

## **Musicplay Newsletter - February, 2006**

This newsletter is for Grade 3-6 teachers, who teach recorder to their students. To those teachers on our list who have pre-school, kindergarten, or primary grades, the next newsletter will be of greater interest to you ---- using children's literature as part of your music class. I do try to keep the Musicplay newsletters of interest to teachers of all grade levels, but felt that I should address recorders in this issue, so please pass on to teachers in your school who do teach recorders, or just delete this issue. Thanks so much!!! Denise Gagne, [www.musicplay.ca](http://www.musicplay.ca)

### **Tips for Teaching Recorder**

The key to success in teaching recorder, is to isolate each of the skills needed to be a successful player, and work on it in isolation before combining several skills. The weakest reader in the class can successfully tongue a note. The weakest reader can learn which holes correspond to which letters of the alphabet. If your weak readers can experience success at the isolated skills of recorder playing, they will be less likely to give up in frustration when the skills are all put together in performance. Students need to be able read the names of the notes, read and perform rhythms, hold the recorder with the left hand at the top, cover tiny holes with straight fingers, blow a controlled stream of air, start the note with the tongue, use legato tonguing, and know know fingerings for the notes. This is a complex task for a nine year old!!!

**To Improve Note Reading:** Floor staff games are fun for all students to play --- even students who may be excellent note readers, like to play the games.

Note Names Jump The teacher calls out a line note - E, G, B, D, F - and the students jump to the line that she calls. To play this as an elimination game (optional), the last child to land on the line that is called is out.

Note Name Beanbag Toss The first child in group one tosses his beanbag onto the music staff. He must name the note. (For example, if the beanbag lands on the first space, the child must name the note F.) If the child is correct, the bean bag stays on the staff. If a mistake is made, the beanbag is removed. At the end of the game, the group that has the most beanbags remaining on the staff is the winner.

Note Name Race Divide the class into two (or three) groups. Line the groups up, about 6-10 feet away from the musical staff. Name a note from the staff and specify if it is on a line or in a space. For example, G on a line. Say "Go!" before students are allowed to run. The first student from each line runs to the G line. The first student to stand on the G line is the winner.

We have a new publication "Staff and Symbol Games" with many more floor staff games. These can be played on a teacher created floor staff ( use painter's tape!) or on the

Noteworthy Music Rug. To view the rug, visit [www.musicplay.ca](http://www.musicplay.ca)

**Mad Minutes** Have your students complete Mad Minutes each recorder class. These are timed drills for practising naming notes. The goal is to have instant recall of the note name - just as you want to have with math facts. Make your own mad minutes, or use the ones that are given in the “Complete Recorder Resource Kit”.

**Kids Notes** allow all special needs children to keep up!

Kid notes are notes with the letter name imprinted directly on the note head. Students still see note placement on the staff and read rhythms. Kid notes are included in the Complete Recorder Resource Kit 1, 2 and Holiday Songs for recorder. Do a web search for kids notes font, to find where to order it from, so you can use it with your own student worksheets and songsheets.

**To Improve Rhythm Reading:** Have the students read rhythm flashcards and play the rhythms on one note. Daily rhythm flashcard reading helps students to become confident and accurate rhythm readers when playing recorder.

**Sequence instruction carefully so ALL students can experience success:**

In the “Complete Recorder Resource Kit 1” the notes are introduced as follows: BAG ED C’ D’ F C

As each new note is introduced, it is practiced in isolation, and then with only 1 or 2 other notes. This careful sequencing allows all students to be successful.

**To Improve Tone:** Teacher role modeling is essential for student success. Dazzle the students one day with your best solo. It gets it in their heads that the recorder is a real instrument - not a toy. If you are not a confident recorder player, play them a recording of a professional recorder consort. There are recorder examples in the Listening Resource Kits 3, 4 and 5. To help students avoid overblowing ask them to blow ‘cool’ air onto the palm of their hand, then ‘warm’ air. Have them blow ‘warm’ air into the recorder. Talk softly when you count them in. If you are speaking loudly, they will play loudly. Play accompaniments softly - if you turn up the volume, the volume of the recorders follows.

**To Help Students Learn to Cover the Holes:** Use straws or a pencil to practise holding a tube with straight fingers. Tell them to use their finger pads - not fingertips to cover the holes. If necessary, draw a circle on their finger pads with felt pen so they can see what part of their finger goes on the hole. Check if they have ‘donuts’ or ‘recorder warts’ - press firmly covering the holes, then look at your fingers to see if there are complete circles.

**Make a chart with questions for Recorder players**

1. Is your left hand closest to the mouthpiece?
2. Did you cover the holes with \*fat, fluffy, full, flabby\*, finger pads, not fingertips?

3. Do you start every pitch with a soft, whispered \*too\*?
4. Did you breathe gently into the recorder?

### **Recorder Rap**

My recorder is ready - I'm just waiting to begin.  
If I need a little practice I will play it on my chin!  
I'll do a quick check that the left hand's at the top.  
Blow warm gentle air. Keep it steady - don't stop!  
Use the pads of your fingers - not the tips - and you'll see  
Some nice recorder warts if you cover carefully  
Start each note with the tongue - say du du du  
You'll all be great recorder players when you are through!

**Echo playing:** At the beginning, stay on one note, isolating skills. Show the note name flashcard and

- \* practise starts and stops (watching conductor is a skill!)
- \* blow a controlled stream of air (control is a good word)
- \* start the note with the tongue
- \* continue the air stream when tonguing the note
- \* practise long tones - they want to play....so let them play! After 12 - 16 second long tones they won't be so anxious to play when you are explaining. 12-16 seconds gives you sufficient time to scan the class looking for left hands and correct fingerings.

When this is successful, extend their development by moving to 2 or more notes that they have to echo. At first let them watch your fingers, then make them shut their eyes.

**Recorder Karate:** The most incredibly successful way to get students to practice was a program inspired by Barb Philipott on the MK8 list, that she called "Recorder Karate". You can call it Recorder Karate, or Recorder Rewards, but the idea is that students earn belts, as they do in karate classes when they pass a certain level. The belts were pieces of colored yarn, about 5" in length, that they tied around the bottom of their recorders. Another reward could be little colored stickers (buy them from Staples) as a badge that they earn for passing a level. My students loved this, and practised MUCH more than they ever had before!.

White belt Hot Cross Buns (bag)  
Yellow Belt Skin and Bones (bag e)  
Blue Belt Hush Little Baby (gabc)  
Black Belt Ode to Joy (gabcd)

Students practice more, and practice more effectively if they have an accompaniment CD to play with. Student book AND CD are only \$5 U.S. for Complete Recorder Resource Vol 1 and 2.

**Practice Cards:** Dated practice charts are really difficult for the teacher to keep track of. Practice Bugs are much easier and fun for students to complete. Post on a bulletin board with the heading: Recorder Players Bug Me

For a copy of a practice bug to give to your students, email [tvmusic@telusplanet.net](mailto:tvmusic@telusplanet.net) and I'll send you one as a pdf file.

**Composition** Begin by having the students improvise answers to your questions. Later, ask them to improvise a melody. I do this with all playing at once. If you accompany them on the piano, it's not total chaos! In the Recorder Kits, there are composition pages with starter phrases for the children to finish and staff paper for them to create their own compositions. **Free Music writing software** can be downloaded at [www.codamusic.com](http://www.codamusic.com) "Notepad" You can download this for all your school computers and have your students write their own music!

**Assessment:** Recorder Karate can serve as the assessment for recorder. You can also use guessing games to hear children play short excerpts along: Cuckoo, Doggie Doggie, Who's That (In the Recorder Kit 1) are all guessing games. To assess recorder solos, you can use a complex, or a simple rubric.

**Skill Descriptor Always Mostly Somewhat Not Yet**

3 points 2 points 1 point 0 points

**Tone** Plays with a gentle, beautiful tone

**Tonguing** Starts the note with 'too'

**Legato** Connects notes

**Fingerings** Uses correct fingerings

**Finger position** Covers holes completely, uses fingerpads

**Rhythms** Plays rhythms accurately

**Fluency** Plays complete example on the first attempt

**Difficulty** This is a difficult solo

**Rehearsal Skills** Student quietly waits turn to play

27 Possible Points Students Point Total

\* Include a copy of this rubric and a tape of student performance in his/her portfolio

**Forgotten Recorders: Teach students to keep their recorder in their backpack - backpack rule!**

Keep your recorder in your backpack - it will go home with you each day for home practice. After you practice at home, put it in your backpack --- then, it will be at school when you have music class.

**Loaners:** Allow students to borrow, but demand collateral for the loan (shoe is good). They get the shoe back when they write this note in their agenda and show the note to

you at recess or lunch. Clean and disinfect loaner recorders in the school dishwashers.

Dear Mom or Dad, Today I forgot my recorder, and needed to borrow one to be able to participate in class. I have music on Monday and Thursday each week. Please help me to remember to put my recorder in my backpack after each practice session. Sincerely, your child.

### **CANADIAN RECORDER MATERIALS 2006**

**Now Available - Yamaha Recorders  
\$10 for recorder / student book / CD**

We're really pleased to be able to offer Canadian schools our recorder/book/CD packages with Yamaha YRS 23/24 three piece recorders! For one low price, you can order a Yamaha 3 piece recorder, The Recorder Resource student book and student practice CD. Students practice more, and practice more effectively when they have the CD to practice with! To introduce this new package to schools, we're offering a special low price of \$10 on this package, and will include the GST and shipping costs on minimum orders of 10 packages. This special pricing will be available until March 31, 2006. USA customers can order this package from [www.westmusic.com](http://www.westmusic.com)

#### **Yamaha Recorder~Book~CD 1 Package \$10**

This package features a 3 piece Yamaha recorder, the student book with 38 songs (correlated to the Recorder Kit Level 1), and a CD for students to take home and practice with. The package price includes tax and shipping with a minimum purchase of 10 sets.

**Qty: Amount**

#PY7 Yamaha Baroque recorder, Book, CD#1 \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

#PY8 Yamaha German recorder, Book, CD#1 \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Yamaha Recorder~Book~CD 2 Package \$10**

This package features a 3 piece Yamaha recorder, the student book that correlates with the Recorder Kit 2, and a CD for students to take home and practice with. The package price includes tax and shipping with a minimum purchase of 10 sets.

**Qty: Amount**

#PY9 Yamaha Baroque recorder, Book, CD#2 \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

#PY10 Yamaha German recorder, Book, CD#2 \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

To Order: **FAX TOLL FREE 1-888-562-4647** Email: [tvinfo@telus.net](mailto:tvinfo@telus.net)

**Themes & Variations**

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