

5 Squirrel songs

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

These two contrasting squirrel songs work well alone or, when sung together, offer a satisfying and accessible way into part-singing. The accompanying percussion ostinato has the feel of a quiet, still squirrel, and then a squirrel quickly running up a tree. These are good songs for reinforcing melody shapes and basic sight-singing skills.

Starting

- Start by learning the drum, shaker, and guiro ostinato patterns. Teach them as a body-percussion pattern first (drum = patsch, shaker = clap, guiro = click):

Guiro/click	Z	Z	Z		4/4	
Shaker/clap	Z	Z	Z			
Drum/patsch		Z		Z		

- Start with just the patsching | Z | Z , saying the rhythm syllables (slug, *sh*, slug, *sh*, or ta, *sh*, ta, *sh*).
- Then transfer some children to the drum, eventually inner-hearing the syllables.
- Do the same process with the other two instruments, shaker (*clap*) and guiro (*click*).

Let us chase the squirrel

- Hand sign and sing 1, 2, 1 (doh, ray, doh), then sing 'up the hickory tree' while hand signing.
- Sing the song to your group, asking them to listen carefully and see if they can join in when they hear 'up the hickory tree'. Try this a couple of times, then sing the whole song together.

Hop old squirrel

- Hand sign and sing 3, 3, 3 (me, me, me), then sing 'hop old squirrel' while hand signing.
- Sing the song to the group, and invite them (with an open hand) to join in with this line; do this several times, gradually adding the 'eidledum's.

Teaching and rehearsing

- When the songs can be sung confidently, add the percussion parts. Wait until the group can sing the song while doing each pattern before adding the next one. This will probably need to be done over several sessions.

Listen out

- Make sure the group is making a really nice singing sound throughout the songs.
- Try to breathe after each two-bar phrase; this should give enough breath to keep each phrase smooth.
- Watch out for the two-note slur on 'squirrel'; keep it smooth and connected, without punching the last note of the phrase.

Performing

- My arrangement of these songs is a suggestion and not definitive, so feel free to adapt it to the needs of your group. There are lots of elements to work with. Try exploring dynamics (how loudly or quietly they sing) and tempo (how fast or slow they sing). Put the various parts of the arrangement in any order, letting your group decide which to include for each performance.
- Use the instruments you have to hand and experiment with the timbre. What does a scurrying squirrel sound like?

5 Squirrel songs

Let us chase the squirrel

Trad. American
arr. Jo McNally

Guero
Shaker
Drum

Voice

Piano

Let us chase the squir - rel,

4

up the hick-ory, down the hick-ory, let us chase the squir - rel, up the hick-ory tree.

Continues overleaf

Hop old squirrel

7

Hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum,

10

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee.

Both songs together

13

Part 1
Hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum,

Part 2
Let us chase the squir - rel,

16

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee,
up the hick-ory, down the hick-ory, let us chase the squir - rel, up the hick-ory tree,

19

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum.
up the hick-ory tree.

9 Warm up and Stomp canon

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

I wanted a way to begin warming up the voice and body without resorting to 'traditional' warm ups that may not be so suitable for young singers. So, I came up with this, in two parts—a stretching warm up with varying vocal qualities, and a very simple movement canon. When done together, they not only reinforce group listening skills but also maintain a strong steady pulse. This is an enjoyable, useful piece that can be used effectively with almost all age groups.

Starting

- Before you start to teach this piece, listen to the CD to get a feel for the fun voices.

Teaching and rehearsing

Warm up

- Teach this by rote, using the different vocal qualities (cowboy, posh, whisper, nasal) and doing the actions. Remember, changing the vocal qualities exercises the vocal folds.

Stomp Canon

- The easiest way to teach this is to gradually add each new activity so the piece becomes longer and longer:
 1. Count to eight in a steady pulse.
 2. Count to eight, then march/stomp for eight.
 3. Count to eight, march/stomp for eight, patsch for eight.
 4. Count to eight, march/stomp for eight, patsch for eight, clap for eight.
 5. Count to eight, march/stomp for eight, patsch for eight, clap for eight, click for eight.
 6. All the above and then a turn. There should be one turn taking eight counts to complete.
 7. All the above, then seven 'oo' (monkey) sounds and one loud 'yeah!' The 'oo' sounds should be loud and accompanied by jumping. This will need to be practised several times, and on the final 'yeah!' everyone should freeze with hands high.
- Once the piece is learnt, try doing it as a round. The second group begins after the first has finished counting.

Ideas

- The piano part is meant only to keep the pulse, so feel free to adapt it as you like; anything that keeps a steady beat will be fine.
- Try doing a 'bouncy' (bend knees) not just for the marching but while patsching, clapping, and clicking too. This will help to keep the pulse steady.
- Do just the movements (no vocals) to your favourite CD!
- The 'Warm up' can also be sung in a round, beginning after four bars. For older singers, try starting after two bars!

Listen out

- Take care over the nasal 'ee' sounds, and try to access a 'head voice' rather than produce a pinched and constricted sound. Keep the pitch within the spoken range—think wicked witch sounds!
- When stomping, the tendency will be for some of your group to jump or stomp so hard that they cannot keep a steady pulse. If this happens, or if you think it might happen, call it marching; this should keep things under control.
- The turn can be a bit silly, so you might want to try this with the group before adding the other elements. There will always be at least one child who will try to turn eight times!

Performing

- The first time this piece was performed it was done over two evenings by almost 1,000 singers. We used it as the opening piece for a concert, done first in unison and then in four parts. Not only was it a great way to settle in the singers and warm them up, but, as it's visually fun, it relaxed the audience and prepared everyone for the evening. Sometimes I even repeat it as a closing piece and get the audience to join in! Again, this is a piece to consider using for your entire school as a good way to start an assembly and get those voices working before moving on to other group songs. Also, by starting with this your group will get rid of some of the fidgets and nervous energy all age groups can have.

9 Warm up and Stomp canon

Words and music by
Jo McNally

Warm up

With attitude ♩ = 120

Shoulders up, down, forward, back ...

mf (Cowboy voice)

... and an up and a down and a

4

(*)

for-ward and a back and an up and a down and a for-ward and a back and a -

(*)

Circle shoulders ...

(Posh voice)

Flick hands left, right ...

p (Whisper)

- round, and a-round. This way, _ and that way, _ and

10

Touch knees ...

this way, _ and that way, touch your knees, touch your knees.

13 *Make 'evil' fingers!*
mf (Nasal voice)

ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee

17 *Swing arms like skiing*
 (Loud air sound)

sh sh sh sh

Stomp canon

21 *f*

1.-6.	*	last time	Hands held high
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1. Count 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 oo oo oo Yeah!

2. Stomp x8

3. Patsch x8

4. Clap x8

5. Click x8

6. Turn (over 8 counts)

7. Jump and say 'oo' x7

14 Great big house

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

This is a fun and rhythmically active song which encourages solo singing with confidence. The tune is catchy, with a repetitive melodic pattern. When combined with the 'Simple Simon' rhyme and the pie ostinato it's a charming yet useful piece.

Starting

- Think of types of pies. Start with pies of the traditional sort, such as fruit pies, and see how many your group can name. Don't be surprised if they suggest some unusual ingredients. My group's suggestions varied from mud pies to nose-with-toes pies, favourite football teams, and some other 'icky' non-food items best left to the imagination!
- Next learn the poem 'Simple Simon'. At the end of the poem ask two to four students to say the name of their favourite pie with the rest of the group echoing the pie name. The echoing keeps everyone involved and 'on task' and this can be done freely without worrying about keeping a steady pulse. If a student is unwilling to participate at this point, just move on to the next one.
- Repeat the poem until everyone has had a turn with a type of pie. It doesn't matter if students choose the same pie. You are trying to encourage working in an ensemble, taking turns, and extending concentration time.
- Introduce the song by echo-singing unaccompanied. With each repetition, change the type of pie.

Teaching and rehearsing

- The goal with each repetition is for a different student to sing the final phrase 'filled with _____ pie' by themselves. This can be as simple as just filling in the type of pie, or singing the entire phrase.
- The trick is to keep the flow of singing without having to stop between verses to choose a new solo singer. So, while singing the first part of the song point to a student and give them the 'thumbs up' sign. If they are willing to sing the final line they will give you the 'thumbs up' sign back and sing. If not, they will give you the 'thumbs down', and you can find another willing singer.
- Continually vary the starting pitch to whatever is comfortable for you, then after several repetitions change the starting pitch up or down. This is best done when the song is unaccompanied.

Listen out

- Don't put pressure on yourself or your group. They will become more comfortable singing by themselves in their own time. It's a matter of gentle encouragement and persistence.
- Don't be too picky about matching pitch the first few times you sing this song. I find that often the group will match quite well, and then the pitch will waver when individuals sing. If you are finding this is a problem, try an energetic 'washing windows' (contrary hand circles) movement on the final phrase, as this will help support the tone. Also, check posture!

Ideas

- Change the town name to your own: 'Great big house in Hil - ling - don/Pa - ris, France/near Swake - leys School'.
- Create your own pie ostinato.
- Try some first steps in simple two-part work.
 - Divide your group in two, and do the song and the 'Simple Simon' rhyme together.
 - Try 'Simple Simon' in canon, starting at *.
 - Try the pie ostinato (repeated) with the poem.

Performing

Combine the various elements:

- Start with the pie ostinato twice.
- Now read the poem expressively, with clear diction.
- Next sing the song, with or without solos; four verses work well.
- Repeat the pie ostinato twice.
- End with the poem, repeating the final phrase 'let me taste your wares' several times, gradually getting quieter until the final phrase is whispered, then stop.

14 Great big house

D A7

Great big house in New Or - leans for - ty stor - ies high_____

3 D A D

Ev - 'ry room that I've been in filled with pump - kin pie. (clap)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass) with a grand staff clef. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A5, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Great big house in New Or - leans for - ty stor - ies high_____'. The second system starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Ev - 'ry room that I've been in filled with pump - kin pie. (clap)'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass) with a grand staff clef. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A5, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Great big house in New Or - leans for - ty stor - ies high_____'. The second system starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Ev - 'ry room that I've been in filled with pump - kin pie. (clap)'.

Poem

4/4

Sim - ple Si - mon met a pie - man go - ing to the fair, Says

Sim - ple Si - mon to the pie - man 'let me taste your wares'.

The poem is written in 4/4 time. The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Sim - ple Si - mon met a pie - man go - ing to the fair, Says'. The second system starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Sim - ple Si - mon to the pie - man 'let me taste your wares''. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Sim - ple Si - mon met a pie - man go - ing to the fair, Says'. The second system starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Sim - ple Si - mon to the pie - man 'let me taste your wares''.

Pie ostinato

4/4

Fudge pie, ap - ple pie, cher - ry pie, yum!

The pie ostinato is written in 4/4 time. The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Fudge pie, ap - ple pie, cher - ry pie, yum!'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. The melody is on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the melody. The melody starts on a D4 note and goes up stepwise to A4, then down to G4. The lyrics are 'Fudge pie, ap - ple pie, cher - ry pie, yum!'.

20 Sweep away

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

'Sweep away', or 'The turtle will talk it seems', is a North American folk song about dreams. In some cultures, the turtle represents the planet earth and being aware of all the things around us. If you watch them, turtles seem to look at everything. They don't appear to make a lot of sound (actually, some do, from hissing, guiro-type sounds to squawking, but the perception is that they don't); they open their mouths, but we don't often hear what they have to say. This song has a beautiful tune, with lovely stretched phrases alternating with a gentle percussion 'turtle/secret conversation'. The addition of a simple descant, sandblocks, and a rainstick make this piece thoughtful and atmospheric, and the 'conversation' can be a great start for developing the imagination and extending listening skills.

Teaching and rehearsing

- If you can, start with the piano accompaniment (or play the recording). Have your group close their eyes and listen to the music. Ask them how it makes them feel. What does it sound like? Sad, happy, playful, sleepy, awake? Try this a couple of times, keeping the group calm and focused.
- With your group echoing, speak the poem quietly in rhythm. What might a turtle say? It might be a secret. What kind of a secret?
- Say the poem together, whispering, but in rhythm.
- Introduce the tune, and sing it all the way through first before echoing by phrase. The suggested breathing places are marked with a ✓. There is one optional breath where the phrase may initially be too long, but it's something to work towards.
- Add the 'turtle/secret conversation' next. This is like talking in a secret code which is completely improvised, using body percussion. Don't try to make this a rhythmic exercise. At first you ask the questions, and they make up an answer. Explore all the sounds palms together can make—clapping quietly, sliding, long slides, rhythmic slides, etc.—but reinforce that these are quiet sounds. The freer form will feel more magical (and promote listening skills). I've included a rhythmic percussion bridge for these 'conversations' which works well as a transition between the secret conversations and repeat of the tune.

Ideas

- When you're ready, transfer the 'conversation' to percussion instruments. Sandblocks have a quiet, crisp sound and almost a whisper quality. If you don't have sandblocks, use palms of hands sliding across each other.
- Try xylophones or metalophones. You could start by using only one note for each 'speaker', and then work up to a pentatonic scale or even a full octave as they become more accustomed to having 'musical conversations'. Gradually add more sound options—not too many at first.

Listen out

- This is a great opportunity to reinforce expressive speech. When saying the poem, explore whispering. A quiet and true whisper can be heard only by someone nearby, but a stage whisper can be heard throughout a room, especially when there is clear diction. Try both. Also, speaking in unison is a skill, and if not done carefully can sound monotone and unexpressive.
- When singing, keep the style legato and smooth. As this tune is quite challenging, with more than an octave range, take the time to work on each phrase carefully and quietly. Quiet singing will help your group to begin listening to one another and reinforce matching pitch.

Performing

This works well as a performance piece. There are several options:

- Just sing the song, adding the sandblocks and descant on the repeat.
- To extend a performance:
 - Start with a rainstick.
 - Add the poem, whispered.
 - Sing the song with the optional descant.
 - Add a 'conversation'.
 - Repeat the song, and end with just the rainstick.

20 Sweep away

Trad. American
arr. Jo McNally

Gently ♩ = 96

p *pp*

con Ped.

5 *p*

Sweep, sweep, sweep a - way, Sweep the road of dreams. Peo-ple say that in the

10

night, The tur-tle will talk it seems, The tur-tle will talk it seems.

Riffs

Descant recorder

Sandblocks

'Secret conversation' bridge

(play very quietly)

Sandblocks

Guiro

23 White banana (Barbados)

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

This is a wonderful and lively song from Barbados with a Caribbean beat. There are two versions here: one with guitar and optional percussion, and the other an extended arrangement with piano and percussion. This song is fun to sing, perhaps at the end of the week, and it really gets the body feeling and moving with the music.

Starting

- There are two ways to approach this song: either speak the text rhythmically or just dive into the melody. Either will work, so long as the approach has energy and 'attitude'.
- Start with the first four bars. Say or sing the words to your group in rhythm, including a clap at the *. Putting a movement in these rests will help to keep this rhythm accurate.
- Keep the diction crisp, clean, and with plenty of 'attitude'.
- Now sing the phrase with the group echoing each bar, and then sing the whole phrase together.
- Follow the same process with each four-bar phrase.

Percussion

- There are two percussion accompaniments for this song, both using the same instruments. The first, used in the arrangement, is the most suitable for this age group, while the second is more complex. Both are based on keeping a steady pulse. Don't try to add all the instruments in your first session!
- When using the first set of parts, count the four beats 1, 2, 3, 4, then gradually add the instruments. Pat alternate knees with the maracas, and have your conga and cowbell/clave players say 'sh' with hands apart in the rests.
- Think of the percussion parts as belonging to a selection of repertoire patterns that can then be used to accompany other songs. Once a pattern (rhythmic or melodic) is learned, re-using it will help your group to develop aural memory and can lead to developing music-reading skills.

Ideas

- If you are comfortable with playing guitar or piano, try beginning with the accompaniment. This should be lively and happy, and let the group move to the music. To keep your singers listening and focused, get them to 'freeze' when the music stops. Do this several times as a game.
- Vary how your group moves. The main rule is that no one touches anyone else!
 - Sitting down, move a specific body part (head, shoulders, arms, face, etc.).
 - Standing, move anything except the feet (keeping balance could be a challenge).
 - Standing, move everything, but stay in place.
 - Move to the music around the room, not touching anyone else and keeping the space 'looking full'. This keeps the children focused not only on their own movement but on the spacing of the group, so that everyone is moving safely.
- This would be a great piece to come back to in future years, for developing sight-singing and rhythm-reading skills.

Performing

Both versions work well as performance pieces, but the best thing about all the songs in this section is that they can be sung anywhere. Always try to include singing as part of your day. It doesn't always have to be beautiful, but it should be natural and joyous.

- Sing the song with guitar and add any or all of percussion set 1.
- The arrangement starts with a percussion introduction, the instruments added gradually until a pattern is built up. Sing the song accompanied by percussion set 1 (shown in the score), or set 2 if your group is more able.
- The ending reverses the introduction, gradually taking out the percussion as the repeated last phrase is sung more quietly each time until the final whisper.

23 White banana (Barbados)

Trad. Barbados

Happily ♩ = 75

Three white hor - ses in the sta - ble, Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row.

Off to-mor-row is a break - up day, Come a - long with your shal - low plate,

shal - low plate 'tis a white ba-na - na, Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row.

Percussion

arrangement overleaf

Set 1

Maracas

Conga

Cowbell/
Clave

Set 2

23 White banana (Barbados)

Happily ♩ = 75

Trad. Barbados

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The top three staves are for percussion: Maracas, Conga, and Cowbell. The Maracas staff begins with a *mf* dynamic and a series of eighth notes. The Conga and Cowbell staves have rests for the first two measures, then enter with eighth notes in the third measure, also marked *mf*. The Voice and Piano staves are empty for the first four measures. The score then continues with a fifth system, indicated by a bracket and the number 5. This system contains four measures. The Maracas, Conga, and Cowbell staves continue their rhythmic patterns. The Voice staff remains empty. The Piano staff enters in the third measure with a melody marked *mf*, consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth measure in the fifth system.

9

mf

Three white hor - ses in the sta - ble, Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row.

13

Off to-mor-row is a break - up day, Come a-long with your shal - low plate,

17

shal - low plate 'tis a white ba-na - na, Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row.

21

Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row, Hey, hey we go off to-mor-row,

25

mp *pp*

mp *pp*

mp

mp *pp*

Hey, hey_ we go off to-mor - row, Hey, hey_ we go

28

(whisper)

off to-mor - row. Off to-mor - row.

31 BA bay

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

'BA bay' is a great alphabet song and a real tongue-twister! Each verse uses all the vowel sounds and the sounds or words they make when combined with consonants. It's great fun and good alphabet practice, and gives a good work-out for the lips, teeth, and tongue, although it's pretty silly and some of the combinations turn into strange-sounding words, so be careful!

Starting

- Make sure you can sing this song confidently before teaching it—it's very important with this one! The tongue-twister aspect is quite challenging, so have a few consonants you're comfortable with for the first few times you sing the song. B, C, D, H, M, and Z are good starters; T, X, and W aren't! Be careful with the letters F, G, P, and T as the words could surprise you. Try them outside the classroom first.

Teaching and rehearsing

- This is another song to teach by rote—sing it to the group and have them echo bar by bar. Especially with this song, the repetition gets the sounds into their ears and reinforces listening skills.
- Take your time and sing each verse a couple of times; enjoy the 'taste' of the sounds.

Ideas

- Once you have introduced the song to your group, let them choose which consonant to use next.
- I use this song for just about any age group. The older the group, the more consonants you can use, until you're ready for the 'alphabet marathon'—yes, trying to get through all the consonants in one session! By this time the group should know the song really well and be able to sing without repeating each line.

Listen out

- Young singers will probably find it difficult to choose only the consonants, so be patient. No matter how you reinforce this—and even if you stress that all the vowels are already contained in the song—someone will always choose A, E, I, O, or U!
- As your group becomes more familiar with the song, they will begin to hear and identify that some of the sound combinations make words: b + a = bay, m + a = may, for example.

31 BA bay

Trad.

C

B A bay B E bee B I bit - ty by
C A say C E see C I ci - ty sy

4 G7 C F C G7 C

B O bo bit - ty by bo B U boo bit - ty by bo boo.
C O so ci - ty sy so C U soo ci - ty sy so soo.