

# Use Drumsticks to change your life (not chicken!)

Where to get your drumsticks – cheapest ones I could find this morning - (98p a pair!!)

<http://www.djmmusic.com/Itemdesc.asp?ic=TDA35>



## Tips –

- Have a class set plus a few spares, all exactly the same.
- Make giving them out part of the activity
  - Learn to pass them one at a time
  - then try to do it in time with a beat – it's HARD!
- When each person gets their set they put them on the floor in front of them.
- No-one taps while I'm talking, we only tap when we're asked to.
- Sticks are on the floor until we're asked to pick them up.
- Be consistent about behaviour – 1 warning for misuse then take them away. You won't have to do that often.
- Do give the ground rules – hold them at the ends, tap them near the point, we're not aiming to break them!
- Ask them to hold both in one hand while you speak, never speak over them.
- Backing beats – I've made some using Acid Express, Band in a box and by recording a keyboard! There must be many ways. Make a selection of mp3s different styles and speeds, keep them on ipod or phone, then just plug the class sound cable into the headphone socket.
- You could use actual music for backing – a good way to introduce a well-known piece each week. I use backing beats as I then use them for pitch copying things too.
- Say "tap", not "hit"!
- Sometimes use a 3/4 backing beat, and time sigs other than 4/4
- Look after the little cardboard tube for each pair. All instruments should be handled with care and respect. They are nicer to use if kept organised. When the sticks get a bit older – watch how as they pass them out they'll try and keep the nicest looking pair for themselves – you'll see what I mean!

## Simple activities -

- At the beginning of the year I'd do body percussion in time with a beat first before introducing the sticks. Tap a few beats on different body parts, everyone joins in with you, then choose children to be the leader. Insist on the beat!
- Also body percussion – get them to do the action you just stopped doing – exercise for the brain!
- Tap in time with a beat
- Tap and count in 4s, make the strong beat stronger
- Tap on beat 1 only – do the rests as 'not taps' Then do with the other beats.
- As above but combine, eg 2 and 3, 1 and 4, 2 and 4.
- Count to 20, only tap on the 2x table, same with other tables
- When they can do that well, keep the numbers in your head (internalise)
- Sit and use the floor for the strong beat (floor tap tap tap)
- Sit across from a partner and use their sticks to tap across – like a clapping game with sticks.
- Pass beats around the circle – each person does 4 one after the other
  - Count out loud to begin with, then in your head
  - Then do 2 beats each, then 1
  - Do it in 3 time as well
- Copy 4 beat patterns – sticks – child teacher led, then child leaders around the circle
- Gradually make your rhythms more interesting – syncopation, rests, long notes
  - BUT – not too hard at first.
  - Count aloud to begin with, then in heads
  - If someone gets out of time, first wait to see if the next child corrects it

## More activities -



- Change your tapping using the elements –
  - Tempo
  - Dynamics
  - Duration – tricky, as the sound is actually short – but hold the sticks together
  - Texture
    - have one group doing the beat, one doing a rhythm, then switch
    - Build up patterns with 4 parts
    - Try doing a rhythm round
  - Structure
    - Rondos
    - Call and response
    - Build up other structures – eg All tap beats for 4 bars, then do a call and response or a tap and copy, then all tap beats for 4 bars etc...
- “Don’t tap this one back” “Don’t copy this one” etc....
- Start off a rhythm, everyone joins in, then change but ask them to stay the same, next time you change, they change to the one you just did before.
- More about Rondos – This is how I do it.....
  - Tap beats together until everyone is “feeling” it
  - Make up, or choose, or get them to suggest a rhythm for the chorus
  - Sometimes I’d write the rhythm on the board, or have it ready on whiteboard, or write it as we go along, or use my rhythm cards, sometimes not written down
  - Doesn’t have to be standard notation of course, it could be symbols or it could be words – mine always seem to be about food – “Fish, chips, vinegar and sausages with custard”
  - Practise the “chorus” lots until they are sure of it
  - Get them to play the chorus without you, then you improvise in between. If it’s an 8 beat chorus, do an 8 beat improv., etc.
  - Do that a lot, so they get the feel of the length of time they have for their turn. Count beats to start with, then don’t.
  - Be aware that they might copy your patterns instead of playing the chorus – so go over it.
  - Explain carefully, that we’ll all play the chorus, then you’ll make one up, then chorus, then the person to your left, and so on round the circle.
  - If it’s meant to be eight beats and someone’s pattern only lasts for 4 – count the last four beats out loud to make the point about the length of the episode – rests ARE perfectly acceptable!
  - If they start late – make it obvious that the first beat has now become a rest by starting to count if necessary.
- You can do loads with tapping different sounds on chairs (try upturning them) floor, shoes, etc. Copy patterns, etc.
- You can do loads tapping across with a partner – think of Morris dancing, or Indian stick dancing.

## What next –

- Link what you do in your warm up and rhythm work with sticks to the instrumental work and the singing part of the lesson
- See how many of the above activities you can do on the instruments
  - Tongue a pattern on one note and they copy, then child leaders
  - Simple pitch pattern copying, you first then child leaders
  - Rhythm Rondos – then do pitch rondos too

## Homework –

- When you get some good ideas of more things to do with sticks – please email them to me! [marie.price@hertsmusicservice.org.uk](mailto:marie.price@hertsmusicservice.org.uk)

