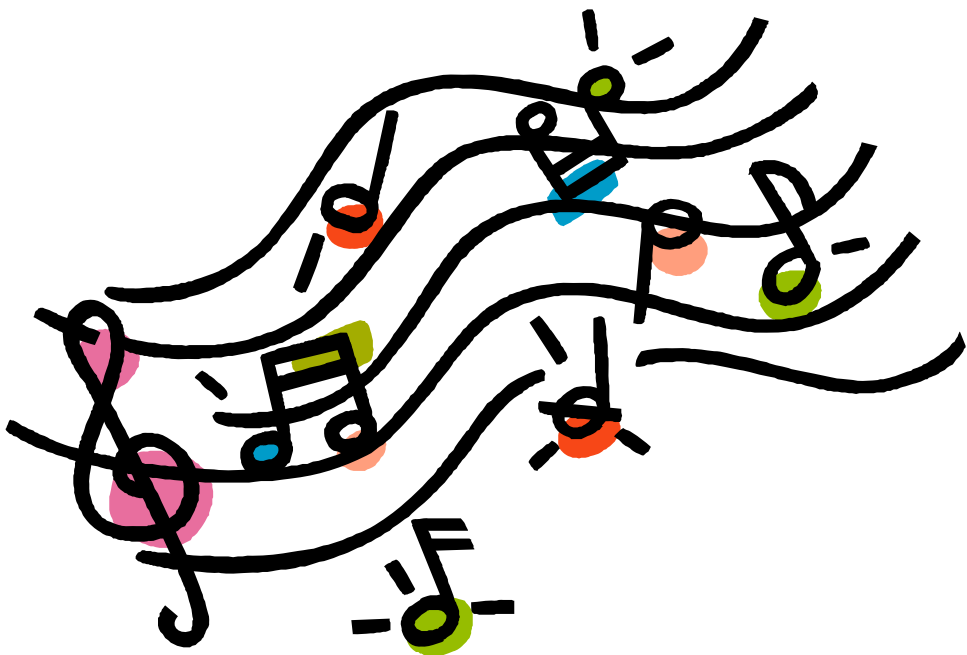


# music in the classroom

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# music as a warm-up activity

Music is one of the best ways to warm-up a cold class. You know your kids probably rolled out of bed earlier than you did, so yes, they're tired! Music will attract the attention of even the least genki students in your classes. Some good rock (or bad pop) will be enough to keep them awake, entertained, and participating in most cases. Got classes after lunch? Kids stuffed with rice are about as active as your average ALT at the BOE in August. Wake them up by getting them out of their seats and interacting with each other.

## **Musical Chairs**

If your class is small enough to get them up and moving in this activity in the morning, then by all means, do it! Motion is the best way to wake a class up after a short night or a big lunch. Play your basic round, just to warm up the class. Use Japanese music or American music and to settle disputes, either let them janken or ask a simple English question and the first to answer it gets the seat! Depending on your class size, this can take up to 10 minutes.

## **Hot Potato**

A great warm-up, also an active game. Get one or two plushies (Pokemon from the crane games at the arcade work like a charm) and hand them to students. If you can trust your students enough, let them toss them all over the room, not just pass from one person to the next, it's a lot more fun for them (just make sure all the windows are closed!). If you use one plushie, ask the lucky student a question in English (using vocabulary review if you want, or just something simple they should know). If you use two plushies, you can review a simple dialogue by labeling one A and one B and having the two students stuck with the plushies do the dialogue. Again, Japanese music or American music both work equally well for this! This activity can be drawn out for however long you want to use it and as long as they can keep hitting each other with stuffed animals, they're happy.

## **Lyrics Detective**

Another out-of-their-seats activity, this one has your students hunting down lyrics that you've posted at different places throughout the classroom. There are a few different ways to do this, but one of the easiest is to remove entire lines (2 or 3 at a time) from the song and leave that space empty in the lyrics sheet you give your students. Play the song and have them follow along and find where that lyric section is "hiding" in the classroom.

## **Fill in the Blanks**

Seems like a no-brainer, eh? Maybe not. Bringing in music as a listening warm-up for a class could be disastrous if you aren't careful and don't know your students' abilities well enough. The hardest step in creating a Fill in the Blanks activity is choosing a song, so we've included a list of tried and true recommendations, most of which will cross borders and work in middle school as well as high school with a little tweaking. The Internet is the best place to get your lyrics, but it's very important to make sure you listen to the song and match your lyrics, because if ANYTHING is different, it will throw your students off and frustrate them rather than warm them up to the idea of speaking English. Finally, it might be a good idea to ask your teachers or research what current American songs have been

on TV commercials lately. I found an article in the local newspaper that featured “Sunday Morning” by Maroon 5 and included it with the activity because it had a breakdown of the song in English and Japanese. Supplemental info for the featured song may be helpful to include, especially if you are using it for a test or more than just a warm up.

### **Mixed-up Lyrics**

Depending on your class size, this can take a little time to prepare, but it’s worth it. Take a song and divide it into sections. How many sections depends on several things - how long you want the activity to take, how many times you can handle listening to the song you’ve chosen, and the level of your students. Label sections of lyrics A, B, C, etc (not in order!) and cut the lyrics into strips. Beware of repeating sections! Give choruses all the same letter to avoid confusion. This works well as a pair or small group activity, so give each set of students a paper clipped pile of cut up lyrics.

## music as a test

Yes, it can work! You know your students karaoke on a regular basis, so why not use music to test their English skills? How often can you tell whether someone has an accent when they are singing? Singing words helps you loosen your usual pronunciation habits and trying to impersonate what you hear help, too. It is true of foreigners learning and singing Japanese, so why not your students?

From personal experience, music as a testing method works! At the Technical High School in Kashiwazaki, the students are expected to learn the first minute or 90 seconds of a song in English. We practice (as a warm-up!) together at the beginning of class every week and after 6 weeks or so, the students are sent to the front of the class in groups of 2-4 to sing the song from memory. It’s really effective at teaching new vocabulary, phrases, and slang words. Example? Recently, the students sang Elton John’s “Your Song” and when I told one student he was “funny” he immediately sang “It’s a little bit funny....” solidifying his place as class comedian.

## music as a reward

We all know the draw that music in English holds over our students. They get bouncy at the thought of Britney or BackStreet, ecstatic at the sight of Eminem, and the toughest boys will giggle with glee for Green Day... so why not make them happy?

You know you have MP3s on your computer. We all know you do!!! There is no hiding it. So, why not put them to good use? CD-Rs are cheap, either 1,500 yen by the stack or 2 for 100 yen... it’s up to you... The point? Mix CDs make awesome rewards for your students and all they take is a little of your time and a maximum of 50 yen. So much more cost-effective and fun than buying plastic crap at your local mega department store.

# Japanese music

Chances are you've heard of Morning Musume and SMAP... Kinki Kids and Orange Range... Asian Kung-Fu Generation and Ayumi Hamasaki... but what do you really know about them? Could you identify their songs on the radio? Could you stun your teachers with a flawless performance of 世界に一つだけの花 (Sekai ni Hitotsu dake no Hana)? It's a SMAP smash hit classic that even the local obaasans know.

Your students are happy being introduced to music in English, for sure, but for the times when you just want background noise or you're playing Musical Chairs or Hot Potato, mix it up every now and then. Shock your students by playing a recent Japanese hit and they'll love you for it. If you're clueless when it comes to the difference between JPop and a chorus of cats on the garden wall, ask a teacher who's on the younger side for some suggestions.

What might your students be into right now? The biggest selling single in 2005 was a theme from a J-drama called 野ブタをプロデュース (Nobuta o Produce), sung by the show's two male leads under the names of their characters. Trust us, your students know (and probably love) the song, 青春アミーゴ (Seishun Amigo). There's also Orange Range's 花 (Hana), which was a summer smash, and one of the current anime hits, *Bleach*, features a theme song by High and Mighty Color called 一輪の花 (Ichirin no Hana).

So, using Japanese music in your classroom can make it easier for you to work your way into your students' hearts, but what about your Japanese pals? Your fellow teachers?

At enkai, once you leave the realm of Queen and The Beatles, you've probably left behind any chance that your co-workers have ever heard the song before. Go out on a limb and learn something to sing. The SMAP song mentioned above is a sure hit at any karaoke party (everyone will know it). Check out the extra handout about Japanese music for good suggestions about songs to learn