

The Ultimate Twinkle Twinkle

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The Ultimate *Twinkle Twinkle*

Sometimes as teachers, we feel that we need an ever-increasing library of material in order to keep our students engaged. In this workshop, we will discover how to take one well-known song and cover all possible musical goals.

I use *Twinkle Twinkle* as part of a larger *Space* unit, where we cover a myriad of activities and songs relating to stars, moon, rocket ships, etc. Each unit begins with a discussion of what songs the students already know that relate to the topic, and a discovery of folk, classical, jazz and popular songs that do as well. I try to incorporate the songs they already know into the overall lesson plan and also to introduce them to those songs “that every child should hear”.

In each unit, I choose one song with which to do all of the activities.

1. Artistic component:

For *Twinkle Twinkle*, we make our own booklet.

2. Creativity:

When you perform a fingerplay, such as *Twinkle Twinkle*, you will find a wide variety of different ways to show each of the parts of the song. Together with the students, I plan out the actions that we are going to do. Later on in the unit as well, they have a chance for creative input with ostinatos and mystery patterns.

3. Language development & phrasing:

One of the key areas of musical focus for *Twinkle Twinkle*, is phrasing. To begin this component, we discover all of the words that rhyme. From there, we create shooting stars.

- a. Instrumentation:

Together with the students, we discover what instruments make a “twinkle” sound. Depending on what’s available, it may be the triangle or any other metal instrument. I like to “lead the students towards” the finger cymbals. Once we have our cymbals, the goal is to keep a steady beat, but on each rhyming word, the cymbal becomes a shooting star.

- b. Small movement:

Using foam stars, I have the children pass the star to a partner on the rhyming word.

- c. Gross motor movement:

Once they can successfully pass the stars at the end of the phrase, we work on movement through space. Here, I use only a handful of the foam

stars. The student with a star is a shooting star, the others stand still. The goal is to move through the stationary students who are in scatter position without bumping into anyone, and to end up in front of someone exactly at the correct time to pass the star on the rhyming word. Once a student has been a shooting star, they sit down. As there are fewer and fewer students standing, it gets more difficult to pass the star at the right time.

d. Movement to music:

It is often a great challenge to get students to move appropriately to the music. I like to find songs with changing themes, such as the Hungarian Dance No. 5, in order to ensure that they are actively listening to the music and changing what they do as the music changes. This skill leads them directly into a dance unit.

For *Twinkle Twinkle*, I use *Twinkle Blues* from *I'm Growing Up* by the New England Dance Masters. This piece has them changing movement between slow and lyrical, and fast and frantic.

4. Form:

If the chosen song lends itself to the activity, at this point I would have them decode the form. Initially I start with shapes and "same or different". Once we have the shape pattern, we assign A, B, C, etc.

5. Solfege and Pitch Assessment:

- a. Whenever I begin the solfege portion of the unit, I start with the body solfege scale. It doesn't really matter where you put the degrees of the scale on your body, as long as you are consistent. This is what I use:

Doh	Toes
Re	Knees
Mi	Thighs
Fa	Hips
Soh	Tummy
La	Shoulders
Ti	Head
Doh	Reaching

How I proceed next depends on how experienced the students are. If they are new to the scale, I would start with a scale song or game, have them

sing the pitches to a neutral sound and maybe stop there. After they have gained confidence with the pitches, I would introduce the solfege syllables, and then finally the Curven hand signs.

You can also include voice play at this point by having them slide through the pitches on an “ooo” or “ahh” following your hands as you go up and down your body. Hopefully, as they move into the higher pitches of the scale, they are also moving into their head voice.

Next we sing the song using the words and/or the solfege syllables while placing our hands on the appropriate spot on our body. For a more advanced class, I would also have them do the song with the Curven hand signs. At this age, I always use the double hand version.

This is the point at which I would do the pitch matching assessment. Before moving on to notation, I usually also do “mystery songs” or random patterns to see if they can follow and sing. If I want them to have creative input at this stage, I would assign only 3 or 4 pitches for them to move through and have the class sing along.

b. Melody notation:

At this age, I have usually introduced them to the staff lines and spaces, without a clef for pitch reference. I use one colour for Doh-Mi-Soh-Doh, and a different colour for the other degrees of the scale.

We discover the placement of the solfege together and follow along while singing the song. At this point as well, I usually also give them random patterns to sing. The random patterns help me assess their audiation.

This is a good opportunity for them to be creative. I give them the guidelines that they have to start and end on Doh, Mi or Soh, and give them a few circles to place on the staff. Everyone has to then sing the creation.

6. Beat and Rhythm:

- a. We started working on beat with the finger cymbals and movement activities, but this is the point where I would begin the assessment. Depending on the experience of the class, I might start with a review of the difference between the beat and the rhythm. We stomp the beat and clap the “words”, and I have them switch between the two with a visual clue.

Next we follow the beat on the hearts. I usually start them with 8, but a more experienced class can do 16. A good way to assess if they are following along correctly is to pick a heart number and have them stop there and tell you which word they sang on that heart. Generally you can also see whether or not they are ending on the correct heart when we finish singing.

- b. After we have worked on the beat, I move on to decoding the rhythm. Using the large hearts, I have them discover how many syllables we sing on each heart. I put the number of syllables first using popsicle sticks and then replace them with proper notation cards. We then clap and say the rhythm.

Since they know the song, it is usually easier to assess their skills by giving them mystery patterns while the large hearts are out. This is another opportunity for creativity. They can make up their own mystery patterns for the class to clap and say.

- c. Ostinato:

Twinkle Twinkle doesn't lend itself particularly well to a melodic ostinato, so for this unit I would do a rhythmic one. Again, depending on the experience of the class, I would give them a 2 or 4 beat ostinato. They could use words, rhythm instruments, or body percussion. I often start with one that I give them, and then encourage them to be creative and come up with their own. Depending on the size of the class, you could divide them into 2 teams for melody and ostinato, or you could have several teams with several ostinatos at the same time, working on their ensemble skills.

7. The final thing I like to do with each unit is to introduce the students to "songs every child should hear", including songs from all time periods and genres. If possible as well, I like to do some music history and some critical listening.

For the star component of this unit, I have chosen 2 activities:

- a. We read the book *How to Catch a Star* by Oliver Jeffers. The backing track I have chosen for this book is the song *Catch a Falling Star*.
- b. For music history, we discuss Mozart. I would play some of his most famous works for the students to hear. For critical listening, we have the *12 variations on Ah vous dirai-je, Maman* KV265. They don't often sit through the entire piece, so I like to choose only a few contrasting ones to focus on. Sometimes we do movement activities to show the differences.

Sometimes I have them create pictures to demonstrate the mood or feeling that each variation evokes. Sometimes we just discuss the features of each variation.

Assessment:

Assessment at this level should be considered primarily as a tool for the teacher to be able to better plan lessons. For example, if you assess keeping a beat, the information will help you to know how much time you need to spend on beat and movement activities. If many of your students are having trouble patting a beat or keeping time to the music, you may want to spend more time on that before moving into pitch matching and repertoire. You might also focus more on keeping the beat to a rhyme or song rather than clapping the rhythm.

I have found that short assessments of a single concept usually gives me a much better idea of how well the students are doing. I try to do some sort of assessment every time I see them, rather than leaving it to the end of a unit. If the class is large, it may take a couple of weeks to get through all of the students. I don't like to single the children out to "perform", so I usually evaluate them as we are going through the various activities. For example:

1. Assess pitch matching with the opening song (2-3 minutes)
2. Assess ability to keep a beat by watching children move or pat to music (2-3 minutes)
3. Assess the ability to clap the words of a chant through observation (2-3 minutes)
4. Assess pitch matching while singing a longer song (7-10 minutes). You may have to go through the song more than once.
5. Assess ability to keep a beat on heart beats
6. Assess ability to match pitch with scale
7. And so on

I have included my checklists for both beat/rhythm and for pitch. With older kids, it is sometimes also useful to see how they feel about their abilities, so I have also included a self-assessment sheet.

Self-Assessment: Matching Pitch

Name: _____

Circle how you think you did:

3

I sang the **whole** song well with the correct pitches

2

I sang **part** of the song well with the correct pitches

1

I need help singing the song well with the correct pitches

Self-Assessment: Matching Pitch

Name: _____

Circle how you think you did:

3

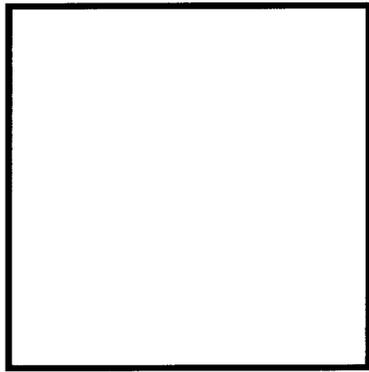
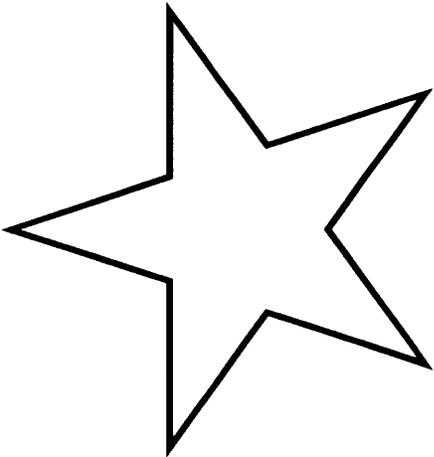
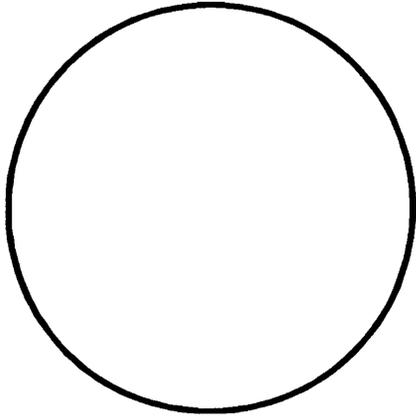
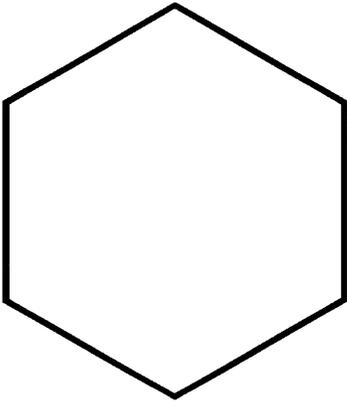
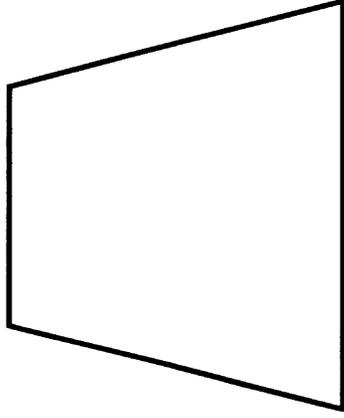
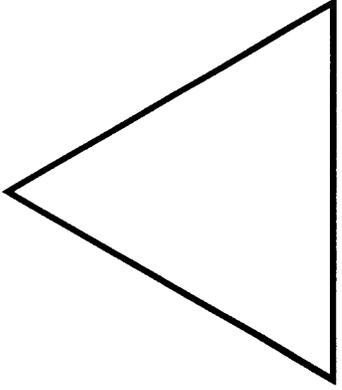
I sang the **whole** song well with the correct pitches

2

I sang **part** of the song well with the correct pitches

1

I need help singing the song well with the correct pitches



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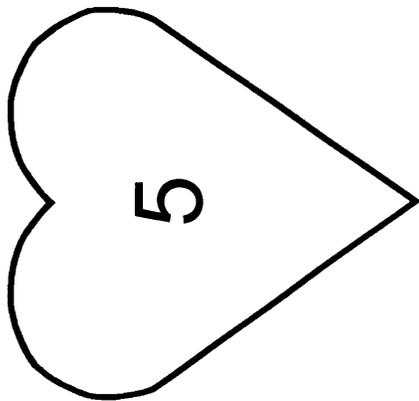
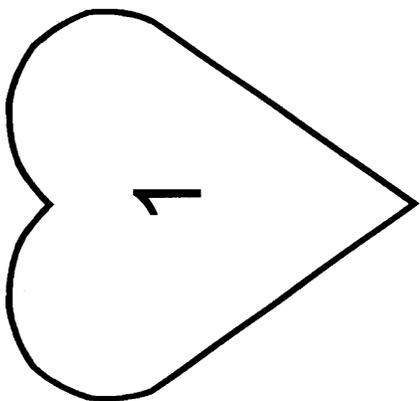
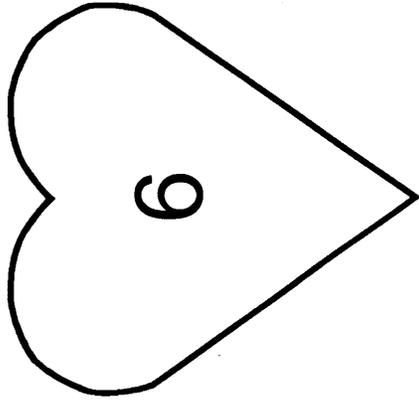
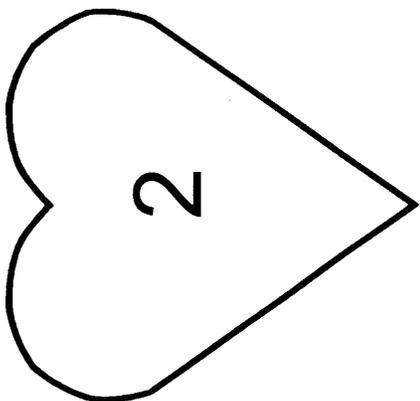
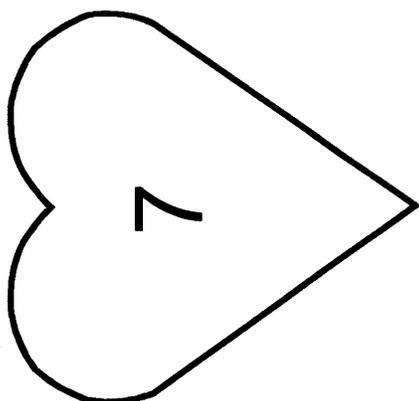
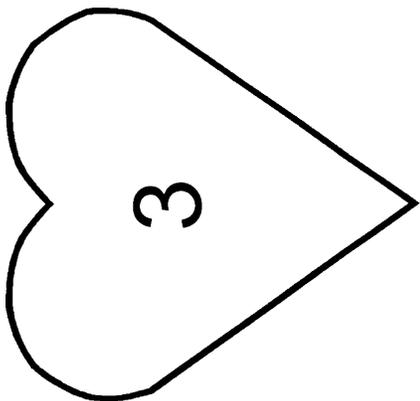
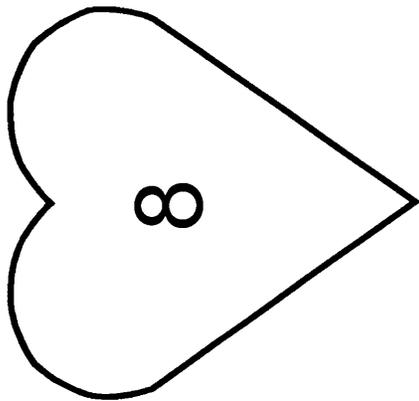
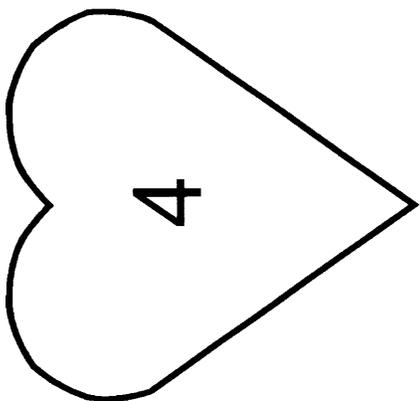
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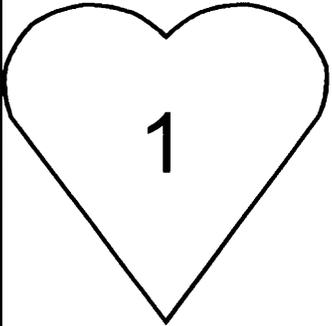
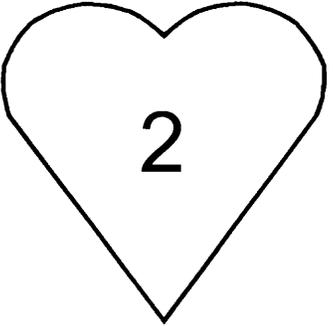
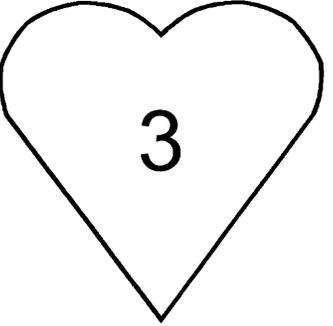
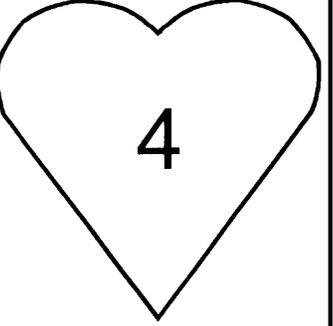
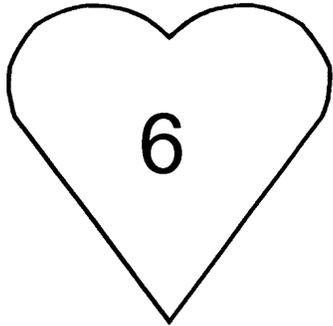
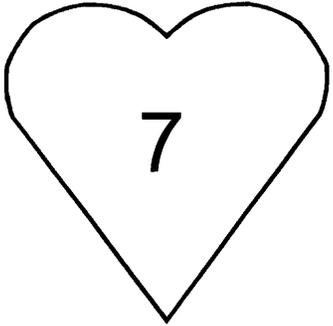
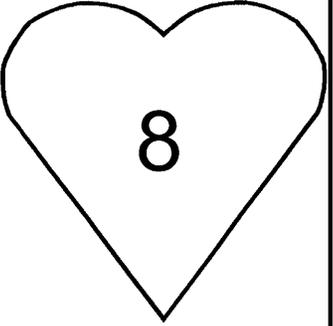
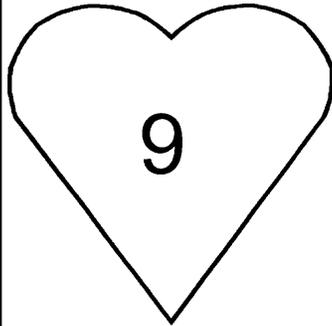
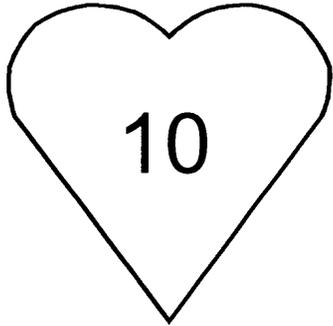
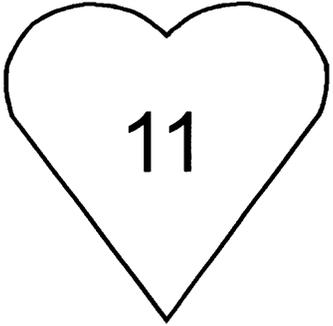
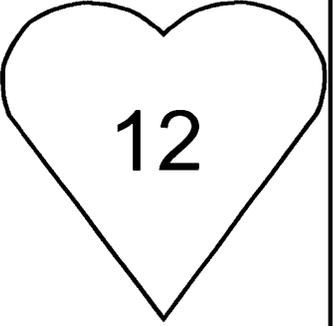
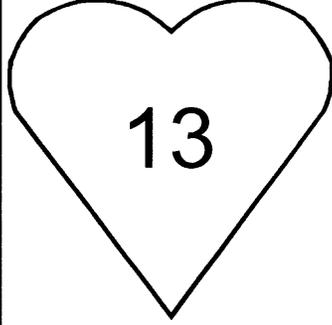
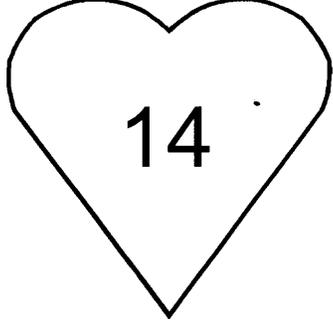
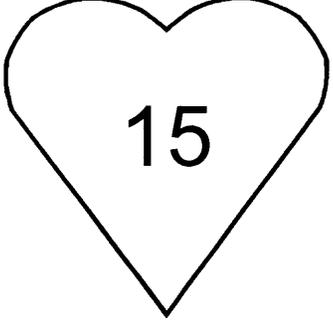
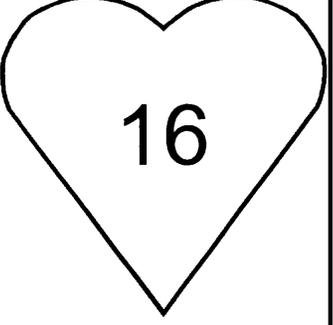
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