

Jazz Duet

Parent Guide

Read the “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, children will construct their own instruments, and then play a simple music game.

WHY

This activity will help children to develop careful listening, a skill that is useful in school, at home, and in the creative process of artists.

TIME

- 5-25 minutes, depending on musical instrument (or no instrument at all)

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **Call-and-response:** when one person makes a pattern of sounds, and the next person either repeats the same pattern or changes it just a little
- **Instrument:** a tool used to produce music
- **Rhythm:** a flow of sound in music with a pattern of beats

GET READY

- Read *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*, a beautiful picture-book biography of one of America’s most famous jazz musicians. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/jazz/jazz_reading.pdf).
- Read the Step Back in Time sheets.

YOU NEED

- Materials to create an instrument (*optional*)
- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- Computer with Internet and speakers or headphones

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.

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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.

JAZZ HISTORY

Some people consider jazz as “America’s classical music.” Jazz was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the early 1900s when musicians mixed ragtime, marches, blues, and African American musical traditions. At first jazz was mostly for dancing, but it soon became just as enjoyed for listening.

After the first recordings of jazz were made in 1917, the music spread widely and developed quickly. The growth of jazz was led by brilliant musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis, who helped define new styles of jazz, like swing and bebop. At the same time, jazz spread from the United States to many countries, and today jazz can be heard around the globe.



“Mood Indigo” sheet music composed by Barney Bigard and Duke Ellington. **Duke Ellington Collection, National Museum of American History**

JAZZ MUSIC

There is a lot of variety in jazz, but most jazz is very *syncopated*, has a forward-moving energy called “swing,” and uses “bent” or “blue” notes.

You might listen to a dozen different jazz recordings of the same song, but each will sound different. In most jazz performances, individuals play solos, which they *improvise*. Jazz artists—both vocalists and instrumentalists—also like to perform their music in their own personal styles.



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DUKE ELLINGTON

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899–1974) was an expert in exploring his musical imagination. Duke paid attention to new *musical forms* and used the instruments in his band to create his own style of jazz. As you listen to Duke’s music, pay close attention to some of his signature sounds, such as muted trumpets, high clarinet notes, his unique piano playing, and unusual combinations of instruments. Because of his skills in writing song, leading his band, and performing music, some experts think Duke is America's greatest all-around musician.

For more information, visit the *Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn: Jazz Composers* online exhibition at http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/ellington_strayhorn_1.html.

Improvise: make up on the spot

Musical forms: the overall plans for pieces of music, such as when verses are repeated in songs

Syncopated: rhythm that includes an accent on a normally weak beat in music



Duke Ellington, a native of Washington, D.C., in the 1930s. **Duke Ellington Collection, National Museum of American History Archives Center.**

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This activity is designed for two or more people to play together.

1. (optional) Make one instrument for each person.
 - a. Design and create a drum (most simple)
<http://sparklab.si.edu/spark-experiments-drum.html>
 - b. Make a “Sound Sandwich” (slightly more challenging to create)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOfI-D65iCY>

Tip

These activity instructions were developed by the Lemelson Center for Invention and Innovation at the National Museum of American History. For more fun invention ideas, visit <http://invention.smithsonian.org/resources/>.

2. If you don't have any materials nearby to make an instrument, just use your body as an instrument. Use your hands to clap, or your voice to sing.
3. Now practice a little with your instrument. Find out what different sounds you can make. Can you change the rhythm of your music? Can you change the volume of your music?
4. Next, practice call-and-response in your jazz duo! Call-and-response is when one person makes a pattern of sounds, and the next person either repeats the same pattern or changes it just a little. Think of it like a conversation. Try the rhythms that would go with these words as examples of call-and-response:
 - *Matching rhythms:*
 - A: Who played the Cotton Club?
 - B: Duke played the Cotton Club.



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- *Mostly matching rhythms, but a small change:*

A: Who wrote “Black, Brown, and Beige?”

B: Ellington wrote “Black, Brown, and Beige.”

- *Matching just the first part, then making new rhythms:*

A: I like jazz. Do you like jazz?

B: I like jazz because it zings and sings and dances.

5. What kinds of patterns are easiest to do as call-and-response?

6. Listen to the call-and-response in this recording of “Take the A Train”
(http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/video/jazz/jazz_6.asx).

For more activities about jazz and *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.



Jazz Duet

For Teachers

Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Identify call and response patterns in sounds.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Accurately repeats patterns in sounds.
- Develops creative sound “answers” to teacher “calls.”

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

4B: Obtain historical information.

National Standards for Arts Education (K-4)

Music Standards

- 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.

