

K12 Course Introductions

MUSIC

Music Preparatory

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Music

- About the Singing Voice
- How to Teach Your Child to Sing
- What to Do With the Reluctant Singer
- Terms and Concepts

The K12 Music Program is designed to help you help your student:

- Learn to sing comfortably and properly
- Learn to read and write musical notation
- Develop an appreciation for great music from diverse traditions.

The K12 Music courses:

- **Preparatory:** This course teaches the basic concepts of the musical language, how to move to the beat of music, and how to sing simple songs in the correct range for children.
- **Beginning 1:** Beginning 1 introduces your child to the basic building blocks of a music education. Beginning 1 lessons assume no prior training in singing or reading music by either you or your child.
- **Beginning 2:** Course builds on the skills that your child has acquired in earlier years.
- **Introduction to Music:** Intended for students ages 8 to 10 who are new to the K12 Music Program.
- **Intermediate Music Level 1:** This course picks up where your student left off in the earlier level of the K12 Music Program. Intermediate lessons assume that you have completed either the Beginning Music levels or Introduction to Music, but they require no other musical training.
- **Intermediate Music Level 2:** Course begins where you student left off in Intermediate Level 1.

About the Singing Voice

Children's voices are delicate and take many years to mature. During these delicate years, children should sing in a way to avoid straining the vocal chords. In particular, they should sing in what is called the *head voice*. The head voice is characterized by a light, easy sound. When you sing in your head voice, you feel vibrations in your nasal cavity.

In contrast, the *chest voice* is lower, louder, and more forceful. When you sing in your chest voice, you feel vibrations in your chest.

The head voice develops first, while the chest voice does not develop until the child reaches the teenage years, only gaining full maturity in the early twenties. It's best to have your child sing with the gentler head voice. If your child is forcing loud singing, or is visibly straining while singing, coach him or her to take it easier and sing in a more relaxed way, using the head voice.

Encourage your child to sing in the range of the songs on the *Let's Sing* CD (provided by K12). These songs have been recorded in a vocal range appropriate for young children. If your child has difficulty reaching this range, be patient. It can take many children a year or two to discover the head voice. The vocal warm-ups included in the lessons are designed to help your child sing in the proper range.

How to Teach Your Child to Sing

In the K12 Music program, you will help your child learn to sing many songs. When a lesson calls for your child to learn a new song, you have a choice of teaching methods.

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The Song Sheet Method

Use this method if you are not comfortable with singing or confident about your own ability to sing.

1. **Learn the words:** Read each line of song words out loud and ask your child to say the words after you. Begin with one line at a time. Increase the number of lines each time you repeat the song until your child can say all the words to the song.
2. **Sing the melody:** Listen to the CD selection. Repeat the selection and say the words with your child in the rhythm of the melody.
3. **Sing along:** You and your child sing along with the CD. When your child is comfortable singing the song, proceed to the activity.

The Singing Method

Use this method if you feel confident of your ability to sing in tune for your child.

1. **Prepare:** Before you teach the lesson, learn to sing the song using the CD and lesson song sheet. Sing along with the CD until you feel comfortable with the song at the pitch level on the CD. Songs on the CD are recorded in a pitch range appropriate for the healthy development of a child's voice.
2. **Learn the melody:** Listen to the CD selection with your child. Sing the melody of the first phrase using a wordless syllable, such as *la*, instead of the words. Point to your child to indicate that he or she should echo the phrase you've just sung. Continue until you have sung all the phrases of the song. If your child sings a phrase incorrectly, simply repeat it until he or she sings it correctly. Sing the song again, but this time, sing two phrases at a time. Point to your child when it is his or her turn to sing.
3. **Add the words:** Sing the song with the words, one phrase at a time, and ask your child to echo. Continue until you have sung all the phrases with the words. Sing the song again but increase to two phrases at a time. When your child is comfortable singing the song, proceed to the activity.

These teaching methods are designed to present the musical information in small chunks, rather than all at once. They will help your child learn songs quickly and thoroughly.

Revisiting Songs

A song introduced in one lesson will often be repeated in later lessons. When you encounter the same song in a later lesson, repeat either of the above procedures as needed. Encourage your child to sing the song once on his or her own. This will help your child develop the confidence needed to sing alone. Be sure to praise your child's efforts.

What to Do With the Reluctant Singer

Some student may show great reluctance to sing by themselves, particularly boys. This reluctance is natural. Try to gently encourage your student to sing by singing with him during the lesson. Even if you don't feel you have a great voice, your own willingness to put yourself on the line can inspire your student to do the same. You may also want other men and boys in your family to sing along as well. Younger boys can get over their cultural prejudices about singing if they see men that they respect taking part in the activity.

Above all, don't force the activity. If your student is reluctant to sing, treat the singing activities as listening activities instead. Follow along with the words of the songs and talk about what you find in them. Try to think of reasons why people might have passed the song down from generation to generation. Even listening to folk songs can be of benefit to your child.

Terms and Concepts

Beat

The steady strides of a jogger, a washing machine's agitator moving up and down, a mother rocking her baby back and forth—all these are examples of movement to a steady beat. Beat is the foundation of music. Beat can be fast or slow. It can speed up or slow down.

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In music, *beat* is a steady musical pulse. Many lessons ask your student to move along with this steady pulse. This movement helps students identify and internalize the beat.

Rhythm

With the eraser end of a pencil, tap a pattern of long and short sounds on a table. This is *rhythm*—a regular pattern of long and short sounds. Your student probably already recognizes rhythm in poetry, for example, in lines like “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.” In lines like that, rhythm is simply “the way the words go.”

Rhythm Syllables

To help students hear and describe different rhythms, we use two simple sounds called *rhythm syllables*. The first, *ta* (pronounced tah), describes a sound with one sound on a beat, such as the word *fish*. The second, *ti-ti* (pronounced tee-tee), describes words with two sounds on a beat, such as *kitten*. The third, *ta-ah*, describes one sound that holds for two beats. (If you can already read music, you will recognize *ta* as a quarter note, *ti-ti* as two eighth notes, and *ta-ah* as a half note.) Other new syllables that your student will learn this year will include *tiri-tiri* (four sounds on a beat), *ta-ah-ah* (a sound that holds for three beats) and *ta-ah-ah-ah* (a sound that holds for four beats). Rhythm syllables help students identify and understand patterns in rhythm. We use these syllables rather than their traditional names because these syllables match the actual sound of the rhythm.



Stick notation

To help students learn how to read rhythms, we use *stick notations* or lines to identify the beat. The notation for *ta* is one vertical line. The notation for *ti-ti* is two vertical lines with a horizontal line connecting them across the top.

In Intermediate Music 1 students will make the transition from these simple syllables and stick notations to the conventional musical vocabulary of quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and so on. From this point, these terms will be used interchangeably during practice phases.

Pitch

A lion emits a low growl. A bird trills a high song. The high and low quality of sound is called *pitch*. The part of a song we often recognize first, the melody or tune, is the sequence of changing pitches. Our music lessons use body-movement activities to encourage your student to respond to melodic direction, which is the way the pitch moves—from high to low or low to high. If you make a low sound with your voice and gradually make the sound go higher, the melodic direction is going up. If you start on a high sound and make your voice gradually get lower, the melodic direction is going down.

Rests

Count aloud a steady beat: “1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4....” Now do it again, but this time don’t say 4 aloud. Instead, say it silently in your head. In this example, the 4 is a rest. A *rest* is a beat without sound.

Your student will often be asked to clap a rhythm. When clapping, to show a rest, he or she should flip the hands open rather than clap them together. Similarly, when you are speaking rhythm syllables, mouth the word rest for the silent beat, but do not say it aloud. (Some children like to touch their lips with the index finger to remind them to remain quiet for that beat.)

In stick notation, a rest is represented by a symbol that looks like a Z, the last letter of the alphabet.

Solfege

To teach students how to identify different musical pitches—the sound of musical notes—the K12

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Music Program uses a method called *solfege* (pronounced SOHL-fehj). With the solfege system, students learn how to use their body as a reference point for each pitch. As your student identifies the pitches, he or she will use special hand signs to show and read melodic patterns.

We use a solfege system called *the moveable do system*. In this system, the solfege notes don't refer to a specific pitch, but to the relationship between the notes themselves. For example, *so* may be placed on any pitch on the staff. The placement of *so* will determine where all the other notes fall on the staff. Using this system, your student will gradually be able to recognize and understand even the most complex melodic material. During Intermediate Music your student will review *do*, *mi*, *so*, and *la* and learn one new solfege note—*re*. Using these five notes, your student will learn a wide variety of melodic patterns.

Letter Names

Intermediate music courses introduce students to the letter names for pitches as instrumental music is taught. Letter names, unlike solfege, are absolute. A letter is given to each line and space of the staff and the letter never changes. Letter names and solfege are complementary systems and each teaches a different skill. Solfege is most useful for sight singing, since most singers learn music by its relationship to the *do*, or the key of the piece. Letter names are useful as instrumental music is learned, since the fingerings are referred to by absolute pitch as well.

Lesson 1 Let's Use Our Voices and Bodies

Use your voice and body movement to explore the basic concepts of beat and pitch.

Unit 1

Approximate Lesson Time: 45 minutes

- 1 Songs and Activities : Walk with Daniel
- 2 Songs and Activities : Minister's Cat
- 3 Songs and Activities : See Saw, Sacra-down
- 4 Active Listening : Beat in Classical Music
- 5 Lesson Assessment
- + Optional: Spider's Journey

- Objectives
- Lesson Notes
- Keywords
- Pronunciation
- Materials
- Print This Lesson

Begin ▶

Preparatory

- Philosophy
- Lesson Time and Scheduling
- Lesson Structure
- Lesson Materials
- Student Portfolio

Just as children need to speak before learning to read and write a language, they need to learn to “speak” music before learning its more abstract concepts. Through activities that use singing, creative movement, and simple visual reinforcements, your child will learn the basic concepts of the musical language, as well as how to move to the beat of music, to sing simple songs in the correct range for children, and to recognize contrasted concepts such as high/low, fast/slow, loud/soft, and short/long.

Our lessons assume no prior training in singing or reading music by either you or your child. For those without a music background, the lessons and materials are designed to make you comfortable teaching music to your child. As you participate in these activities, you will be learning and having fun right along with your child. If you have music training, so much the better—you can build on what K12 offers. Even if your child has experience reading music or playing an instrument, this program is designed to develop the ear and listening skills needed to become a well-rounded musician.

The K12 Music Program provides step-by-step guidance in each lesson. You may choose to print an entire lesson, or you may follow the lesson on the computer screen. While some activities use computer animations, most of the teaching and learning take place away from the computer. In general, you will need a room with enough space to move around comfortably within view of a television screen for the videos.

Philosophy

We believe that every child has the ability to learn to sing properly, to learn to read and write music, and to develop an appreciation for great music from the world's traditions.

Singing

All children have a natural desire to sing. The voice is a child's first and best instrument for learning about music. The best music for training the voice is folk music—that is, the traditional songs that have been sung and enjoyed by people in various cultures, and passed on from one generation to another. K12 has taken care to choose developmentally appropriate folk songs for the CDs and videos that accompany this program, and to produce original recordings in authentic styles, performed by voices in a child's natural range with minimal accompaniment for clarity.

Music Literacy

K12's approach to music literacy is different from the traditional instrumental music approach. Rather than approaching concepts intellectually, your student will start by training the ear. Through singing and fun movement activities, your child learns the basic elements of music, such as beat, pitch, and melody. These activities ensure that your child experiences the "language" of music. This concrete experience prepares your child to learn more abstract skills and concepts in later grades, including the skills required to read and write music. Even if your child has taken instrumental music lessons, these activities will benefit your child's developing ear and musicianship.

Active Listening

Music lessons that include selections from the *Let's Listen* CD encourage active listening to great works from western classical music. Activities encourage your child to listen with imagination and discernment, and to respond to the beauty and emotional power of great music.

Learning Method

Lessons are based on the learning method created by the composer Zoltán Kodály for use in European classrooms and adapted by American teachers during the past 40 years. Key to the structure of this method are the three P's: Prepare, Present, and Practice:

- **Prepare:** This is the crucial stage in learning music. Just as you need to speak before you can read, you need to be able to hear a music concept before you can read and write it. The child is asked to explore a music concept gradually, through movement and singing activities. These activities are designed to focus the child's attention and curiosity on the particular aspect of music. They also train the child to hear the concept first before naming it. This preparation period may take place over several lessons, or even over an entire unit.
- **Present:** These lessons take the discoveries that the student has made, synthesize them, and give them a name and a symbol. Presentation usually takes place in one key lesson.
- **Practice:** In this phase, the student takes the knowledge gained in the Prepare and Present phases and applies them to many different musical situations. The aim of this phase is to make these skills automatic, a part of the student's musical vocabulary. Skills are practiced intensely for an entire unit, but are continually revisited during a student's years in K12 Music.

Repetition and Sequencing

Research in music education suggests that younger children learn best through frequent repetition of songs and concepts. The K12 curriculum is designed around this principle. Most songs are repeated at least four times in one year, and some songs may be repeated more than four times. This repetition will help your student build a stable repertoire of traditional songs. It will also allow your student to achieve mastery over a period of time rather than during each lesson. During each repetition, your child will examine a new aspect of the song or learn a new skill.

You should also retain your CD material for use in future grades. Older students may revisit some of these songs as their skills develop and they are able to identify more and more of the phrases.

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Lesson Time and Scheduling

- **Total lessons:** 72. If you teach Music twice a week, you can comfortably complete the program within a typical school year.
- **Lesson time:** 45 minutes. You might choose to split the lessons into smaller segments. K12's online lesson tracking system allows you to pick up wherever you left off in any given lesson.

Lesson Structure

In the Preparatory and Beginning Levels, the adult and child work together throughout most of the lesson. Each lesson includes a selection of the following:

Songs and Activities

- **Activities:** Games introduce the lesson and reinforce the concept of *beat* in music. Songs reinforce the main objectives of the lesson.
- **Skills Development:** A vocal or rhythm warm-up exercises the voice and reviews melodic or rhythm concepts from previous lessons.
- **Read and Write Music:** A practice page (an activity sheet) that your child completes reinforces the main idea of a lesson. You can keep it in the portfolio as documentation of your child's progress through the program.
- **Music Appreciation:** Activities introduce the instruments of the orchestra, the culture in which music was created, or the relationship of music to story.

Active Listening

- Activities help your child enjoy classical music through creative movement and imaginative play.
- Activities relate concepts presented in the unit to classical works or music from diverse cultures.

Assessment

A few simple questions track progress and assess your child's grasp of the main concepts in the lesson.

Beyond the Lesson

Optional activities extend concepts and skills from the lesson, and present suggested resources for further listening, singing, or reading. These activities may include resources beyond those provided by K12.

Lesson Materials

Materials Supplied by K12

- *Let's Sing* CD, a collection of sing-along folk songs. With the *Let's Sing* CD, you and your child will learn to sing a large repertoire of songs quickly and easily.
- *Let's All Move*, a video of creative movement activities. *Let's All Move* provides helpful, easy-to-follow steps for activities that require movements or a more complicated musical presentation.
- *Let's Listen* CD, a collection of favorite classical music. The *Let's Listen* CD reinforces lesson concepts and opens doors to a world of great music.
- Tambourine and slide whistle

Before you begin teaching the program, take some time to preview the *Let's All Move* video and the *Let's Sing* and *Let's Listen* CDs.

Materials to Have on Hand

- CD player
- Computer with printer
- VCR and television
- Household items such as stuffed animals, chairs, and Popsicle sticks

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- For some of the Beyond the Lesson (optional) activities, you will need the *Wee Sing Sing-Alongs* CD and *Ella Jenkins, Early Early Childhood Songs*. K12 does not provide these, but you can obtain them easily through a music retailer.

Student Portfolio

To document your child's progress in the course, keep a portfolio (a three-ring binder with pocket folders) of completed Practice Pages and any other work done on paper.