



Song: 'Gathered Round the Christmas Tree'

Moving to the Music

(Reflecting the pulse)

This is a physical activity that involves moving and freezing in time with the music. It is designed to establish, and then reinforce, a sense of pulse.

Teachers' preparation



5 mins

Listen to the song a few times before sharing it with the children so that you become familiar with the structure. Rehearse the movements (a gentle stamp; right-right-left-left to reflect the pulse of the verse, then freezing just on the word Christ-mas each time it occurs in the chorus) Aim to precisely reflect the pulse in these actions. The downloadable Song Map shows the moves alongside the lyrics.





20 mins

Objective and Musical Focus:

Learning to listen attentively
Developing teamwork

Instruments?

No

Accessibility:

Suitable for Vision, Motor, Hearing and Cognitive impairments with minor adaptation.

1. Learn the dance moves - introductory activities

This activity is designed to teach the dance to the children and is suitable for 4+ years.

Play the song *Gathered Round the Christmas Tree* from the *Play It!* interactive on our website.

Prepare to learn the dance

Start in a sitting position with the children. (At this stage it is better that they all face you). Encourage the children to pat their knees in a right-right-left-left pattern along with the pulse during the verse, freeze with exaggerated movements each time the word 'Christ-mas' comes in the chorus (so that you are just singing along with the word), and then start moving again as soon as it stops.

Dance on the spot in a standing position.

Face the children and aim to shadow the strong pulse of the song by using a gentle stamping movement (right-right-left-left). (Bear in mind though that you will need to lead with your left foot so that the children mirror your action with their right foot). Sing 'Christmas' each time you freeze - try to engage a different child each time with eye contact. Make sure you start and stop exactly in time with the pulse.

Dance around the room

Dance around the room now that the children know how to move, see if they can keep moving in time to the pulse as they move around the room maintaining the right-right-left-left movement and the freezing. Encourage them to use their whole bodies now - arms and hands, shoulders and head.



20 mins

Objective and Musical Focus:

Feeling the pulse through whole body movement

Introducing rhythm
Introducing pitch and melody

Instruments?

Bells or rattle for teacher

Accessibility:

Suitable for Vision, Motor, Hearing and Cognitive impairments with minor adaptation



Find the song on the BBC *Play It!* interactive on our website.
bit.ly/BTNplayit

2. Develop the dance moves - progressive activities

The following are progressive activities you can develop once your class have assimilated the introductory activities. Suitable for 4 - 7 years.

Play the song *Gathered Round the Christmas Tree* from the *Play It!* interactive on our website.

In this activity we use an instrument on the first beat of each bar to establish the sense of stress that naturally occurs in music. This is done in an understated way here, ready to be refined at a later date. Feeling the pulse through whole body movement is so beneficial to holistic development. We are just venturing beyond pulse and starting to highlight rhythm by drawing attention to the fact that some sounds are longer than others.

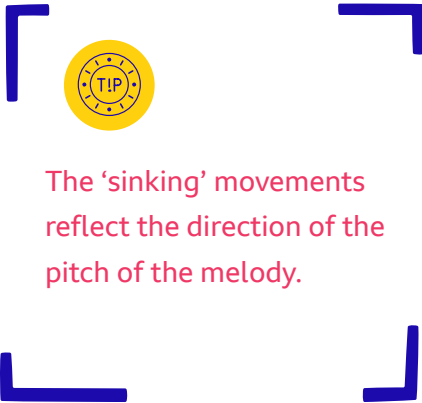
1. Make a circle

If it's possible to make a circle, then do so. Place some bells, or a rattle, or anything that makes a noise, on your leading foot (or stick it into/onto your shoe!), so that there is some emphasis to the pulse as you gently stamp down. Once the children understand the action, you could choose one or two of them to use sound-makers in this way with you.



2. More actions

Once the children have become familiar with the 'right-right, left-left' action of their feet whilst moving their whole bodies, encourage them now to move their whole body with more specific actions - so that they turn slightly to face 'right-right, left-left'



The 'sinking' movements reflect the direction of the pitch of the melody.

3. Arms and feet!

You could also encourage a more disciplined arm movement in harmony with the feet, so that the arms move 'right-right, left-left' too. (This will encourage the arms to take turns in crossing the midline of the body - an important developmental skill needed for so many everyday tasks. It will also strengthen their core body muscles)

4. Freeze!

Freeze and sing 'Christ-mas' and also add a clap on each syllable of the word in time with the singing.

5. Bridge movements

Add the bridge movements - stand on the spot and sink downwards by bending your knees a little on each beat; "When sleigh bells ring and choirs sing it must be Christmas Day!" Come back to standing and sink down again for "It feels so great to celebrate in the usual Crimble way!" Then stand back up and get ready to resume the right-right-left-left movement for the beginning of verse 3.



30 mins

Objective and Musical Focus:

Singing
Experience of genre
Critical engagement
Improvisation of movement

Instruments?

None

Accessibility:

Suitable for Vision, Motor, Hearing and Cognitive impairments with minor adaptation

3. Extend the dance moves - extension and inclusion activities

Extension and inclusion activities that could be incorporated into the song suitable for 7+ years.

Play the song *Gathered Round the Christmas Tree* from the *Play It!* interactive on our website.

1. Create own actions

Encourage individual/group expression by suggesting the children make up their own actions (either individually, in pairs or in groups), reminding them that they should mirror the pulse and the lyrics.

2. Singing in lines

Can the children stand still and sing along to the chorus? Or, suggest they form two lines, facing each other for the chorus. Split them into two parts - the first sings 'Christ-mas' to the person facing them, and then that one replies with '... together we're gonna be...' etc. They could even pretend to lift microphones up and sing into them.

3. Write a new verse

Suggest adding different lyrics - making up a verse 4 and performing it.

4. Other cultures

This song can be used to explore other religions and cultures. Ask children:

What celebrations might other religions and cultures sing about?

How might people who celebrate different festivals change the lyrics to reflect what is important to them?



Pulse

- the evenly-spaced beat of the music

Bridge

- a short section often containing a new theme between the chorus and the verse

Coda

- a passage that brings the song to an end

Repertoire

- a collection of songs or music

Genre

- a category of music.

This song can be described as being from the 'Children's songs genre'

Curriculum Links

Communication
and Language

Physical

PSED

Understanding
of the World

Expressive arts and
design



Appendix

Gathered Round the Christmas Tree Lyrics

Verse 1: When you're feeling in a festive mood
Just forget about the festive food
Now we're really going to party, dude. It's Christmas!
Got no money for a chocolate treat
Got no candy and we've got no sweets
But with everybody nothing beats a Christmas!

Chorus: It's
Christmas
- together we're gonna be
Christmas
- forever a family
Christmas
- gather round the Christmas tree!

Verse 2: Growing up you know we had things tough
Couldn't always get the latest stuff
But a family is just enough for Christmas
Where it gets to be kind of Christmassy,
When we gather round a Christmas tree
I'm as happy as a Dad can be at Christmas!

Chorus: It's
Christmas
- together we're gonna be
Christmas
- forever a family
Christmas
- gather round the Christmas tree!

Bridge: When sleigh bells ring and choirs sing it must be
Christmas Day!
It feels so great to celebrate in the usual Crimble way!



Verse 3: Yes it gets us kind of Christmassy,
When we gather round the Christmas tree, We're as
happy as a kid can be at Christmas

Chorus: It's
Christmas
- together we're gonna be
Christmas
- forever a family
Christmas
- gather round the Christmas tree!

Chorus: It's
Christmas
- together we're gonna be
Christmas
- forever a family
Christmas
- gather round the Christmas tree!

Coda: Around the Christmas Tree—!