

Music Manipulatives



ma·nip·u·la·tive (mə-nīp'yə-lə-tīv) -
n. Any of various objects designed to be moved
or arranged by hand as a means of developing
motor skills or understanding abstractions



Music Manipulatives

Hand-held music note manipulatives are one of the most powerful note-training tools available to the music educator. Students who have the unique experiences of holding, feeling, smelling, tracing, and playing with these pleasant, smooth music notes will gain an intimate and concrete knowledge of each note. This knowledge and experience can then be easily transferred to the more abstract processes of recognizing and performing music notation written on paper.

The teacher should have a thorough knowledge of the parts of a music note, be able to identify each note name, and be able to perform the rhythm of each note verbally, or by clapping.

Parts of a note:

1. Head – the round part of the note, empty or filled
2. Stem – the stick
3. Flag – curved line or lines attached to the stem

Rhythm Syllables:

Whole Note

(4 beats)  "Ta | ah | ah | ah"

Half Note

(2 beats)  "Ta | ah |"

Quarter Note

(1 beat)  "Ta |"

Eighth Notes

(½ beat)  "Tee-tee|"

Sixteenth Notes

(¼ beat)  "Ti-ri-ti-ri|"

~GAMES~

There are many valuable and fun games that can be played with music manipulatives.

Mystery Note Game

Choose one person to come to the front of the classroom to play the “Mystery Note Game.” Have the student turn around and face the class with their hands behind their back. Choose one note to place in their hands and ask them to identify the note without looking at it.

Show Me the Note

Give each student a set containing one of each of the notes. Call out a note name (or rhythm sound) and have the students raise the correct note.

Noisy Notes Game

Start a note at the beginning of a row of people. Each person holding a note must say the rhythm syllable for that note at a predetermined tempo. He must repeat this syllable in tempo for as long as he holds it. As soon as the next person in the row is able to take the note, the person holding the note may pass it on. A player is “out” if he is unable to maintain the specified rhythm.

Note People

Have the students trace or draw a note freehand on a piece of paper, then instruct them to make the note into a person. This can be effective in training students to recognize the round part of the note as the “head.”

Note Art

Instruct the students to draw a picture incorporating the different types of notes into their picture.

Note Money

Bring in items that the students can “purchase” with their notes. Give out the notes as prizes for good work during class, then at the end of class, the notes can be turned for the items. Items worth 4 cents can be purchased with a whole note, two half notes, or 4 quarter notes, etc. An item worth 2 cents can be purchased with a whole note (with a half note given as change), a half note, or two quarter notes, etc.

“Huckle Buckle Quarter Note”

Have a group of selected students leave the room while you hide a note in an inconspicuous but visible spot in the room. Bring the students in and instruct them to find the note. The first person to discover the location of the note says, “Huckle Buckle (note name) .” The winner then gets to hide the next note. If the students are having difficulty finding the note, the person who hid the note can tell them they are getting “hotter” as they get closer to the note, or “colder” if they are moving away from the note.

Note Wear

Instruct the students to discover creative ways to “wear” their notes. For example, the half note can become a monocle, whole notes can become rings, eighth notes can be hung from the ears as earrings, quarter notes can become flowers in a gentleman's pocket. Two quarter notes stuck behind the ears with two whole notes on the eyes can become a pair of eyeglasses.

Feel the Notes

Distribute a set of all the different notes to each student. Instruct them to hold the notes behind their backs and to not look at them. Name a note for them to find and identify by touch only.

Notable Parts

Have the students identify the parts of the note by either (1) naming a part and have the student point to it on their note or (2) ask a student to correctly name each part of the note they are holding.

The Composer

Choose a student to arrange the notes into an original composition. Lead the class in performing the students song by saying and/or clapping the rhythm.

Guess My Note

Tape a note to the back of each student without allowing them to see what it is. They must identify their note correctly by asking other students ONLY about the parts of the note, such as, "Is the head filled in or empty?" They may not ask questions concerning the name of the note or it's rhythmic value, such as, "Is it a quarter note?" When all the students think they know what their note is, ask each student individually to identify the note.

True or False

Hold up a note and say one of the note names (or clap or say the rhythm). The student must say "true" if you gave the correct name or "false" if you gave an incorrect name. when the student gets it right, he or she gets to keep the note.

Note Groupies

Pass out a different note to each student. When you say "Go!" the students are to find everyone else who is holding the same note and get together in a group. The first group to have all students holding a particular note gathered in one place wins.

Shopping for Notes

The "shopkeeper" asks a student "What would you like?" The student should reply with "I would like a (note name) , please." Reply with "Here you are" and give them the note they requested. Students can take turns being the "shopkeeper."

Orderly Notes

Give the students a set of notes and ask them to lay them out in order from smallest time value to largest time value. Now ask them to lay them out from largest to smallest.

Vanishing Notes

Lay out several notes in front of the room. Have a student look at them, then turn around or close their eyes. Remove one of the notes and ask the student which note disappeared. If they name the missing note correctly, they get to keep that note.

Name & Notes

Have each student hold one note of their choice. The first person says, "My name is (Joe), and I have a (quarter note)." The second person says, "This is (Joe) and he has a (quarter note). My name is (Sue) and I have a (whole note)." Each successive person must name all the preceding people and their notes, and then their own

name and note. Try this game with each person hiding his note behind his back after identifying it.

Staff Games

If you have a large floor or table sized staff available, you can play more advanced games with your students. Have them place their notes on the staff:

1. On a line or space
2. On a high note or a low note
3. On the treble clef or bass clef
4. On a particular note name
5. Creating a measure with the correct number of beats
6. Composing rhythms
7. Composing melodies
8. Transcribing a clapped or sung rhythm
9. Transcribing a melody
10. Identifying intervals or chords