



# Song: 'Gathered Round the Christmas Tree'

## Structure, timbre and instruments

These activities involve a range of ideas to develop familiarity with the way the song is structured, and how it is layered with different sounds.

You can download the sheet music and Song Map for the track on our webpage.



5-10 mins

## Teachers' preparation

You will need to be familiar with the song and its structure. You can find a breakdown of the song structure with the accompanying lyrics in the appendix of this activity plan.

### Objective and Musical Focus:

Playing instruments;  
Listening with concentration;  
Exploring the different sounds of instruments;  
Singing

### Instruments?

Yes, tuned and untuned instruments

### Accessibility:

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

### Introduction (instrumental)

Verse 1  
Chorus  
Verse 2  
Chorus  
Bridge  
Verse 3  
Chorus  
Chorus  
Coda



20 mins

# 1. Developing a sense of structure

Listen to 'Gathered Round the Christmas Tree' using the *Bring the Noise: Play It!* interactive tool on our website.

Below are three ways you can help your class develop a sense of song structure using different techniques.



Listening attentively in fun ways helps to develop concentration skills.

## 1. Movement

Start to follow the structure of the song by asking your class to signal different sections of the song with different movements. For example during the verse they should sit down, and when the chorus begins they should signal this by changing movement to standing.

Listening attentively in fun ways helps to develop concentration skills, and eventually the children should be able to move through the actions on their own to each section of the song - they don't want to be the last one left sitting or standing!

## 2. Vocals

Encourage your class to use their vocals to help develop a sense of structure through scat singing. This also allows the song to become more accessible to those limited language skills or EAL students.

Keep singing the 'Christmas' lyrics in the chorus and add scat to the responses, for example start with la la and branch into doo-be-doo / da-da-da / doot.

## 3. Instrumentals

If you have instruments available, you can choose some of them to play along with different sections of the song.

You shouldn't expect perfection at this stage, just encourage starting and stopping with the music.



30 mins

## 2. Developing a sense of timbre

The following activities will introduce the concept of **timbre** to children. Timbre is defined as the quality of a sound.

Children's musical experience is varied. Naming the instruments at the outset of the activity ensures that they become familiar with what the instruments are.

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Listen to '*Gathered Round the Christmas Tree*' using the *Bring the Noise: Play It!* interactive tool on our website. Ask them to identify any of the sounds that they hear - drums, vocals, guitar and bass, tubular bells etc.

Show the children pictures of the various instruments and ask them to vocalise the sound they make, for example a guitar will make a 'twangy' sound whereas bells will need to 'dong' and the drums will need a 'drier' quality of sound.

You can also draw attention to the different ways the sounds are made: guitars have strings that are plucked, drums have skins that are played with drumsticks in this song, while the tubular bells are made of metal and they are struck with a little hammer called a mallet.

Now that they've had time to discover the different instruments used within the song, it's time to prepare your own band!

If you have a set of ukuleles these would be ideal for the guitar, otherwise you could demonstrate the air guitar to the children and use that instead. Drums, tambours or upside down dustbins would work for the drum kit and metal instruments (triangles, chime bars or glockenspiels) could substitute the bells. Use our 'how to' guides to make your own instruments in class to use as a band.

**Extension:** You could take a detour here and learn a little more about tubular bells. They are often used in Christmas songs. Why? (because they sound like church bells)



[LINK TO HOW TO GUIDES](#)



30 mins

### 3. 'Listen and Layer' in Play It!

Below are some suggestions of fun and creative ways of learning about musical layering while reinforcing the structure and **genre** of the song through frequent repetition.

Listen to 'Gathered Round the Christmas Tree' using the *Bring the Noise: Play It!* interactive tool on our website.



Play the song *Gathered Round the Christmas Tree* using the *Bring the Noise: Play It!* interactive tool on our website - [bit.ly/BTNplayit](https://bit.ly/BTNplayit)

#### 1. Layers of a song

Demonstrate how the song is layered by looking at the screen and adding and removing the stems as you listen to the song. Ask the children to close their eyes and see if they can recognise the different sounds.

Lay out some instruments, or instrument-pictures, to represent the different instrumental tracks of the song. Divide the class into these different groups and see if they can join in playing their instruments (eg drummers play with drum kit, air guitar players with guitars etc.) when they hear the corresponding track.

Add the tracks all together gradually, so that the children have to listen carefully for when they should join in. Then have a 'concert performance'. Don't expect perfection here - the fun and learning comes in participating in the process, rather than the final outcome!

Rotate the children around the instrument groups so that they have a turn at playing each type of instrument.

#### 2. Game: Which part is playing?

Turn the children away from the screen ask them to shut their eyes and listen very carefully. Play just one of the tracks and the children have to mime playing or singing the correct instrumental/vocal group.

You can try this a couple of times with different tracks in *Bring the Noise: Play It!* until they get the hang of it.



### 3. Game: Which part now?

This game is similar to an aural version of musical statues.

The teacher operates the 'Listen and Layer' track while the children face away from the screen.

Start with one track which the children have to play along to and then stop the music. The children have to freeze. Start the track again, maybe using a different instrument this time, and the children have to pretend to play that instrument. Stop and freeze again.

### Curriculum Links

Communication  
and Language  
Physical  
PSED  
Understanding  
of the World  
Expressive arts and  
design

### 4. Game: Fill in the gaps

Play the game 'fill in the gaps', where the children have to listen carefully and join in a track from the song.

The teacher should control the 'Listen and Layer' button, and switch off the vocals every time the word Christmas comes in the chorus. The children have to be ready to sing it!

This can be quite a challenging activity for this age group so don't worry if the children struggle at first, it may take some practice.



### Key words

**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

**Timbre:** is the quality of sound





## Appendix

### Gather 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—!