

# READY, SET, RHYTHM!

SEQUENTIAL LESSONS TO DEVELOP RHYTHMIC READING

*By Melody Easter-Clutter & Anna Wentlent*

Reproducible  
Student Pages  
Included



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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*Ready, Set, Rhythm!* is comprised of 80 lessons divided into eight progressive units, which develop sequentially through the basic concepts of rhythm. Each lesson is about ten minutes long, and is specifically designed to be inserted into regular general music classes or ensemble rehearsals as a warm-up, “break” in the middle of class, or concluding activity before dismissal. And the timeline is flexible as well. You may choose to work through a lesson a day, every other day, once a week, or on an as-needed basis to practice particularly troublesome rhythms. Each unit concludes with a reproducible student assessment, as well as all necessary supporting documents, such as student grade sheets. The purchase of this book gives you the right to make as many photocopies as needed of those assessment pages.

Each rhythmic concept is introduced with a focused lesson of teacher-led group work at the board, and then reinforced through hand motions, body movements, tennis ball activities, and composition projects. The content of this book was originally written for middle school students, but it is both useful and appropriate for upper-elementary and beginning high school students as well. If you’re on either end of this spectrum, feel free to either skip ahead in the book or slow down, spending several days on each lesson—modify the timeline as needed to fit the level of your students. In fact, take a look at the “extensions” and “tips” that frequently appear at the bottom of lessons. These offer suggestions for challenging your students with more advanced tasks, as well as continuing the lessons beyond ten minutes for additional reinforcement.

Begin each movement-based lesson by leading your students through a silent warm-up of the body. This is a time to bring your students focus away from all the other distractions of their day, and towards you as their teacher and leader. It also helps to establish positive behavior standards. Each student should remain in his or her own personal space, never touching another student. As the year progresses, the physical warm-up may be a good opportunity to invite students to lead the class. You may choose students leaders at random, create a schedule that rotates through the class roster, or assign the responsibility to established student leaders, such as your choral section leaders.

A few warm-ups that can be done in any location, regardless of space:

- Slowly tilt your head to the right and hold. Repeat to the left.
- Reach upward with your right hand in the air, while simultaneously reaching downward with your left hand next to your body. Hold. Repeat with left hand in the air.
- Roll your shoulders backwards five times. End with head centered, shoulders settled, and arms relaxed at your side.

# UNIT 1 | LESSON 1

## NATIONAL STANDARDS

3

- 2** Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- 5** Reading and notating music.

### Ready:

- Interactive whiteboard, dry-erase board, or chalkboard
- Classroom percussion instrument(s)

### Set:

Write the following four measures of music on the board:

Four staves of music notation in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1: Four quarter notes on a single line, numbered 1, 2, 3, 4.
- Staff 2: Four eighth notes on a single line, numbered 1 - and, 2 - and, 3 - and, 4 - and.
- Staff 3: Two half notes on a single line, numbered 1, (2), 3, (4).
- Staff 4: Four quarter notes on a single line, numbered 1, (2), 3, 4).

### Rhythm:

Speak the rhythm with your students, whispering or silently “thinking” the held beats of the whole and half notes.

Model a basic hand movement for each rhythmic value.

- **Whole note:** Clap hands once, then make a circle in front of your body with your closed hands (a “stir the pot” motion)
- **Half note:** Clap hands once, then pull down to chest
- **Quarter note:** Clap hands once
- **Eighth note:** Pat back and forth on your legs (right then left for each pair of eighth notes)

Lead your students through all four lines separately, and then in unison, counting aloud while doing the hand movements.

**Extension:** Select successful students to accompany the class on percussion instruments, playing the same rhythm or a steady beat.

# UNIT 1 | LESSON 2

## NATIONAL STANDARDS

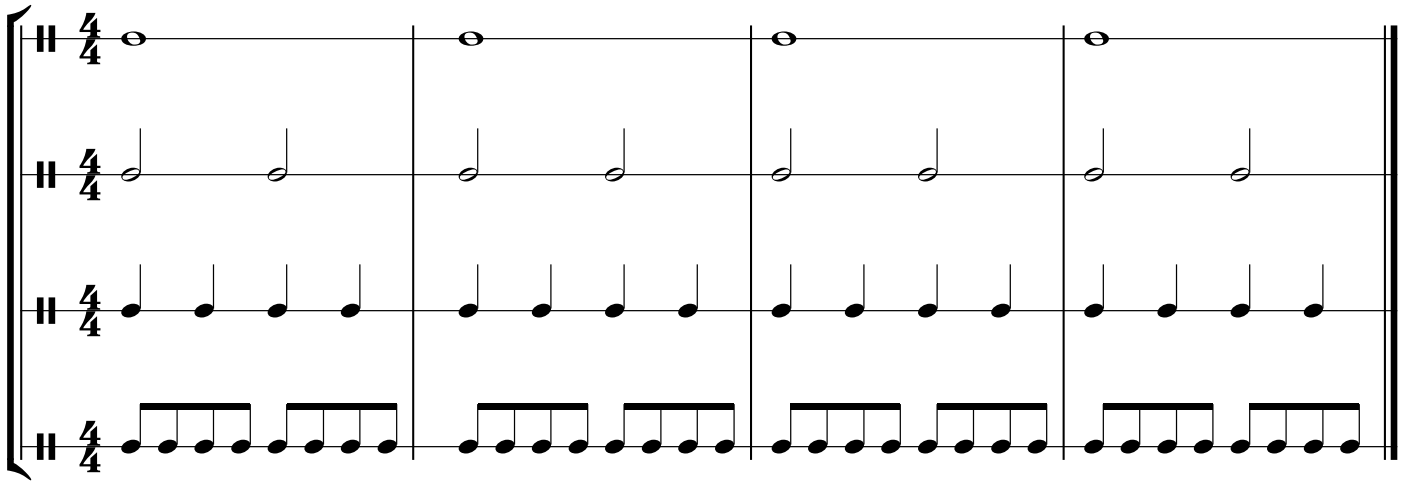
- 5** Reading and notating music.
- 6** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

### Ready:

- Interactive whiteboard, dry-erase board, or chalkboard

### Set:

Write the following lines of music on the board:



### Rhythm:

Stand your students and lead them through a silent warm-up of the body. Since this is the first of many physical warm-ups to come, take the time to emphasize good behavior standards now (stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, respect your neighbor, no talking, and so on).

Model a basic body movement for each rhythmic value. Modify the movements if necessary for the space in which you are teaching. For example, spinning could simply be turning around in place, if you are on choral risers.

- **Whole note:** Spin in a circle for four beats
- **Half note:** Step on the first beat, slide on the second
- **Quarter note:** Jump back and forth with the beat
- **Eighth note:** Jog in place (right leg then left leg for each pair of eighth notes)

Lead your students through all four lines in unison, counting aloud while doing the body movements.

Now, erase or hide the fourth measure of each line, so that there are only three measures of each note showing. Continue on in this pattern, erasing the third measure and then the second measure, until your students are only performing one measure of each note, quickly moving to the next.

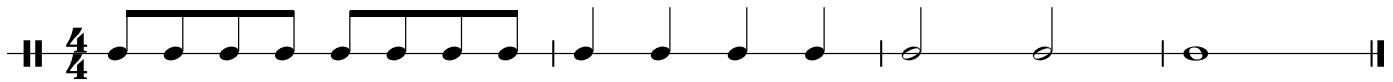
# UNIT 1 | LESSON 3

## Ready:

• Interactive whiteboard, dry-erase board, or chalkboard

## Set:

Write the following line of music on the board:



## Rhythm:

Call on specific students to remind the class of the proper note names and their corresponding body movements.

Lead your students through the line in unison. Repeat if necessary until everyone has mastered the line.

Mix it up by using different tempos. Begin by counting, "1-2-3-4," in the new tempo and then going right into the line of music. Alternate between fast, slow, and medium—the greater the difference between one tempo and the next, the better! Again, make sure that students are counting aloud. This will help them to go at the same speed, despite the tempo changes every four measures.

**Extension:** Reorder the measures, so that the movements come in a different order.

