

Bass (pronounced base) : largest in size, produce the lowest notes.

Alto : in between, both in size and sound.

■ Chime bars, xylophones, glockenspiels, metallophones.

		
glockenspiel	metallophone	xylophone

- ◆ Hold beaters and bounce in the middle of the bar.
- ◆ Stop the sound by touching the bar-note with a hand.
- ◆ Encourage the use of two beaters - one in each hand.

A **bar** can be made out of wood or metal.
The bar rests on the **resonating box**.

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Beaters

There are many different types of B. Hard (wood/plastic), medium-hard (rubber or medium-hard plastic), hard felt and soft felt.

Holding beaters



Children will prefer to use their dominant hand, but encourage them to alternate their hands.

The note-bar should be struck with the round **head** of the beater. The other end should be held in the palm of the hand, with the fingers lightly wrapped around **the stick** and the back of the hand facing up. The wrist must be flexible, to enable the head of the beater to bounce gently off the bar. Some children may need frequent reminders about how to hold the beater.

If the head of the beater remains on the bar, the vibration is dampened, and the sound will 'die'.

Bars can be removed easily –ensure that they are lifted off the instrument with both hands horizontally.

Non-pitched instruments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Claves Place one clave across cupped hand forming a 'sound box'. Strike with the other clave. The hollow hand shape will give a greater resonance. This is difficult for small hands; therefore, hold one clave in each hand, and strike against each other.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cymbals A suspended cymbal is struck with a beater. To achieve a 'roll', strike alternatively with two beaters on opposite sides of the cymbal. A pair of cymbals can be clashed together with a swift up and down movement, passing the face of one cymbal across the other. Stop the sound by drawing them into the body.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tambour Play with slightly bent fingers – or for a quieter sound, bend fingers more and play with finger tips. Also play with beaters ■ Tuneable Tambour To ensure an even tension over the skin, slacken all the screws and then tighten them using opposite wing nuts. You can usually 'feel' if each wing nut is the same tension.

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■ Triangle

Grasp the holder close to the triangle and strike the inside of the base or the outside of the top angle. To 'roll', move beater rapidly from side to side inside the top angle.



■ Woodblock

Two tone – Hold and strike either end. Single tone – strike over slit

Sources:

*COTTON, M. : *Agogo bells to Xylophone*.

*LEY, A. : *Sounds of music Year 5*