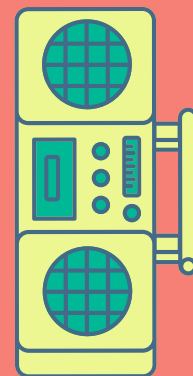


# BUILDING BLOCKS OF MUSIC

## LESSON 1



# ACTIVE LISTENING





# Active Listening


## Background

### *Active versus Passive*

Even when you're not paying attention to the sounds around you, your ears are constantly sending signals to your brain. Our ears do this automatically, or **involuntary**, just like breathing! This is called **passive listening**. When you have music playing in the background, but not focusing on all of the sounds, you are listening to music passively.

**Active listening** is what you do when you are focusing on all of the sounds that you hear. Take a conversation for example. When active listening, you are listening to the sound of the words, the speed at which they are spoken, and the **tone** of voice. All of this information helps us understand the message!

Just like active listening helps our communication skills, it also helps us understand music. We can learn a lot about music just by listening! Let's take the same concept of a conversation and apply it to music.



K-12

# Active Listening

## *Activity*

All you have to do to start actively listening to music is remove distractions, listen to the piece of music, and really focus on what you hear. As the music plays, ask yourself the following questions:

- How does it make you feel?

Is the song happy? Sad? Exciting?

Does it change throughout the song?

- Is the song fast or slow?

To help you decide, try clapping or tapping along to the beat.

- What instruments do you hear?

Do you hear drums? String instruments? Piano? Voice? Or, simply describe the sound.

- What is the **melody**?

Can you hum the melody? If there are no words, can you tell which instrument(s) are playing the melody?

### ***More Advanced Listeners:***

- **Major** versus **Minor**

Is the song in a major or minor key?

- **Instrumentation**

How many instruments can you hear? Which instruments are playing the rhythm, accompaniment, and melody sections?

- **Lyrics**

If the song has lyrics, what are they about? How do the lyrics work together with the mood of song to create meaning?

- **Time Signature**

Try to figure out what time signature the piece of music is in. If you have trouble, listen for patterns in the accompaniment (rhythmic support).

*Activity*

In this experimental activity, students will learn to identify sounds from the objects that produce them. We will use everyday household objects and use our active listening skills to identify which sounds different objects produce.

**What you will need:**



A variety of everyday household objects: *keys, wooden spoon, empty bottle, tin can, etc.*

**Procedure**

- Place objects on table and allow students to observe.
- Ask: What sound do you think each object will make?
- Have students close their eyes (or turn around) and then produce sound with each object.
- Have students open their eyes or turn back around and guess (or vote for multiple students) what object made the sound. (Repeat for all objects.)

**Extension**

- Make a sound with a 'mystery object' and let students consider what type of object could produce that sound.
- Let students take turns with the role of sound producer.
- Use two objects at once for further reflection.



4-12

# Active Listening

## *Extended Ideas*

Take the concepts learned in your active listening lessons outdoors! Either go for a walk or simply go outside and listen to the sounds around you.

Create a journal and bring it with you when you go outdoors. Write down what you hear. Do this for 10-20 minutes everyday. Compare the sounds from a sunny versus rainy day. A spring day versus a fall day. Morning versus night. When you are in a new area, observe the different sounds that you hear and write them down later.

### **Extension**

Take a list of sounds that you hear on any given day, or combine several days into one list. Use the list of words to create either a short story or a poem. See how many of the words on your list you can work into your writing. Can you use them all? If writing a poem, try to use at least one of the words from your list in every phrase.

Remember to date your entries. Go back through them and see how your writing changes over time.

Share your favorite entries with family and friends.

# Active Listening

## Definitions

- Involuntary- Done without will or conscious control.
- Tone- a musical or vocal sound with reference to its pitch, quality, and strength.
- Melody- a sequence of single notes that is musically satisfying. The principal part in harmonized music.
- Major Key- A musical key or tonality in the major mode. Major keys are defined by their tonic note (their starting or base note) and their scale being major.
- Minor- A musical key or tonality in the minor mode. Minor keys are defined by their tonic note (their starting or base note) and their scale being minor.
- Time Signature- An indication of rhythm at the beginning of a piece of music., generally expressed as a fraction with the denominator defining the beat as a division of a whole note and the numerator giving the number of beats in each bar, or measure.