



DRUMFUN

beat IT

A rhythm game handbook
for teachers



30 games to bring the joy and power
of drumming into classrooms

By Steve Sharpe
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A rhythm game handbook for teachers

30 games to bring the joy and power
of drumming into classrooms

The Beat It CPD Project brings the joy and power of drumming into classrooms equipping teachers with tools to boost creativity, collaboration, and confidence in their students.

Through hands-on professional development sessions, teachers and support staff learn accessible and engaging rhythm-based activities that support key areas of the Curriculum for Excellence, including literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing.

These workshops inspire teachers to use music as a dynamic way to build teamwork, enhance focus, and nurture a love of learning in pupils of all ages.

Whether it's creating rhythmic patterns to reinforce numeracy or using drumming games to boost emotional resilience, the Beat It Project helps transform classrooms into vibrant spaces of connection and growth.

Introductory Video: <https://www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/intro>

*This project is part of Aberdeenshire's Youth Music Initiative Programme,
funded by The Scottish Government through Creative Scotland, and delivered by Live Life Aberdeenshire.*







About Drumfun

Drumfun is a rhythm and drumming organisation based in Scotland, dedicated to bringing the joy of music making into schools, communities, and organisations.

Each year, we deliver hundreds of workshops in classrooms and schools throughout Scotland, using rhythm as a powerful tool for building confidence, connection, and creativity.

Our work includes long-running funded projects like Beat It and Let's Drum, which have reached thousands of children across Aberdeenshire, Moray, and the Highlands. These interactive, inclusive sessions support key areas of the Curriculum for Excellence, including literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing.

This resource is an extension of that work. It's a practical guide to help you bring rhythm based learning into your own classroom.

Contact us:

If you have any questions or would like help delivering the games in this book, please feel free to get in touch:

info@drumfun.co.uk
www.drumfun.co.uk

We offer tailored CPD, one-off workshops, and ongoing programmes to suit your setting. Let's make rhythm a joyful part of your classroom!





How to Use This Book

Welcome to the Beat It rhythm games resource - a practical, playful, and creative resource designed especially for primary school teachers. Whether you're a music specialist or a complete beginner, this resource is designed to help you bring rhythm to life in your classroom through fun, engaging group activities.

What's Inside?

- ➔ 30 Rhythm Games: A wide range of accessible activities using body percussion, voice, drums, and percussion instruments.
- ➔ 14 Learning Focuses: Each game supports specific skills such as rhythm development, numeracy, coordination, confidence, creativity, and group collaboration.
- ➔ Clear Instructions: Each game includes easy to follow steps for how to play, how to develop it further, and top tips for success.
- ➔ Adaptable Formats: Most games can be scaled up or down to suit different class sizes and age groups. You'll also find variations and extensions to keep things fresh.
- ➔ No Instruments? No Problem! Many games use only the body and voice, making them perfect for any classroom setting.



How to Get the Most Out of It

- ➔ **Start Simple:** Choose a few games that match your pupils' age and confidence levels. Many games build skills progressively, so you can revisit them with added complexity.
- ➔ **Use the Learning Focus Tags:** Each game is tagged with its primary learning outcomes. You can select games to match a curriculum goal, group need, or classroom energy level.
- ➔ **Mix and Match:** Games don't need to be followed in order. Use the contents or learning focus index to find what's right for your session.
- ➔ **Use as Starters or Full Lessons:** Some games take 5 minutes and are perfect for brain breaks or transitions. Others can form the basis of a whole music session.

Watch and Learn

Every game in this book comes with a video demonstration to help you feel confident before delivering it. You can view all the videos at:

www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos

- ➔ Each game page includes a clickable link (PDF or digital version), and there's a full list of all video links at the back of the book for easy reference.
- ➔ Watching the videos is highly recommended – they bring the games to life and give you a strong sense of pace, energy, and delivery style.
- ➔ Click a game title in the contents page to jump straight to that game. Then click the game number at the top right of each game page to return to the contents.





Make It Your Own

Once you and your class are familiar with a game, try adapting it:

- ➔ Change the rhythms
- ➔ Invite pupils to invent their own actions
- ➔ Add storytelling or themes from your topic work
- ➔ Use percussion instruments if available
- ➔ Explore dynamics, tempo, or expressive movement

The Beat It approach is all about learning through rhythm but also about joy, connection, and creative exploration. Don't worry about getting it perfect. If your class is engaged, moving, listening, and creating together, you're doing it right.

Let the games begin!



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Learning Focus Index



Learning Focus	Related Games
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Focus & attention	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 18, 21, 23, 25
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Confidence	6, 8, 13, 22, 30
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Coordination	1, 2, 29
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Time: 10 - 15 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: None

1

#1. Body Percussion

This game gets the group warmed up and thinking fast. Beginning with a series of call and response body-rhythms, players must listen carefully and concentrate as the game soon requires them to layer rhythms, and even swap rhythms seamlessly! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Warm up by demonstrating a few simple body-rhythms, asking the group to copy in a call and response format
- ➔ Make sure to incorporate the rhythms which will be used for the next portion of the game: (stamp, clapclap, stamp, clap) and (chestchest, snapsnap, clap, clap)
- ➔ Split the group into 2. Group 1 will play rhythm 1 (stamp, clapclap, stamp, clap) and group 2 will play (chestchest, snapsnap, clap, clap)
- ➔ Explain the rule: when the leader counts to 4, the groups will swap rhythms without stopping
- ➔ Play together and practice swapping!

Development

Introduce a third rhythm or pulse. Ask the children for their own ideas. As long as the rhythm fits into a count of four it will fit. Play with dynamics - loud/ soft, fast/ slow. Discuss different ways to start & finish the piece.

Comments

It can be quite difficult for younger children to play a rhythm while there is another rhythm going on. This type of playing (named: polyrhythm) is usually best done with older primary children. It's a good idea to choose a player that is confident with it to be the group leader so that those less confident can follow them if they lose the beat.

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Focus & attention
- Coordination

Time: 15 – 20 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: None

2

#2. Sevens

This game is based around a set of 7 beats, which changes, ending with small groups creating their own body-rhythms of 7 beats. You can also include some numeracy, which helps to get brains working as well as bodies moving! The game can be done over a series of sessions or as a stand-alone activity. For example, you might like to teach the first 4 rhythms in the first session with the children, and then do the second part of the game in the following session.

[Find video here](#)

Play the Game



Teach the first four patterns:

A) Lap, Lap, Lap, Lap, Lap, Lap, Lap

B) Lap, Clap, Lap, Clap, Lap, Clap, Lap

C) Lap, Clap, Click, Lap, Clap, Click, Lap

D) Lap, Cross Lap, Lap, Clap, Click, Clap, Lap



Ask the children to create their own body beat pattern of 7, either in teams, partners, or small groups

Development

You can put all the created rhythms together to create a poly-rhythm ensemble. Start by asking one of the groups to play their rhythm and then layer in the other groups one by one, slowly building the group sound.



Learning focus:

- Numeracy
- Pattern recognition
- Coordination

Comments

The first 4 rhythms can be tricky to master when we repeat them as each one finishes and starts on the lap. Watch out for this!

There is a good opportunity to involve some numeracy concepts: rhythm B has every even number as a clap, rhythm C consists of 2 sets of 3 with one remainder.

Time: 5 mins

Group size: Medium

Age group: Mid and Upper Primary

Instruments needed: None

3

#3. Pass the Clap

This simple game is used to encourage turn taking and helps develop our inner sense of rhythm. It can help everyone feel important, as the game only works when each person is playing their part in the group beat. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Establish a count of 4 to set the pace and timing
- ➔ Pass a clap around the circle so that each player plays a single clap 'in time' with the group beat
- ➔ Repeat as above, this time each player playing 2 claps at a time

Development

Try asking the players to choose whether they play one clap or two claps. If a player chooses two claps, then the direction of travel changes! This can be very fun and challenging, but when played well, very rewarding!



Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Focus & attention
- Inclusivity & respect

Comments

Asking the players to keep their bodies moving in time to the beat will ensure the games success. You will find it a lot easier to keep the clap travelling at the correct pace. Encourage the children to *feel* the rhythm.

Time: 10 mins

Group size: Medium

Age group: Mid and Upper Primary

Instruments needed: None

4

#4. Pass the Clap, 2 to Change

This is a development of the previous pass the clap game. This time, as the beat is passed around the circle, each player can choose if they play a single clap or a double clap. If any player chooses a double clap, then the direction of travel changes. This can be great fun and can help with concentration as well as developing a sense of rhythm. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Play the previous game as a warm up or an introduction
- ➔ Ask each player to choose whether they play a single clap or a double clap each time it is their turn
- ➔ Pass the clap/claps around the circle and see if the players can concentrate enough to not get it wrong!

Development

Once the game is mastered, try asking the group for suggestions of different actions which could have powers (for example, a stomp skips a beat).

You can also play it as an elimination game: if someone makes a mistake, they are out of the game, and so the number of players reduces until you have a winner (note: it will always be 2 winners – play it and you’ll see why!)

Comments

It can be challenging at first to keep the beat and remember to switch directions – start slow and see if you can build up to a good tempo (remember to feel the rhythm, body movements can help again).

This game can also be played simply as a non-rhythmical game (i.e. without the need to play the claps in time). In this form, the game focuses primarily on concentration and group cohesion rather than rhythm skill development.

Learning focus

- Fun
- Focus & attention
- Group collaboration



Time: 5 mins
Group size: Any
Age group: All ages
Instruments needed: None

5

#5. One...Two...Three...Ten!

This is a quick-fire game that can be played simply with our voices. The leader establishes a rhythmic count, and the group have to feel the rhythm in order to play the game correctly. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ A designated leader starts a rhythmic count of 1...2...3
- ➔ Each player in the group continues the count silently until they reach the number 10
- ➔ On the count of 10 each player shouts out and claps

Development

You can play this game with different leaders and at different paces. You can choose different numbers to 'count to', for example, you might count to 20.

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Social-emotional development
- Fun

Comments

You'll notice that it's harder to play correctly when the pace is slower. It's easier to play when each player moves their body in time to the beat. Try playing it with eyes closed and you'll see what a difference this makes!

Time: 5 - 10 mins
Group size: Any
Age group: Upper Primary
Instruments needed: None

6

#6. One.Three.Four - Back and Forth

This game is a great icebreaker as it can be quite challenging! The players are invited to create a back-and-forth rhythm of 3 beats. As the game develops, numbers are replaced with actions. The waltz rhythm makes it challenging for players to keep the rhythm flowing, especially as the numbers are replaced. The challenge makes the game a great one for engaging the players, as they need to concentrate on the rhythm. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Separate group into pairs.
- ➔ Each pair counts to three between themselves, taking it in turns, back and forth (1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3...)
- ➔ Repeat, replacing the 1 with a clap. (Clap, 2, 3, Clap, 2, 3...)
- ➔ Repeat, replacing the 2 with a nod. (Clap, Nod, 3, Clap, Nod, 3...)
- ➔ Repeat, replacing the 3 with a stamp (Clap, Nod, Stamp, Clap, Nod, Stamp...)

Development

This game can also be played with a leader playing the part of person 1, and the class playing the part of person 2. Similarly, it can be played with 2 teams – split the group in 2 and play. Players can also choose their own body movement replacements. Try increasing the speed as players get more practice.

Comments

This game is great for building confidence, as it can be quite difficult at first, but players will notice that as they get more practice, it becomes easier quite quickly. The game can be played rhythmically to help develop a sense of timing, or can simply be played as a fun warm-up or icebreaker without needing to stay in rhythm. When focusing on keeping the rhythm, this game can be quite challenging. Encourage players to keep a slow pace at first and try to not create a gap in between counts of 3 – the rhythm should be flowing with no pause for an imaginary 4.

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Social-emotional development
- Fun
- Focus & Attention

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Any

Age group: Lower Primary

Instruments needed: None

7

#7. Che Che Kule

This is a simple African call and response song that is a fun way to energise a group and get them ready for 'music time'! This game works well with primary 1 and 2 children as a warm-up or energiser. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Teach the first 4 lines: Che Che Kule, Che Che Kofi Sa, Kofi Sa Langa, Ka Ka Sa Langa
- ➔ Sing the first 4 lines as a call and response
- ➔ Add actions (tap head 4 times for 1st line, shoulders for 2nd, hips for 3rd, knees for 4th)
- ➔ Teach the final line: Ku Ma Dende, and ask the children to repeat it twice with a 'HEY!' at the end
- ➔ Practice the final line along with the HEY!
- ➔ Sing the whole song as call and response with actions.

Development

You can play this game standing up or sitting down. You can also try it at different speeds. You might want to ask one or two of the players to play a beat on a drum while the others sing the song with the accompanying actions. See if the drummers can end with a big 'BOOM!' at the same time as the rest of the group shout 'HEY!'.

Also, this game can be used to discuss syllables and the use of words to convey rhythm and rhyme. The words of the song don't mean anything in particular and are simply rhythmical phrases that are fun to speak out. You can ask the children to make up their own 'nonsense' phrases that might be fun and have a good rhythm.

Learning focus

- Fun
- Listening
- Literacy

Comments

I use this game a lot with Primary 1 and 2 children as a warm-up or energiser at the beginning of a session. It helps if there's a strong singer in the group who can encourage the others to sing out loud. If the group is shy, you can start quietly and build the volume (along with the speed) gradually.



Time: 15 - 20 mins

Group size: Small to medium

Age group: Mid and Upper Primary

Instruments needed: None

8

#8. The Human Keyboard

This game is really fun to do, and tends to be pretty popular as well! Each player chooses a vocal sound and holds out a hand, and another player creates a song using the players as a 'human keyboard'. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Players stand in a circle and hold one hand out with their arms bent at the elbow
- ➔ Ask each player to think of a vocal sound
- ➔ Choose a leader to go around the circle and press each hand down
- ➔ As each hand is pressed down, the player whose hand it is makes their vocal sound and brings their hand back up to 90 degrees as if their hand were a key on a keyboard
- ➔ Let the leader have fun making different rhythm songs using the sounds that the group have chosen

Development

You might like to split the group with two leaders and see if they can co-create a fun rhythm song. Once the group is comfortable with the game, you can ask players to hold two hands out and have 2 sounds each. You can also add a looping function! Choose a loop button (a shoulder press, for example), which means that the player repeats their sound until the loop button is pressed again.

Learning focus

- Confidence
- Creative & musical expression
- Fun

Comments

It's a good idea to caution against rude sounds or inappropriate words. Also, if using the loop function, be sure to establish the timing of the loop first by pressing the hand down a few times in sequence before creating the loop.

Time: 10 mins
Group size: Any
Age group: Mid Primary
Instruments needed: None

9

#9. Rhythm Sequence

This game tests the player's concentration and listening skills by asking them to echo back a series of rhythms, but with a few 'rules' to remember. The leader will see if they can 'catch you out!' So be on guard and pay close attention! This game works particularly well with the primary 4's and 5's. Primary 6's and 7's find it too easy, and the earlier years can find it too tricky. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ The leader begins by establishing a series of call and response rhythms with their body
- ➔ Introduce rule number 1: If part of the rhythm is played on the lap or knees, then the players are not to copy
- ➔ Play the game inserting some beats on your lap/ knees, and see if you can catch anyone out!
- ➔ Introduce rule number 2: If the leader plays 2 stamps, the group is not to copy but instead clap 5 times and shout HEY!
- ➔ Play the game
- ➔ Announce rules 3 and 4: The word lowolowa results in a vocal crescendo with ascending hands, and rule 4 is "Hey Hey Hey" = "Ho Ho Ho" & Vice versa
- ➔ Play the game, mixing up regular calls with the special ones

Development

Ask the group if they have any other ideas for 'rules,' e.g. if a certain rhythm is played (Clap Clap Stamp for example), then instead of copying we all pull a face!



Learning focus

- Listening
- Focus & attention
- Fun

Comments

It's nice to introduce each rule one by one and build it up slowly. Also, trying to create a sense of excitement and flow can make it more likely that you'll catch someone out as they will become distracted by the rhythm and more likely to forget the 'rule.'

Time: 15 mins
Group size: Medium
Age group: Upper Primary
Instruments needed: None

10

#10. Son Macaron

A pass the beat game played in a circle with hands touching. Players sing 'Son Macaron' (an Eastern European song), and after each round, someone is out and removed from the circle, leading to a grand final in which only one player can become the winner! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Teach the song: "Son Macaron Son Marion, Marion Marion, Leah Leah Tip Tip Tip, Leah Leah Tap Tap Tap, One beat, Two beat, Three beat....CATCH!"
- ➔ Players sit in a circle and place their right hand (downward facing) on top of their neighbour's upward-facing left hand
- ➔ Practice passing the beat around the circle as such: each player in turn raises their right hand, taps their neighbour's right hand, and brings their hand back to its original place
- ➔ Pass the beat around the circle while singing the song
- ➔ On the word 'CATCH' the player that is about to be tapped can pull away to save themselves from getting out, but if they fail to do so, they're out!
- ➔ The circle of players will get smaller as one person will be removed from the game each round

Development

You can invite the players to play 3 taps on the phrase 'tip tip tip' and 'tap tap tap'. You can allow the people who are out to help keep the beat by clapping in time or by playing a drum.

Comments

Some groups may feel a little uncomfortable with hands touching. You will know best if this is an appropriate game for your group. Try to ensure that the beat is passed in time and that no one removes their hand before the word 'Catch!' I will sometimes allow a little flexibility with this, but watch out because if you don't enforce it at some point, the game can become difficult to judge. Once down to 2 players, it can feel very different, so allow the finalists time to practice the passing of the beat back and forth before you play the final round. You will need to keep a close eye on the final, It can sometimes be very difficult to tell who is the winner!

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Focus & attention

Time: 2 - 3 mins
Group size: Any
Age group: Upper Primary
Instruments needed: Drums or percussion

11

#11. Time to Beat

Hopefully, a quick little game: See how long the players take to go from a rumble into a unified beat! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Each player has a drum, and the instruction is to go from a group rumble into a unified group beat in as short a time as possible
- ➔ Set up rules like – No talking and no pointing, instead use eye contact and listening
- ➔ Play the game and use a stopwatch to find how long it takes

Development

You could try this game with players having their eyes closed. Ask the players how the experience differs when they are restricted like this. You can play the game multiple times, and each time the resultant unifying beat must be different to the previous ones.

Comments

This can sometimes be a tricky game to succeed with. Sometimes, a group will find it very difficult to silently agree on a dominant beat. Don't be downhearted if your group isn't ready to play this game, it might just be that they need a little more guidance. It's actually quite an advanced & nuanced game. Players need to be willing to lead and try to create a dominant beat that others can follow, but also they need to be willing to sacrifice their beat if they see that a competing beat is becoming more dominant.

Learning focus

- Group Collaboration
- Listening



Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Mid - Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums or percussion

12

#12. Where's the one?

This game encourages players to find certain beats within a rhythm, and develops towards 2 groups, each playing different beats within the rhythm. I find the game helps players to gain confidence with pattern recognition and rhythm, as the group needs to keep focus on the beat to play the game successfully.

[Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ The leader plays a simple rhythm on a drum with an underlying pulse of 4 beats
- ➔ Ask the group to play on beat number 1 only
- ➔ Ask the group to play on beat number 2 only (this is usually harder)
- ➔ Try different variations by asking the group to play on different numbers of the underlying pulse of 1,2,3,4
- ➔ Split the group to create a rhythmic conversation with one group playing, for example, beats 1 and 2, while the other group plays beats 3 and 4

Development

Try different variations of beats for the players to play on. You can also increase the rhythmic count to that of 8 (see also games 16 and 25). Try asking each individual or pairs to choose their own number to play on. One number could be a clap and another number a drum beat. There are many variations on this, once you understand the concept of an underlying pulse within a rhythmic beat.



Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Pattern recognition & numeracy

Comments

You may not be confident enough to play a beat on a drum, in which case you can use a drumming soundtrack or even a popular song or folk song.

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: All

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

13

#13. Conductor

A fun and simple game for all ages. A player stands in the middle of the drum circle and conducts the group's sound using their body language and movements. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ A leader is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle
- ➔ The leader 'conducts' the group sound by using their hands to demonstrate a drum roll, and their outward facing palms to show when to stop
- ➔ Raising their arms in the air increases the volume, and lowering their arms decreases the volume
- ➔ Use foot stamps to create strong, unifying beats. Running on the spot, tiptoe's stomps and jumps can all be used to conduct the group

Development

You can ask different children to be the leader, and each child might like to add their own ideas about which signals mean which response.

You can ask 2 children to come into the middle and see if they can co-create a soundscape or rhythm with the group.

With older children, you can split the group into 2 or 3, and the conductor can become a composer by demonstrating rhythm parts for each group to play, so that the result is a group polyrhythm.

Learning focus

- Confidence
- Inclusivity & respect
- Group collaboration

Comments

This is a really simple and very fun game. Children of all ages will enjoy being the leader. It's a great game to foster respect within the group and develop confidence in the leader. I usually find that after 3 or 4 turns, the group is ready to do something different.

Time: 5 - 10 mins
Group size: Medium to large
Age group: Mid to Upper Primary
Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

14

#14. Call & Response

This is a simple game based on a call and response format. The game is great to encourage listening within the group, as a leader is chosen to play a set of rhythms which must be copied exactly by the group. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Choose a leader
- ➔ Ask the leader to play a variety of rhythms on their drum
- ➔ Ask the group to listen as best they can and copy what they see and hear

Development

Pass the leadership around the circle, and let every child have a turn (you can play this with each player having one rhythm each, or a number of rhythms). You can also make it a fun game where one particular rhythm is forbidden and is not to be copied. Try adding some claps or vocal beats into the rhythm.

Comments

You can play this game with an emphasis on beat length (i.e. each pattern played is to be of a similar length), or you can play it allowing length variation. If playing the latter, don't allow the length to become too long, as it then becomes very difficult to achieve a successful copy.

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Group collaboration
- Listening

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Mid to Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

15

#15. Call & Response, 2 in a Row

A variation on a call & response sequence in which there is a 'rule'. If the leader plays the same rhythm twice in a row, the group doesn't copy the second time! A fun game for developing good listening & concentration skills! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Choose a leader
- ➔ Ask the leader to play a variety of rhythms on their drum
If the leader plays the same rhythm twice in a row, then the group don't copy
- ➔ Play for fun, or for elimination!

Development

Ask the group to think of other 'rules' that result in no playing. For example, if there's a clap in the rhythm, or if it's a *certain* rhythm.



Comments

Sometimes, a group will ask me for clarification if the rule is in force when the same rhythm is played differently. For example, if the rhythm is played at first with one hand, and then with two hands. You can decide amongst yourselves what the rule is in this case. This game can be really fun when a group finds it challenging, but occasionally I get a group who are really good at it, in which case it's not so fun!

Learning focus

- Resilience
- Focus & attention
- Listening



Time: 10 - 15 mins
Group size: Medium to large
Age group: Upper Primary
Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

16

#16. 12,34,56,78 to Groove

A simple way to start a group improvisation. Here we split the group into 4, with each group playing certain beats within an overall rhythm played by a leader, eventually the group can begin to improvise around this structure.

[Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Divide the group into 4 sections
- ➔ Establish which beats each section is to play on:
 - The 1st section plays on beats 1 & 2
 - The 2nd section plays on beats 3 & 4
 - The 3rd section plays on beats 5 & 6
 - The 4th section plays on beats 7 & 8
- ➔ A leader starts with a simple groove based around 8 beats and the group are invited to join in playing their beats along with the groove

Development

As seen in the video, we can develop this game into a group improvisation by inviting the players to add in extra beats as they wish.

You can also ask individual players to have a second grouping in their minds to play along with, so for example a player might be in group 1 (playing beats 1 & 2), and they choose to also occasionally play along with group 3 (therefore playing beats 1 & 2 and sometimes beats 5 & 6 in addition).

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Pattern recognition & numeracy
- Group collaboration

Comments

Developing this game into a group improvisation can sometimes be a slow process, but give it time. A player can often get 'stuck' in their 2 beats and find it hard to explore additional beats. Encourage players to stop and listen occasionally as the rhythm is playing, and encourage them to feel the rhythm in their bodies.

Time: 10 - 15 mins
Group size: Medium
Age group: All ages
Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

17

#17. Conversations

Drums are used in this game as tools for self expression, they are our voice! We begin with simple one on one conversations and can develop into a group conversation. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Choose 2 players to converse with one another using their drums
- ➔ Allow the conversation to evolve until it comes to a conclusion
- ➔ Choose 2 more players to do the same, and allow different couples to play the game
- ➔ The group can enjoy listening and have fun by guessing what they were discussing - were they being friendly, hostile, shy, etc.
- ➔ Play the game as a circle game, with the first 2 players conversing and a third player interrupting, followed by the first player dropping out

Development

You can play this game as a group, asking the players to play in a random order, listening to all the different voices in the room and responding accordingly. Encourage lots of silence at first and gradually build up into a whole group conversation/ rhythm, with overlapping expressions. This can be done with eyes closed to facilitate really good listening.

Learning focus

- Creative & musical expression
- Social-emotional development
- Group collaboration

Comments

This game is lots of fun, and it's great to see children developing self expression and having fun with their friends. It's a game for all ages and abilities, and a great way to develop connections and rhythm expression.

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Small - medium

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

18

#18. One at a Time

A fun game to develop patience, group awareness and improvisation. The simple rule being - only one person is allowed to play their drum at any one time!

[Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Introduce the rule that only one player is allowed to play their instrument at any one time
- ➔ Each player can play whatever they want (a single beat, a rhythm, a drumroll etc), and when they're playing, no one can interrupt
- ➔ If more than one player starts playing at the same time, then all of those players are out
- ➔ If anyone interrupts a player, then they are also out
- ➔ Play the game!

Development

You can try playing this game with your eyes closed for an additional challenge. You can develop it into a group challenge - put the stopwatch on and see how long you can play for as a group without anyone going out!

Learning focus

- Focus & attention
- Creative & musical expression
- Group collaboration

Comments

Sometimes a player might not take any risks and choose to not play at all in order to avoid going out. Watch out for this and take any necessary steps to bring them back into the game. As in the video, the game can sometimes develop into a series of single hits only. Try and encourage players to relax and play for longer. The main obstacle is in the initial beat; once you've established that you are the one playing, you're not going to get out!

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Small - medium

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

19

#19. Group Improvisation

Encouraging players to make their own beat while listening to others in order to create an enjoyable and funky group rhythm! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Each player has an instrument
- ➔ Encourage players to listen and contribute to a group rhythm by experimenting and making up their own beat
- ➔ Explain that the aim is to make a nice group rhythm. We each have a 'voice' and the goal is to each be heard equally and have fun in creating our music
- ➔ Encourage quiet playing to encourage listening
- ➔ Start the groove - and see where it goes!

Development

This is a foundational element of group music making, and once players are comfortable with improvising together, you can introduce a number of different dynamics - volume, tempo, accents, dropping in and out, stop & go, etc. Have fun adding different dynamics into your group, playing at first with a designated leader, but in time, allowing the group to self-facilitate their own musical dynamics.

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Creative & musical expression
- Group collaboration
- Listening

Comments

At first, it might be tricky to help the players develop an equal sense of the importance of both listening & playing, but in time with more and more experience, it will come. This game is perhaps best played with a range of different instruments, so using drums & percussion, for example, will allow players to hear more clearly all of the different voices in the group.



Time: 10 - 20 mins

Group size: Any

Age group: Mid to Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

20

#20. Say it and Play it

“If you can say it - you can play it”. This simple phrase demonstrates the connection between words and rhythm. Here we explore this connection by creating rhythms using words, phrases, names & rhymes. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Teach the phrase “If you can say it, you can play it”
- ➔ Chant the phrase as a call and response in order to embed the idea
- ➔ Begin by saying some names of players and then playing the syllables of those names on the drums or instruments
- ➔ Try saying other words, phrases, names or rhymes and putting them to music in the form of rhythm
- ➔ Build up a group rhythm made up of elements of different words and phrases (for example each player plays the rhythm of their name and birthday)

Development

You can use this game to support any topics or themes that you are working on as a class. You can try and play poems and nursery rhymes in their entirety. Pick a phrase or a rhyme and make it into a call and response and use this as an attention call, or as an interval in the music (example leader calls - “One, Two, Three Four Five”, the group responds “Once I caught a fish alive”).

Learning focus

- Literacy
- Group collaboration
- Listening

Comments

This is a fabulous foundational element of rhythm. Once players grasp this concept fully there is no end to the number of rhythms they will be able to play. Early years will struggle to play the beat of each syllable and will instead group syllables together and tend to play the underlying pulse, whereas most mid and upper primary aged children will be able to tap the beat of each individual syllable.

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: All

Age group: All

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

21

#21. Drum Freeze

This is a simple but fun game which encourages players to listen carefully. A leader plays a rhythm for the group to play along to. When the leader stops, the group freezes! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game



Establish the rules of the game: a leader plays a rhythm and the group plays along. If the leader stops playing, the group must also stop. If anyone continues to play after the leader has stopped, they are out of the game!



Play the game

Development

You can ask different children to be the leader. You could introduce a special 'freeze cue' into the rhythm (e.g a loud Boom, or a double hit) and players must stop playing when they hear the cue.



Comments

This is a really simple game for all ages. I sometimes like to make it so that if no one gets 'out', then everyone who is currently 'out' comes back 'in'! This way it keeps everyone playing and fosters a sense of teamwork and of players helping each other.

Learning focus

- Fun
- Focus & attention
- Listening

Time: 15 - 20 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Mid to Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

22

#22. King of the Jungle

This is a really fun game which gets the group engaged and thinking quickly. Sat in a circle, a hierarchy of the jungle is established, with the leader at the top as the lion, the king of the jungle, and the player to their right at the bottom, as the wiggly worm. The aim is to overthrow the king and move your way up the food chain. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ With the players sat in a circle, establish the hierarchy/food chain of the jungle. The leader is at the top (the lion), and the person to the leader's right is at the bottom (the wiggly worm)
- ➔ Introduce the game: a rhythm is played by all (knee, knee, clap, knee, knee, clap...)
- ➔ The leader begins by saying their own name on the first clap, and another player's name on the second clap (e.g. knee, knee, Steve, knee, knee, Tom)
- ➔ The player whose name was called on the second clap (Tom), now does the same (e.g. knee, knee, Tom, knee, knee, Sarah)
- ➔ The game continues in this way. If a player hesitates or says the names on the wrong beat, they move to the bottom of the jungle (the wiggly worm), and the rest move up one space to fill the gap
- ➔ At the end of the game, whoever is in the Lion's position, is the King of the Jungle!

Development

You can develop the rhythm of this game to make it more challenging, for example Lap Clap Click or LapLapLapLapLap Clap. You can also allocate each player a number instead of using their name. This also makes it more challenging as they are more likely to forget which number they are!



Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Inclusivity & respect
- Listening

Comments

Be careful that everyone is getting a turn. Sometimes it can be that the more popular players are the ones getting lots of turns and as a facilitator it's important to ensure that each player is having a chance to take part.

Time: 10 mins
Group size: All
Age group: All Primary
Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

23

#23. Simon Says

This game is familiar and fun, using the format of a 'Simon says' game and instead, using rhythms. It's interesting to notice how easily players are caught out as they are distracted by the rhythm, making the game a fun way to illustrate how rhythm and music can make us relaxed. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Begin by playing a series of rhythms, asking the group to copy in a call and response format
- ➔ Introduce the game - Simon Says (you can change 'Simon' to your own name)
- ➔ You play a rhythm, and the group only copies if you first say 'Simon Says'
- ➔ Try changing who is the leader!

Development

Similar to games 15 and 9, you can introduce new rules that result in not playing. For example, perhaps Simon is a bit naughty and might encourage you to clap, whereas clapping has actually been outlawed in Simonland - so don't let him trick you into clapping!

Learning focus

- Fun
- Focus & attention
- Listening

Comments

This is a really fun and rather simple game, and not much can go wrong. Most players will be familiar with the concept, although do check that everyone understands the rules before playing. Have fun!



Time: 5 - 10 mins

Group size: Medium - large

Age group: All

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

24

#24. Circle of Sound

This game is a quick and fun way to create a rhythm in a group. A leader stands in the middle and, by gesturing in a circle, helps the group to generate their own rhythm of seemingly random beats! The game can be a fun way to explore how a rhythm is a cycle of beats, as the circle repeats, we can begin to hear a pattern.

[Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ A leader stands in the middle of the circle and slowly gestures a big circle with their arm, starting with their arm pointing straight up above their head
- ➔ Ask everyone in the group to watch the circle, and choose a point at which they will play their beat. Each player gets one beat
- ➔ Repeat a couple of times, asking players to keep their one beat at the same point in the circle
- ➔ Once the group has got used to this, try moving the circle at a faster pace, or several times in a row to see if you can hear the pattern repeating itself!

Development

You can develop this game by using vocal sounds in addition to instruments. You can ask players to choose 2 or 3 points in the circle where they make their sound.

You could have 2 or even 3 players in the middle, and they can each take it in turns to make their circle, resulting in 2 or 3 different overall patterns combining together to make a fuller song. Experiment with deciding an overall structure for the group song - e.g AABBBCCA, or ABABABC, where A is circle number 1, B is circle number 2, and C is circle number 3. You can also encourage players to become aware and start to predict or point to where the next sound is coming from!

Learning focus

- Focus & attention
- Creative & musical expression
- Listening

Comments

Encourage players to be patient and enjoy waiting for their turn to make a sound. Use this game to encourage listening and awareness of all the other sounds in the group.

Time: 10 - 15 mins

Group size: Medium to large

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

25

#25. One to Eight

This is another great game for helping a group to generate a joint rhythm. The game is based around a pattern of 8 beats, with each player choosing a number between 1 and 8 to play on. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Ask players to choose a number between 1 and 8, and keep this number secret to themselves
- ➔ Establish the tempo by counting from 1 to 8
- ➔ Each player is then to play one note on their chosen number. Note: Practice a couple of times as a group first (e.g. everyone plays only on 3)
- ➔ Play the game with each person only playing on their chosen number
- ➔ Once the group has practised a few times, you can ask players to choose 2 numbers, and encourage them to experiment with their beats (for example, they could play a couple of faster beats on their numbers instead of just one) - Enjoy your group song!

Development

With younger player, you can use a 4 beat cycle and ask players to choose a number from 1 to 4. It's fun to play different rounds (for each round, players keep their same number): with a different listening theme for each round e.g. Round 1 - play your chosen number and listen to the resulting group rhythm. Round 2 - play and see if you can guess what your neighbours' (either side) secret numbers are. Round 3 - play again and ask players to notice which are the most & least popular numbers. Round 4 - ask if any player would like to make a 'bold claim' (for example - I claim that over half of the group have chosen number 3), and find out if their claim is correct. Use this game as an opportunity to discuss the importance of space or rests in music.

Learning focus

- Focus & attention
- Pattern recognition & numeracy
- Group collaboration

Comments

This can be a tricky game for younger players, and some players may find it a little stressful to have to count while playing. Encourage players to try their best but not to worry if they're struggling. Similar to game 24, this is really a game of creating moments of time in which to play, and so as long as there is space and beats, the game will be fun and the rhythm will be interesting.

Time: 10 mins

Group size: Small to medium

Age group: Mid to Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

26

#26. Rock, Paper, Scissors

A rhythmical development of the classic game, in which players can create rhythms in small groups, using an array of hand gestures. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Introduce the game by giving each of the hand gestures in 'rock, paper, scissors' a rhythmical sound (rock is 'boom,' scissors is 'boom boom,' and paper is a short rumble) ask the
- ➔ players to repeat these after you to get used to it
- ➔ Sat in a circle, the leader calls 'rock, paper, scissors,' and the group each play a gesture, as in the classic game, holding their hand out into the centre of the circle and keeping it there
- ➔ You can now choose a group of 4 and ask them to play their rhythm for the group, using the rhythmical sounds corresponding to their hand gestures
- ➔ Play again, choosing a different group, and enjoy the different rhythms that are created!

Development

After small groups play their rhythms, you could layer the sounds from different groups together to create a polyrhythmic ensemble.

Choose other hand gestures to result in new sounds to make the options of the rhythm greater (e.g a prayer gesture could mean a vocal 'ahh').

Learning focus

- Rhythm skills
- Pattern recognition & numeracy
- Group collaboration

Comments

This is a good game to compliment composition learning, with players experiencing different options of notes within a rhythmic structure. You can use this game along with other pattern recognition and numeracy games to develop musical understanding and terminology (crotchets, quavers etc) and composition.

Time: 20 mins

Group size: Large

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion, Boomwhackers

#27. Composer

A development on the 'Conductor' game in which the conductor becomes a composer. Using the boomwhackers allows the players to not only create a rhythm, but a tune as well! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Split the group into sections with each section having the same colour and size boomwhacker. In the centre of the circle, you will need 2 boomwhackers of each colour (the composer's set)
- ➔ Introduce the game: You are the composer, and you will give each section their own rhythm to play
- ➔ Begin with a simple rhythm, play it on the chosen colour and size of your composer's set, and that section will repeat after you - these players continue to play as you set the rhythms for the rest of the sections
- ➔ Move on to the next group, layering the sound
- ➔ Continue until all sections are playing, and enjoy the music! You can now conduct the group to play louder, quieter, etc.

Development

Let different players lead the group and compose their own music. You can also let 2 people collaborate together to compose a piece.

Use the game as an opportunity to discuss any observations and reflections, 'what did you like about the music,' 'how did it feel to be the leader' etc.

Learning focus

- Confidence
- Inclusivity & respect
- Group collaboration

Comments

This is a really great game to encourage confidence in players (when being the leader) and respect towards one another (when following a leader). This game is also great for developing a sense of community or group cohesion. Younger groups will find it challenging, so it is best suited to the older primary children.



Time: 15 - 20 mins

Group size: Small to medium

Age group: Upper Primary

Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

28

#28. Hats

This is a simple game which gives players a physical introduction to sight reading music. The group plays a rhythm of 4 beats together, using objects placed in the middle as visual cues. The leader can modify the rhythm as the group plays, encouraging players to concentrate and begin to translate visual cues into rhythm and sound. [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ A leader places a line of 4 objects into the middle of a circle (for example, drum hats)
- ➔ Each object (hat) is a beat (and so the group plays, 1,2,3,4...)
- ➔ If two objects are placed together, this is a double beat (for example, if you were to place a 2nd hat onto the 3rd hat, the group would play 1,2,33,4...)
- ➔ If three hats are placed together, this is a triple beat (e.g. 1,2,333,4...)
- ➔ If a hat is taken away, the beat gets missed (1,2, pause,4...)
- ➔ Continue the game in this way, adding hats and taking hats away to create different rhythms
- ➔ Make sure to help the group by gesturing the rhythm throughout!

Development

You can ask players to create their own rhythms made up of 4 beats with a grid on a whiteboard, or with pen and paper. You could add layers for different instruments, for example, row one is for the drums, row 2 is for hand claps, row 3 for the tambourines. You could also double the line to 8 beats, and for an extra bit of fun, make it a memory game and ask players to try it with their eyes closed!

Learning focus

- Focus & attention
- Pattern recognition & numeracy
- Rhythm skills

Comments

You can play this in real time or develop the idea more slowly to allow children the best chance to succeed. Introduce volume and tempo dynamics to keep the music interesting and engaging. Make sure everyone can see the 'score' and be aware that some children might be reading it backwards, depending on where they are sitting.

Time: 10 - 15 mins
Group size: Medium to large
Age group: Mid to Upper Primary
Instruments needed: Drums &/or percussion

29

#29. One to Eight Dance

This game is great for building confidence, and just for fun! The group plays an improvised beat together, and on the count of 8, stops for 8 beats, allowing all players to stand up and try to find a new seat in time! [Find video here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ Explain the game: The group plays together on the drums. When the leader counts to 8, the group will stop playing for a further 8 beats
- ➔ When the group stops playing, everyone must leave their drum where it is, stand up, and try to find a new seat. If a player fails to find a new seat before the 8 beats are up, they are out!
- ➔ Play the game like this for a few rounds
- ➔ Once the group is used to the concept, introduce 2 rules: you cannot swap seats with the person next to you (you must cross the circle), if you fail to find a seat within the 8 beats, then you dance in the middle until the group stops again!

Development

You can add movement themes into this game, so for example, when changing seats, move like a robot/ hop on one leg, etc. Also, you can play it in what I call 'buddy mode,' where players have to choose a new partner to sit with at each change.

Learning focus

- Fun
- Social-emotional development
- Group collaboration

Comments

If playing either of the developments, you will want to count to 8 slower than if playing the regular game, as it will take longer for the players to find new seats. This is a great game to energise and mix up the players, and so is great for encouraging a group that don't know each other so well to mix.

Time: 10 mins

Group size: Small

Age group: All

Instruments needed: Small foot tambourine

30

#30. Tiptoe Tambourine

This is a simple game which gives players a physical introduction to sight reading music. The group plays a rhythm of 4 beats together, using objects placed in the middle as visual cues. The leader can modify the rhythm as the group plays, encouraging players to concentrate and begin to translate visual cues into rhythm and sound. [Find video Here](#)

Play the Game

- ➔ 3 players stand in the centre - one with a tambourine on their foot, one as the listener, and one as the referee
- ➔ The listener will stand with their back turned on one side of the room, and the player with the tambourine will stand at the other side
- ➔ The player with the tambourine must walk towards the listener and tap them on the shoulder without sounding the tambourine
- ➔ If the listener hears the tambourine, they must turn around, point to the player and shout 'tiptoe tambourine!' If this happens, the player with the tambourine is out and someone else has a go!
- ➔ The referee is there to make sure that fair play is happening, and that the listener isn't saying that they hear the tambourine, when indeed there is no sound
- ➔ You may want to add certain obstacles to make the game harder, for example, someone can lie down and the player with the tambourine must step over them

Development

You might decide to set a time limit (e.g. 20 seconds). If the tambourine player hasn't reached the listener by then, they're out. This introduces a little bit of pressure while still keeping calm and focused.



Learning focus

- Focus & attention
- Inclusivity & respect
- Listening

Comments

This is a great game to wind down after an energetic music session. All ages can play it, and it is simple enough for everyone to enjoy.





Credits

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A special thank you to the teachers, pupils, and staff across Aberdeenshire schools whose energy, openness, and enthusiasm have shaped the Beat It project. This resource is inspired by your creativity.



Video Links



Game	URL
1	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/1-bodypercussion
2	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/2-7s
3	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/3-passtheclap
4	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/4-passtheclap2
5	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/5-12310
6	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/6-123backandforth
7	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/7-chechekule
8	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/8-humankeyboard
9	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/9-rhythmsequence
10	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/10-sonmacaron
11	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/11-timetobeat
12	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/12-whereistheone
13	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/13-conductor
14	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/14-callandresponse
15	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/15-2inarow



Video Links



Game	URL
16	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/16-12345678groove
17	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/17-conversations
18	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/18-oneatatime
19	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/19-improvisation
20	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/20-sayitplayit
21	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/21-drumfreeze
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27	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/27-composer
28	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/28-hats
29	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/29-1to8dance
30	www.drumfun.co.uk/beat-it-videos/v/30-tiptoetambourine



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Remember, if you have any questions or would like help delivering the games in this book, please feel free to get in touch:

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