

# WORLD OF FUN

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## Using songs and chants in the Primary classroom

Songs and chants are a regular part of young learner lessons. Children enjoy the singing, chanting and movement and they are a great outlet for all that youthful energy! But songs and chants also have a serious role to play in language development.

In general, music, songs and chants add to the fun of learning and make language more easily remembered. Songs are a group activity and therefore secure – a child won't need to worry about making mistakes or forgetting, and even if they don't sing, they can still listen to others and join in the actions. Also, songs and chants are memorable and we find it easier to remember a string of words in a song than when we just read or hear it spoken normally.

### Songs and chants are particularly good for

#### a Pronunciation

If children just hear words separately or even whole sentences spoken slowly, they will be confused when they listen to natural speech spoken at normal speed. They may not even recognise a well-known word like GOOD in a stream of 'he's a very good dog' as 'good' and 'dog' blend together and sound like a new word.

Listening to songs and chants allows students to tune into rhythm and intonation that affect the quality of speech sounds in English like weak forms, linking and syllable length. And when singing and chanting, they practise a much more natural English.

#### b Speaking

Singing and chanting are a good rehearsal for speaking. As children build confidence and remember language chunks (groups of words that are often found together like 'good morning'), they can start using them in real-life conversations.

#### 4 Listen and chant.

Look at my robot!  
It's got three arms and four legs.  
Has it got small feet? Yes, it has!

This is my robot.  
I like it a lot!  
Look at my robot!

It likes cleaning. It likes painting.  
It likes walking and talking.  
This is my robot. I like it a lot!

So, even in this simple chant in *Fun skills* Level 1, there is lots of language for the children to use in class to create their own meaning, e.g. 'Teacher, look at my picture.' or 'This is my pen.'

#### c Listening

When students listen to songs carefully in order to do a task, they are developing their concentration and the ability to recognise words and phrases in context.

## d Reading and writing

All the four language skills – not just listening and speaking – are involved in this song from *Fun skills* Level 4: reading the text, hearing the missing word, discussing it with a partner and then writing it in.

- 1 Listen to the song. Write the missing words with your friend. There are two examples.

**Asya**

My dream school is really brilliant!  
Our classroom is in a cinema.  
We use e-books to learn English.  
It's like you are on Mars!!

**Filip**

My dream school is in the 1. There's always lots to see and do. We are 2 who look for 3. Our classroom really is the best.

**Andres**

My dream school is so fantastic! Our classroom is in a cool 4. We drink 5 and wear 6. Visit my dream school today.

**Kanya**

My dream school is like a wonderland. Our teachers here are all great 7. We read comics and we sing 8 songs. Come inside and have a look around my dream 9.

## e Grammar

Grammar can be practised in songs and chants, too. If we look back at the first example, *like + ing* is repeated and memorised through repeating the chant. As young children pick up language in chunks and cannot yet analyse, it is more effective to have them meet and practise the target grammar in a meaningful and fun context.

## f Vocabulary

In order to remember new words, we need to meet them in lots of different contexts and practise them a lot – see them, write them, hear them and say them. Songs and chants provide an excellent opportunity for meaningful and memorable practice see below for song from *Fun skills* Level 2.

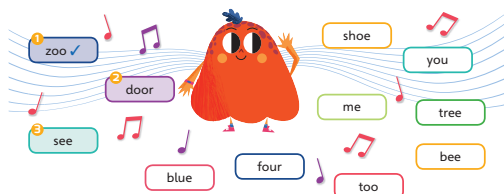
- 1 Listen to the song and number the pictures.



- 2 Answer the questions. Draw lines.

- |                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Which animal is climbing a tree? | A It's eating leaves.  |
| 2 What is the giraffe doing?       | B It's under the tree. |
| 3 Where is the tiger?              | C the monkey           |
| 4 What is the tiger doing?         | D the elephant         |
| 5 Which animal is throwing water?  | E It's sleeping.       |

- 3 Which of these words are in the song? Tick (✓) the words.



- 4 How do the eight words sound? Put the words in groups 1-3. Then listen and check.

If you want to use more songs and chants in class, here are some tips:

- ❖ Choose songs that
  - have simple, easily understood lyrics
  - link with a topic or vocabulary that you are studying in class
  - are repetitive
  - are easy to hear and too not fast
- ❖ You can find lots of songs and chants online; many come with videos and audio
- ❖ Make sure the key vocabulary is understood, before introducing the song/chant
- ❖ Think of suitable movements to go with the song/chant
- ❖ There are many traditional songs/chants like the one below that contain useful vocabulary and easy-to-do actions:

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands  
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands  
If you're happy and you know it  
And you really want to show it  
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands

- 1 Clap your hands
- 2 Nod your head
- 3 Wave your arms
- 4 Scratch your nose
- 5 Stamp your feet
- 6 Do them all

- ❖ *Listen and Do* is a great way to introduce songs and chants to children. Their response to listening is just an action. For example, if the song has different things mentioned in it - like heads, shoulders, knees and toes in the song above - when they hear the words they touch those parts of the body on themselves or on a picture.

As you can see, songs and chants are not just for fun!

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