

Teaching Rounds

Teaching rounds is a natural follow on from teaching songs in unison.

The curriculum documents recommend that teachers teach rounds by ear first.

It is advisable to spend several sessions getting to know the tune very well before children are expected to divide into parts.

Although day 1 and day 2 are used to describe the sequence of learning this may in reality take a longer learning time. Teachers may not feel inclined to sing for the class and may prefer to use a CD.

The tune can be secured by using the following procedure: Teachers may choose to vary the ways into singing rounds depending on the song.

Day 1

1. Choosing a suitable starting note (not too high, not too low)
2. Listening to a recording if available and appropriate or listening to teacher singing the entire song
3. Chanting the words rhythmically
4. Clapping, marching, tapping, thigh-slapping etc to keep the beat (pulse)
5. Joining in with certain parts of the song that are easily remembered
6. Echoing the teacher (or recording) by repeating a line or phrase of the song directly after the teacher sings (or plays recording).

Echoing is a very good way of securing the song. This should be done with the minimum of breaks. To keep the flow going, teacher encourages the children to sing directly after teacher has sung by using hand gestures.

Teaching Brother John (Freres Jacques)

Teacher may start by singing the first phrase with children echoing

Teacher: Are you sleeping?

Class: Are you sleeping?

Teacher: Brother John

Class: Brother John

Teacher: Morning bells are ringing

Class: Morning bells are ringing

Teacher: Ding dang dong

Class: Ding dang dong

Teacher may then sing the two phrases together and children repeat.

Teacher: Are you sleeping, are you sleeping?

Class: Are you sleeping, are you sleeping?

Teacher: Brother John, Brother John

Class: Brother John, Brother John

Teacher: Morning bells are ringing, Morning bells are ringing

Class: Morning bells are ringing, Morning bells are ringing

Teacher: Ding dang dong, Ding dang dong.

Class: Ding dang dong, Ding dang dong.

7. When the class are secure with each phrase or line of the song, teacher may begin again.

This time, the teacher starts and class sings along to the end of the song in unison.

Teacher may drop out of the singing but quietly rejoin the song, singing “ding dang dong” (ostinato) throughout as the class continues singing.

Teacher continues to sing “ding dang dong” and encourages half of the class to sing “ding dang dong” and to continue singing that throughout the song as the other half of the class starts to sing the song again twice.

When the class are secure, the groups can swap or reverse their roles.

Day 2

Revise what was done on day one until class are confidently singing the tune and the ostinato without the teacher’s voice.

When the class are secure, the teacher can start the song again, this time the teacher will repeat the first phrase “Are you sleeping, are you sleeping?” when the class are beginning to sing the second phrase “Brother John, Brother John”. The class continue to sing the whole song twice as the teacher sings the other part, (one phrase behind the class).

This activity can be repeated with class divided into two groups. One group leads and the other follows.

Throughout teaching a class to sing a round, the children should be encouraged to sing softly so that they can hear the other complimentary parts. Through listening to each other they can appreciate the different sounds that blend together to make harmony. Encourage the children to maintain a steady beat through gentle movement or by using a percussion instrument to tap a pulse.

Chime bars may be used to keep the pulse steady and to keep the children in tune (see article on song singing and accompaniments).

Playing a simple accompaniment whilst the round is being learnt is very useful and gives the teacher a good excuse to repeat the singing so that various children can practice the melodic and /or rhythmic accompaniment.

The **melodic ostinato** played on Chimebars could be taken from the last line of the song: Ding dang dong.

If the song is sung in the key of F the children will use the notes F, C, F

Count:	1,	2,	3,	4
Chimebar:	F	C	F	rest
Words:	Ding, dang, dong, (silence)			

Rhythmic ostinato

Count:	1,	2,	3,	4,	
Claves:	Ta	ti	ti	ta	ta
Words:	Morn' bells are ring - ing				

The performance of the round can be extended by combining instrumental playing with the vocal line, although in performance rounds are best unaccompanied. It is a great opportunity for children to experience first-hand how harmony is created. It is also very satisfying for children to make harmony with their voices alone.