



The Ark



Beats & Rhythms from Around the World

At Home Activities - Part 1

Introduction

This pack is designed to help you use percussion as a way to learn about music. Everyone has innate rhythmic capacity and the various games and activities in this pack will help to activate and develop it.

A good sense of timing and rhythm is fundamental to all music, not just percussion, so you can use these activities as a way to develop general musicianship also. The activities and rhythms chosen come from many different parts of the world.

The activities have been selected and adapted from our full classroom activity pack which links to aspects of the primary school curriculum. If you would like further activities you can download the full document for free [here](#).

Activity 1: Rhythm Warm-Ups

Aim: this game will begin to warm you up and help develop a sense of timing and rhythm. You can play individually or as a group with family members at home.

Step 1: Set a medium speed (tempo) to a count of 4.

You can use a metronome to help you. Here's one you can use online:
[https://www.google.com/search?q=metronome and then claps:](https://www.google.com/search?q=metronome+and+then+claps:)

Step 2: Only clap on the first beat of every bar of 4:

1 beat (or crochet) per bar (Count: 1 _ _ _ , 1 _ _ _ etc)

Step 3: Add in more claps. If you are doing this as part of a group at home, follow each other and make sure everyone is clapping together in time.

E.g 2 beats per bar (1 2 _ _) or (1 _ 3 _)

Then 3 beats per bar etc (1 2 3 _) or (1 _ 3 4)

Activity 2: 4 Beats Game – Knees, Clap, Click, Click

Aim: to introduce simple body percussion and the 4/4 time signature. You will learn about the importance of silence or rests in music and how that changes the groove and feel of a rhythmic pattern. It also develops physical coordination and the ability to follow a musical leader.

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[https://www.google.com/search?q=metronome and then claps:](https://www.google.com/search?q=metronome+and+then+claps)

Step 1: Learn the pattern:

- Tap knees on beat 1
- Clap on beat 2
- Click with one hand on beat 3
- Click with the other hand on beat 4

If you cannot click your fingers, simply make the movement of a click instead

Step 2: When you can play the pattern comfortably, leave out certain beats.

E.g. knees, (silence), click, click

Or knees, clap, (silence), click etc.

On the silent beats, mime the movement but make no sound.

Step 3: If you are doing this activity as part of a small group at home, different people can take turns being the leader and deciding which beats to leave in or take out.

Focus on an Instrument: The Bodhrán

The bodhrán is a single headed frame drum common in Ireland. This type of drum is of a general type that is also widespread within the traditional music of western Asia and south India, parts of Eastern Europe, North Africa, Iberia, Ireland and Brazil, and also occurs sporadically in other cultures, for example,



indigenous Americans, the Inuit people, and in Tibet and Mongolia. In mainstream western culture, frame drums are chiefly represented by the tambourine and early bodhráns also had jingles attached.

The earliest proof of the use of the bodhrán goes back to a book of the 15th century. It is a medical transcript in which the sound of a bloated belly is described as the sound of a drum (bodhrán). In old encyclopaedias the word was found in use before 1827. Pictures by the Irish painter, Maclise, published around 1850, show a frame drum on which the left hand of the player seems to touch the skin and the right hand seems to move in the typical way. On the right, you'll see a section of the painting "Snap-Apple Night". Look at the boy playing this type of drum in the window in the top right-hand corner!



Before the 1950s, the bodhrán was played on St. Stephen's Day (December 26th) in a ritual known as "*Hunting the Wren*". Wren boys accompanied the following ceremony with whistles and bodhrán-like drums.

When Irish composer Seán O'Riada started to bring traditional Irish music on the stage he declared: "*The Bodhrán is the national drum*". Bodhrán playing significantly changed in approximately 1970 when players began using a new innovative technique of placing the back-hand against the skin. Before this the bodhrán was solely held by the crosspiece (the bars that overlap each other at the back of bodhráns) with the skin resonating openly. When played in the old way, tonal variation could only be achieved by the bodhrán player through volume dynamics.

Since the introduction of this technique the vast majority of bodhrán players place the back-hand (or non-stick holding hand) against the skin in some fashion thereby opening up a whole new avenue of creative expression. The backhand has been employed to change the tonal colours of the bodhrán to synchronise with the tune. What has been created is an entirely new percussive voice in traditional Irish music.

Does anyone in your family play an instrument? Are there other Irish traditional instruments you can research and explore?

Activity 3: Rhythm Game - Tea & Coffee

Aim: This is an excellent way of developing a sense of timing in 4/4 (4 beats in a bar), which is also the time signature of much Irish traditional music. Instead of using difficult technical words like crochet and quaver, the idea is to use words with different amounts of syllables, e.g. tea and coffee.

In Irish traditional music, a 4/4 tune is called a reel and is a very common type of tune. This exercise can be used to get a better understanding of reels, or to simply help you get a good grounding in playing in 4/4, one of the most common time signatures in music across the world.

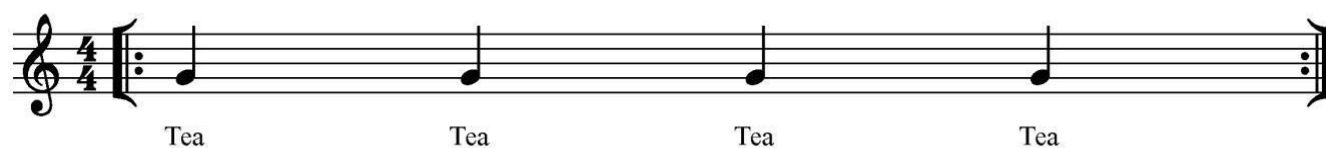
Step 1:

Clap four beats slowly, counting each beat as follows:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ...

Now, repeat the clapping, but replace the counting with the word "Tea"

i.e. Tea ... Tea ... Tea ... Tea...



Step 2:

Next, clap eight beats twice as fast as before, counting each beat again.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Then, replace the clap on each pair of beats with the word 'coffee' (saying each syllable separately)

i.e. Coff, ee, Coff, ee, Coff, ee, Coff, ee

Group 1

Tea Tea Tea Tea

Group 2

Coff - ee Coff - ee Coff - ee Coff - ee

We hope you have enjoyed these at-home activities. Please let us know how you get on by asking a grown-up to email us at boxoffice@ark.ie or tagging us on social media **@TheArkDublin** using the hashtag **#TheArkAtHome**.

Stay tuned for more fun at-home music activities exploring Beats & Rhythms from Around the World!

These activities are taken from our Beats & Rhythms Around the World Classroom Pack, created by musician Robbie Harris and edited by The Ark's Creative Arts Manager, Aisling O'Gorman.



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agus Scileanna
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