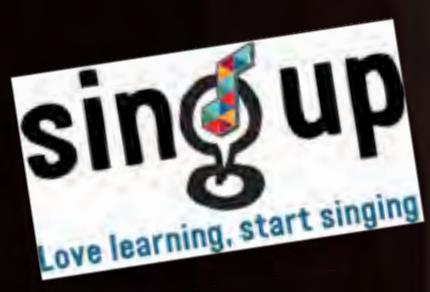




Big Sing Up mambo

Percussion teaching guide

- Add a new musical dimension
- Engage the whole class
- Meet music curriculum requirements



How to turn a Sing Up session into a whole class instrumental music lesson that ticks all the music education boxes



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Introduction?

You can turn any Sing Up song into a whole-class music lesson that engages all of the pupils throughout the whole lesson by adding in some simple class percussion instruments, to form an accompaniment to the song. You'll find that the percussion will add a completely new musical dimension to the song and, if you follow the approach here, you'll also satisfy all of the requirements of the National Curriculum for Music and make the OFSTED inspectors very happy.

To get you started we've taken **Big Sing Up mambo** as an example and below you'll see how to turn this great song into a complete music lesson that involves and stimulates the whole class.

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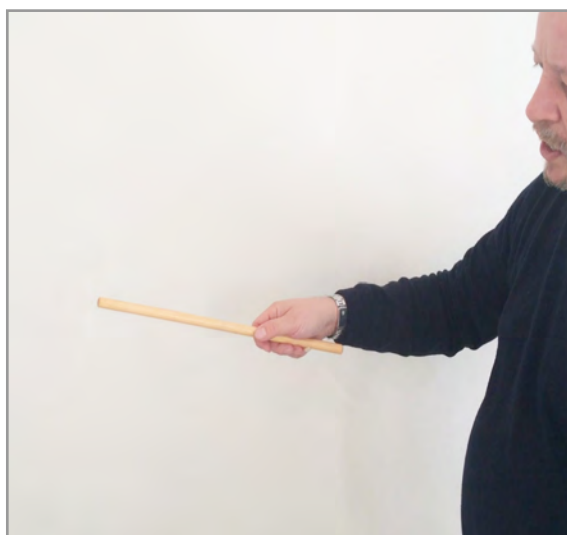
1. It may take 3 or 4 lessons to get your first Sing Up Plus song to performance standard but you'll find that your second and third songs come together much more quickly as everyone will have by then mastered the basic percussion techniques and will understand the approach.
2. Percussion parts will work better with some songs than with others and there's a list of ones that we think work particularly well at the end of this article.

But first a word about percussion...

All the instruments we'll be using are percussion instruments. The word percussion derives from the Latin verb *percutere* 'to strike forcibly' and percussion instruments are typically played by being struck with sticks, with the hands (or other parts of the body) or by being plucked or shaken. The skills and techniques used by percussionists, which is the general term for musicians who play percussion instruments, involve producing as wide a variety of sounds as possible from these apparently simple instruments. Percussionists also work on creating sustained sounds from instruments that normally have short sounds and creating short sounds from instruments that have long sustaining sounds.

Holding the sticks and beaters

A good technique for holding the beaters will help to get the best sound from the instruments that are being played. Grip the sticks between the pad of the thumb and the first joint of the index finger. The wrist should be turned inwards with the palm facing downwards. Beaters should be held towards the bottom end of the shaft with the fingers curled in a row along the stick. Try to leave some of the bottom end of the shaft protruding from your palm to create a good balance and so that the ball end of the beater is not top heavy. Keep your elbow slightly raised up and away from your body. When you strike the instrument, try to keep your forearm still and move your wrist as if you are flicking a drop



Video Example
How to hold the beaters



How to play the instruments?

The Cowbell or Agogo Bells

This instrument is best played using a wooden stick. The stick should be the open end of the bell. If the beater is placed inside the bell and rapidly moved up and down, a sustained roll can be achieved. You can use a similar technique for playing the Agogo Bells, which are made from 2 differently pitched bells joined together.



Video Example
How to play the Agogo bells



The Bongo drums

Whenever possible the Bongo Drums should be played with the hands; sticks can damage the drum playing surface (the drum “head”). To get the best sound from the Bongo Drums, each drum should be struck with the tips of the fingers on the edge of the drum nearest to the body. Keep your elbows slightly raised and try not to hit the drum in the middle of the drum head as this will produce a poor sound. If you imagine the drumhead to be a clock face, the right hand should hit on the four o’clock position and your left hand on the eight.

Your hands should not stay in contact with the drum once you’ve played the beat but should immediately return to your natural playing position just above the drum head. A good way to achieve this is to imagine that the drum head is very hot and so you do not want to leave your fingers on it any longer than necessary.



Video Example
How to play the Bongo drums



The Triangle

For a bright sparkling sound this is best played with a thin metal rod. For a long sound, suspend the Triangle loosely from your thumb and strike the Triangle slightly below the top corner on the other side from the open bottom corner. For a short, damped sound (indicated in the music by the letter D), grip the Triangle with your fingers as well as the thumb.

To produce sustained sounds or rolls, suspend the Triangle loosely and quickly move the beater back and forth across the bottom, closed corner of the Triangle.

If you're lucky enough to have a Triangle on a stand, then you'll find all the above much easier.



Video Example
How to play the Triangle



The Maracas

The Maracas can be played either as a single instrument or as a pair with one in each hand. To create a clear sound the Maracas should be held upright with the handle held vertically to the body and shaken forwards and backwards away from and towards the body. The Maracas can also be shaken up and down or a single Maraca can be played by tapping it into the palm of the other hand.



Video Example
How to play the Maracas



The Tambourine

There are many techniques for playing the Tambourine and perhaps the most common is to hold the frame in the right hand in a vertical position with the skin or head facing to the left and to shake it from left to right. To produce an accent the left hand can strike the drumhead whilst it is being shaken to the left. The Tambourine can also be held steady in the left hand in a horizontal position with the skin playing head uppermost and be played with the fingers or fist of the right hand striking the skin. A sustained tremolo or roll can be performed by holding the instrument by the frame in one hand and vigorously twisting the wrist from side to side, keeping the jingles in continual motion. Left-handed players can reverse the playing positions.

The skin of the Tambourine can become slack over time, particularly if it is made from animal hide and the weather is cold. It can easily be tightened by placing it near (not on!) a warm radiator or by gently warming it with a hair dryer.



Video Example
How to play the Tambourine



The Guiro

Hold the scraper in your dominant hand. Hold the Guiro horizontally cupped in your other hand with palm facing up and the tube pointing away from your body. The scraper can then be scraped to and fro along the ridges to produce a long rasping sound. It is best to start this motion with a stroke away from your body with more weight being placed on the first stroke.

The Guiro can also produce short sounds by simply tapping the scraper in the centre of the instrument. A fascinating variety of rhythms can be produced by employing a combination of taps and strokes .



Video Example
How to play the Guiro



The Claves (or Clapsticks)

There is a particular method for producing the high pitched click of the Claves and they should not be simply bashed together! To produce a good, clear sound the player should gently cup one of the sticks in the hand with the palm face up and the fingers curled in a row so that the stick rests horizontally loosely along the tips of the fingers and thumb. There should be space underneath the stick so that it does not touch the palm of the hand. This space will allow the sound to resonate. The other stick of the pair of Claves should then strike the centre of the held Clave.



Video Example
How to play the Claves



Introducing grid music

The music grid is an easy way to learn rhythms without needing to be able to read western musical (Staff) notation. The grid is made up of horizontal lines and vertical columns and there's one grid for each instrument. The cells in the top shaded line of the Grid contain the beat numbers, which run evenly from beat one to beat sixteen. Each cell in the line below will contain a letter or letters indicating the manner in which the instrument is to be played on each beat.

You'll see that we've left a gap in the grid between each group of four beats. This is just to make it easier to see each group of four beats when practicing and learning the rhythms **but when playing and performing the whole piece, the rhythms should flow smoothly and evenly through all the beat numbers.**

Each rhythm loops round and round, so after beat sixteen we immediately start again at beat one. Here is a blank sixteen beat grid:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

And here is a list of the letters used in the second row:

The letter “O” indicates that the instrument plays no sound. This is known as a beat's rest.

The letter “X” indicates that the instrument is to be played in the normal way, as described for each instrument above.

The letter “D” indicates that the instrument is to be damped or muffled with the hand to produce a very short sound; this will particularly apply to the Triangle.

When a long note is to be played, two (or more) cells may be merged together, indicating that the note sustains over all the merged beats.

When two letters appear in the same cell or beat number e.g. “XX”, this indicates that the note should be played twice and at double speed.

When the letters “OX” appear in the same cell, the first of the double beats is a rest and only the second beat is played. This is often called an “off beat”.

or the Bongos the letter “H” indicates a high sound, made by playing the smaller of the two drums, and the letter “L” indicates a low sound, made by playing the bigger drum.

For the Tambourine and Guiro the letter “S” indicates a short sound, played by tapping the instrument once, and the letters “Lg” indicate a roll - a long sound, played by shaking the Tambourine or stroking the Guiro.

How to teach the music

Always start by listening to the song as a class and by everyone learning the song to the point that it becomes internalised - known by heart. This is really important. Once the class has mastered the song, it's time to add the percussion.

If you've got sufficient instruments (one between two pupils), a good approach here is to divide the class into pairs (or "buddies") and for one of each pair to take the initial singing role and for the other to be the percussion player.

Later, you can ask the "buddies" to swap roles, so that the singer takes over the percussion and vice versa. It's also a good idea to rotate round the different percussion instruments from time to time, so that over the course of a lesson or two, everyone gets to play every instrument. If possible, also try to keep a reasonably equal balance between each type of instrument – e.g. try to avoid having only one Triangle but six Bongos. If you haven't got enough instruments to split the class into pairs, then splitting into 3s or 4s will also work.

Once everyone knows the song and you've split into buddy pairs (or 3s or 4s) and allocated the instruments, start by rehearsing each instrument part on its own, to the point that the players are confident with their own rhythm. To help with this it's a good idea for the teacher, or a nominated time-keeper, to clap or play a steady beat on a drum to set the tempo and give the percussion players a solid beat to hold on to. Practice one part at a time and then, once all the parts are being played well, start from the beginning with the first instrument (Cowbell or Agogo) and then add in each instrument, one at a time in the order they appear on the score, until the whole group is playing together.

Once the percussion parts are working well you can then ask the singers to join in over the percussion. Then ask the buddy pairs to reverse roles and later, once the new percussionists are confident, ask the buddy pairs to swap instruments with other pairs, so that each pair has a new instrument.

Later, once everyone has mastered all the basic parts, try experimenting with stopping and starting the percussion accompaniment mid-song or building up (or taking out) the instrument parts one at a time. Asking the percussionists to play softly at some points in the song and strongly at others will add variety and dynamics to the piece.

Below are two examples of percussion parts for the Big Sing Up mambo. There's a simple part to get you started and a more advanced part to challenge your pupils as they become more proficient. You can of course mix and match the parts to suit individual players' abilities, so that everyone can join in.

Big Sing Up Mambo

Simple part full score

Audio Example Full Score Simple



Cowbell

1	2	3	4
X	X	X	X

5	6	7	8
X	X	X	X

9	10	11	12
X	X	X	X

13	14	15	16
X	X	X	X

Audio Example Simple-Sing-Up-mambo-Cowbell-part.mp3



Maracas

1	2	3	4
X	0	0	0

5	6	7	8
X	0	0	0

9	10	11	12
X	0	0	0

13	14	15	16
X	0	0	0

Audio Example Simple-Sing-Up-mambo-Maracas-part.mp3



Tambourine

1	2	3	4
XX	XX	XX	XX

5	6	7	8
XX	XX	XX	XX

9	10	11	12
XX	XX	XX	XX

13	14	15	16
XX	XX	XX	XX

Audio Example Simple-Sing-Up-mambo-Tambourine-part.mp3



Triangle

1	2	3	4
0	X	0	X

5	6	7	8
0	X	0	X

9	10	11	12
0	X	0	X

13	14	15	16
0	X	0	X

Audio Example Simple-Sing-Up-mambo-Triangle-part.mp3



Audio Example Full Score Advanced

Big Sing Up Mambo

Advanced part full score



Cowbell

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Cowbell-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
X	X	X	XX

5	6	7	8
X	X	X	XX

9	10	11	12
X	X	X	XX

13	14	15	16
X	X	X	XX



Bongos

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Bongos-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
L	HH	L	H

5	6	7	8
L	HH	L	H

9	10	11	12
L	HH	L	H

13	14	15	16
L	HH	L	H



Triangle

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Triangle-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
X	D	D	D

5	6	7	8
X	D	D	D

9	10	11	12
X	D	D	D

13	14	15	16
X	D	D	D



Maracas

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Maracas-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
X	X	XX	X

5	6	7	8
X	X	XX	X

9	10	11	12
X	X	XX	X

13	14	15	16
X	X	XX	X



Tambourine

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Tambourine-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
Lg	S	S	Lg

5	6	7	8
Lg	S	S	Lg

9	10	11	12
Lg	S	S	Lg

13	14	15	16
Lg	S	S	Lg



Claves

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Claves-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
X	OX	O	OX

5	6	7	8
O	X	X	O

9	10	11	12
X	OX	O	OX

13	14	15	16
O	X	X	O



Guiro

Audio Example Advanced Sing-Up-mambo-Guiro-part.mp3

1	2	3	4
S	S	Lg	

5	6	7	8
S	S	Lg	

9	10	11	12
S	S	Lg	

13	14	15	16
S	S	Lg	



Other Sing Up songs

These Sing Up songs will work well with percussion:

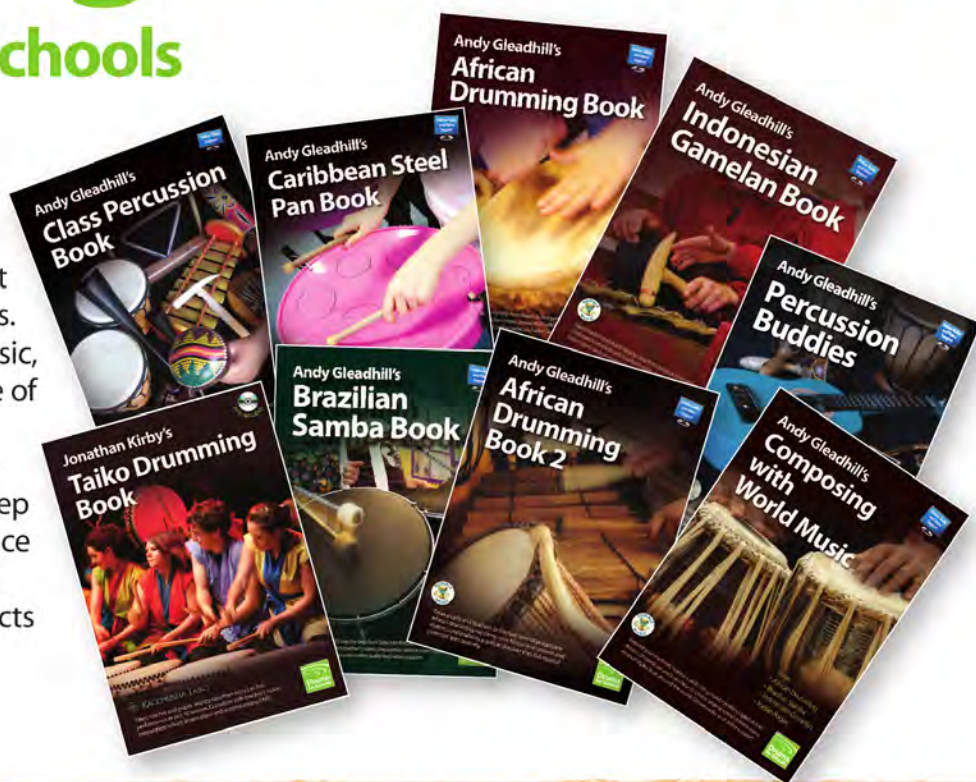
- ▶ Animal song
 - ▶ Big Sing Up mambo
 - ▶ La bamba Chicka hanka
 - ▶ Chocolate molinillo
 - ▶ Dem bones
 - ▶ Every inch of our planet is a home
 - ▶ Feeding time
 - ▶ Going over the sea
 - ▶ Isn't it nice
 - ▶ Let's dance
 - ▶ Make that sound
 - ▶ Mama don't allow
 - ▶ Si Si Si
 - ▶ Sumer is icumen in
 - ▶ This little light of mine
 - ▶ Tingalayo
 - ▶ Under the lemon tree
 - ▶ Unst boat song
 - ▶ What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
 - ▶ When the wind blows
 - ▶ Wiggle your fingers
 - ▶ Wood
-

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from Sound Children

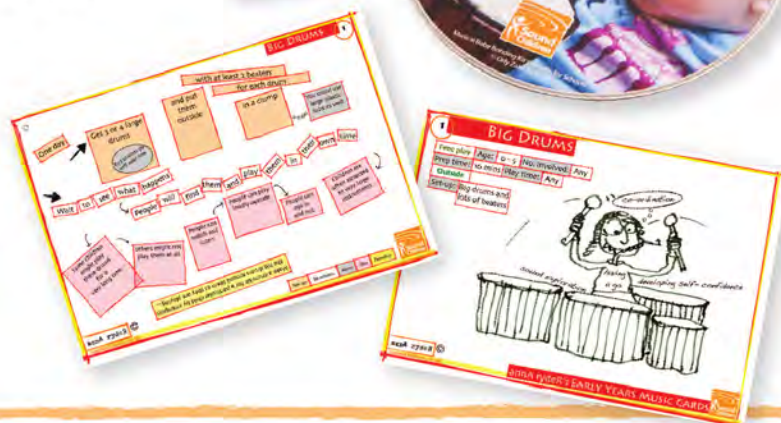
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