

## **Play your Pitch Pipe, Your “Chromatic Pitch Instrument”.**

### **Listen and match a note – a pitch – with your chromatic “pitch pipe”**

Use a good sounding brand,  
such as The Master Key, A-440, 13 keys, C to C.  
Write your name in permanent marker  
on your own personal pitch pipe.  
It's like your own personal toothbrush,  
for your mouth only.  
Write your name also on the outside case.  
Keep the case and the pitch pipe together.  
Return to pipe to its case to keep it safe and clean.

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**Play C on your pitch pipe. Choose the C closer to D. Blow gently so the note – the pitch - is pure. Sing that same note, C.**

Sing “Happy Birthday” starting on C, with the song words.

Then sing just the first phrase, “Happy birthday to you”, which has six notes for the six syllables.

Then, starting with C, sing the **letter names** of those six notes of the first phrase of “Happy Birthday”: C CD C F E. Repeat until it's easy. Do it eyes closed. You're in the key of F. Now play it on your pitch pipe! Notice that C –D –E – is the “going up” direction on the pitch pipe.

Then add the second phrase. C CD C G F. Repeat 'til easy. Eyes closed. Play on pitch pipe.

Work on the third phrase C CC' A F E D, then the last phrase Bb BbA F G F. Eyes closed. Pitch pipe.

Then sing the whole song with the letter names:

C CD C F E, C CD C G F, C CC' A F E D, Bb BbA F G F. You end on F, in the key of F.

Now you can play all of “Happy Birthday” on your pitch pipe!

Blow very gently into each hole so the actual note sounded will be true to pitch and sound good (rather than bent from blowing hard). This may take some trial and error.

Then play “Happy Birthday” on your piano! The B-Flat is a special note, a black key, played twice in a row like the C's.

Try more songs. Sing the words, sing the note letter names, play them on the pitch pipe.

Try “Hot Cross Buns” (E-D-C), “Mary had a Little Lamb” (EDCDEEE), “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” (CCGGAAG), any tune within one octave of 8 scale notes, or 13 chromatic notes, will fit on your chromatic C to C pitch pipe.

Try to match any sounds you hear with the same pitch pipe sound. Find the pitch pipe letter name of that note. Bird song, insect sounds, dog howls, cat meows, sighs, laughs, sneezes, hiccoughs, door bells, train whistles, sirens, car horns, computer beeps, appliance hums, any note you hear. Most sounds have a note - a specific pitch - or sometimes many notes. Sing the note you hear in any sound. The wind can whistle. Raindrops ring notes in surfaces they hit. Goblets ring notes from their shape and amount of liquid.

Look at the two holes in your pitch pipe with the letter C. Choose the C closer to D, "Middle C" on the piano. Imagine what the note sounds like. Sing the note you imagine. Blow the note. Was it the same? Then you sang C.

If you sang a different note, find out what note you actually sang by blowing other notes until you find the one you sang. Maybe it was a note below: B. Or below that: B-Flat (A-Sharp). Maybe it was the note above, C-Sharp (D-Flat), or G above, or A. Where was it? Try again. And again.

You can develop a sense of pitch. Little children can learn what C sounds like the way they learn what red looks like. Use of the pitch pipe can enhance study of other musical instruments, and even come first, to encourage awareness of musical pitch.

Ask student families to do all this while they're in the pre-lesson preparation stage of daily home listening to their Suzuki recordings, and observing the individual lesson group lessons.

There are many ways you can use your pitch pipe to learn more about musical pitches.

You can try every day to sing middle C, then check your note on the pitch pipe. Sing it eyes closed and notice how it feels in your throat and chest. Notice where it is in your own personal range of singing. Is it the lowest note you can sing? The highest? Next to the lowest? In the middle?

Carry your pitch pipe around with you to be able use it anytime you hear a sound.

I started doing this my freshman year at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music from the instruction of my professor of sight singing and ear training, Mr. Dean Nurenberger. He asked us to use our pitch pipes as we walked around in our day. This was in 1966. Mr. Nurenberger also directed the Collegium Musicum choir, which I joined to sing early music.

Mr. Nurenberger taught us to say special words for evenly dividing the beat. The number of notes per beat would require the same number of syllables. We put the accent on the first syllable, like a downbeat, with all the syllables evenly spaced in time.

Mr. Nurenberger said "cinnamon in it" for five notes to a beat. From one note per beat to eight notes per beat, I say, "blue, yellow, pineapple, watermelon, cinnamon in it, honeydew cantaloupe, drink your pina colada, running jumping laughing dancing". You can find other words too, like "mango" for two notes per beat. You need each word or phrase to naturally have the accent - the stress - on the **first** syllable.

What to say for 9 notes to a beat? "Galloping horses and buffalos". 10? "Mister Vanderhosen Hagenmeir". For 12, add "Junior". For 11? YOUR royal highness coming in going out!

My teacher Mr. Nurenberger was funny and fun, I thought saying "cinnamon in it" was fun, and I still think my pitch pipe is fun. \* \* \* \* \*

(See related articles, "Sing for Your Baby", "Call Back when you're humming all of Book One", "The Suzuki Circle around the Suzuki Triangle", "One Child, One Parent, One Teacher: Bad Environment", and "Lesson Buddies", about the essential support group for the Suzuki Triangle of Parent-Child-Teacher created when Suzuki families are together to watch each other's weekly individual lessons).