

Song Dotting

Song Dots are made by tapping the rhythm of a pattern or a whole song with chalk or a marker, leaving a visual record of this movement. Each dot represents a single, unitary sound. The idea is to, move to, hear, and document the individual sounds of a song or segment of a song.

For example, using the song, *Are You Sleeping* (Sing and follow the dots)



Purpose of Song Dotting

- To build on students abilities to hear and move to individual sounds in music.
- To provide a means of writing down what one hears that combines auditory, kinesthetic, and visual modes
- To provide a first step toward notating music in a formal way
- To let students notate the individual sounds of a pattern simultaneously with performance of the pattern. [Video](#)

Preparing Students for Song Dotting

Activity I: When a song is well known to your students:

Teacher:

- “Let’s sing the song and tap the rhythm of the song on our knees.”
- “This time let’s put the rhythm on our elbow.”
- “Anna, where should we put the rhythm this time?” (Tap on the floor)
- “Anna, please select another person who will tell us how to move for our next singing of the song.” (George who chooses to jog the rhythm in the feet.)
- These activities can continue for as long as interest and time permit.

Activity II: (Again the song is well known to the students.)

- “What song does this sound like?” The teacher taps the rhythm of the song on the board with a capped marker.
- Students guess.
- Class sings the suggested song. The teacher re-taps the original song while the students sing the suggested song in their heads (in [their inner hearing](#)). They determine whether or not the suggested song matches the song the teacher tapped.
- Other suggestions are offered and checked until the class agrees on the song the teacher originally tapped.

Game: Guess the Syllable

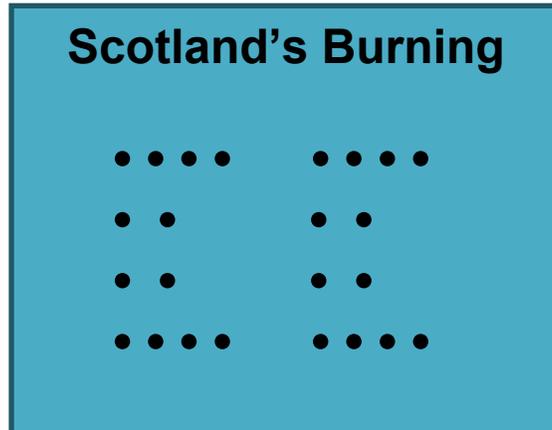
Teacher:

- “I will tap the song and stop on one of the sounds (syllables). Can you guess on which syllable I stop?” Teacher taps and John suggests a word on which she stopped.
- “Let’s check it out.” Teacher sings the song and stops on the word previously stopped on.
- “John you guessed correctly the word on which I stopped? Would you like a turn in leading the game?” If he chooses to lead, John will come to the board, tap the song and stop on one of the syllables. He will then call on classmates to guess the last word that was tapped. The person who guesses correctly will have the next turn.

Two people can make a game of this activity. [Video](#)

Song Dotting with Your Students

Activity I: When a song is well known to the students and they have had opportunities to coordinate moving with the rhythm of the song, (using the song *Scotland's Burning* for example) write the following on the board:



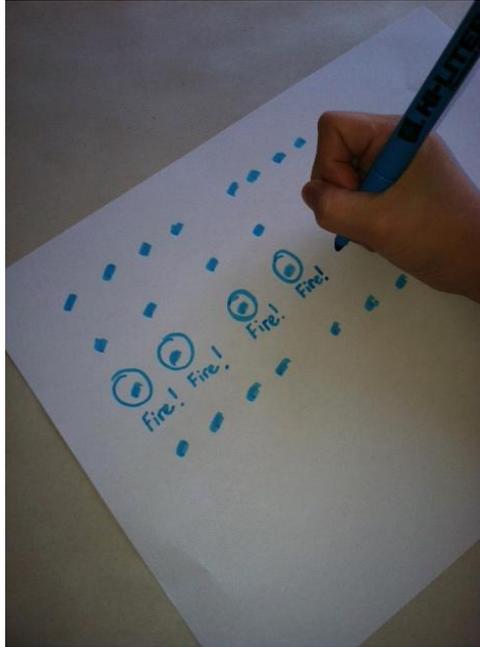
Teacher: “This says that this series of dots is *Scotland's Burning*. How can that be?” Let students come to the board to explain their understanding of what the dots mean. Depending on the age of the students and their experience, it could take many tries and much discussion before the student come up with the idea that each dot represents one syllable of the song. For as long as time permits, let the students contemplate, experiment, and discuss these dots. [Video](#)

Activity II: (Materials needed – a blank sheet of paper and a marker)

- Let's sing our song (or a chunk of the song) and tap the rhythm, the syllables of each word, in the palm of our hand. Students tap and sing.
- “Listen to the song in your inner hearing as you tap the song (or chunk) in the palm of your hand.” Students listen and tap on various parts of the body.
- “With your finger, tap the words (rhythm) across your paper going from left to right.”
- “Pick up your marker, leaving the cap on. Let's tap the rhythm with our capped marker, moving from left to right.”
- “Take the cap off your marker and make a mark for each tap of the song.”
- “Put the cap on your marker, sing the song and check that you have a dot for every syllable of the song.” [Video](#)

Using Song Dotting in Education

- Students can find the dot/s that represent certain words, or phrases of the song. For example, using the song *Scotland's Burning*, the students might find the dots that represent the words "fire", circle them then write the word beneath the dot or draw a picture of fire.



- Song dots can be made into note heads. Stems and flags can be added to the note heads to make a formal representation of the musical sound. [Video](#)

Notice that at some point, the teacher may choose to sing the song on a neutral syllable ([Chinning](#) the song). Doing this takes away interference of sounds or meaning of words and allows learners to hear more clearly durations of sound in the music. [Video](#)

When learning to play instruments, the song dotting idea can set the stage for students to learn about, perform, and practice certain techniques.

[Video](#) (Recorder, tonguing)

[Video](#) (Violin, bowing)

Bibliography

Bennett P. D. & Bartholomew, D.R. (1997). *SongWorks I: singing in the education of children*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Winter, M. (1999). *Recorder EdVentures: teaching recorder in the classroom*. Butte, Montana: Winter.