

50 Ways To Use Songs and Music In The English Language Classroom



TEACHING RESOURCES

“Without music, life would be a mistake.” – Fredrich Nietzsche

“Music makes the world go ‘round” but it also makes learning happen. Please see my presentation on this topic, for all the reasons why. [The Top 10 Reasons To Use Music In The EFL Classroom.](#)

MUSIC

Here are some of the best ways to use music in your teaching, each with a nice resource or example found online or ELT Buzz Teaching Resources.

1. Listening Cloze. I’m starting here because it is the “go to” activity for teachers. Grab the lyrics, make a worksheet with words missing and have students listen and fill in. For lower level students add a wordbank to help them listen. [Find 100s of pre-made ones.](#)

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2. Line Ordering. Simple and elegant. Get a simple song, cut the lines up (or have students do it) and then have them listen repeatedly while putting them in order.

[Listen To It.](#)

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3. Rewrite the lyrics. This is probably the favorite music lesson I’ve done. Simply find a catchy chorus in a song (be careful of [earworms!](#)) and then have the students rewrite the chorus and make it their own. [Example here.](#)

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4. Try some chanting. Chants are strong language learning activities. Repetitive, catchy, they get students involved and are especially helpful for lower level learners. [Here is my fav. chant.](#)

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5. As a class calmer. Research suggests that students perform tasks where concentration is required, better with music playing in the background. When testing or students are writing or reading, play some soft background music. Here's my go to - **Play it.**

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6. As the whole enchillada. Don't think of a song as just an add on or part of a lesson. It can be the whole thing. Build activities around the language in a song. Always more than enough for a full lesson! Here's what I did with one song. **View it.**

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7. Engagement. This should probably be first on the list, a popular way to use a song and introduce a lesson - as a hook. It's all about finding the right song for what you are teaching. How about this one to introduce a grammar class studying the second conditional? **Listen To It.**

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8. Students make a doodle video. It's easy to do and read about it **here.** Students each make a picture for one line of a song. Put them together and then make a movie. Inspiring for all students and great for team building. **View It.**

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9. Class Timer. Playing a song or part of a song is a great way to indicate a set amount of time for the class. Think Jeopardy's "Thinking song" or **this all-time favorite.**

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10. Jazz things up. Carolyn Graham's "Jazz Chants" are perfect for any class, young or old. The repetition, rhythm and simplicity of them make any lesson very effective. **Find out how.**

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11. Teach Pronunciation. Music relaxes students and take the "strain" off of this very personal activity. Use a silly song and try to get your students lips around it. **View It.**

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12. Retell A Story. There are many songs that are "stories". Have students listen to one a few times while making notes. Then ask them to retell the story as told by the singer. Here is my all time favorite. **Listen To It.**

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13. Motivation. Use the role models of students to motivate them. In every country around the world there are "Second language singers". Stars who sing in both their own language and English. Use their English songs to motivate your students. **The best second language singers workbook.**



14. Teach Grammar. The right song can be a powerful way to teach a grammar point and for students to learn grammar in a fun, creative, useful way. **Try this song**

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15. Create class atmosphere. Songs and music are socially loaded and bring people together in a powerful way. I've used this song countless times to make classroom togetherness but there are many other songs that do the same. **We Are Family.**

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16. Vocabulary building . Songs are full of great vocabulary that student will pick up naturally in song. A simple activity is to write some vocabulary on the board. Some in the song, some not. Students copy, listen, circle the vocabulary they hear. **An example**

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17. Dialogue role playing. Duets are great and really kind of mimic real communication and sometimes discourse. Find a duet and have students in groups or pairs sing it!

Listen To it.

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18. As a classroom management technique. I'm not big on using "punishments" in class but I used to have a problem with cell phones. I set a rule that if one went off in class, the student had to stand up and sing a song in English for the class. It worked like a charm! Imagine singing this song **View It.**

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19. Guess the pop song. A simple yet fun, effective technique. Play charades where the students must "hum" the song and the other teams try to guess the song. **Guess It.**

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20. Musical Appreciation. Students have lots of opinions about their favorite songs. So they'll love this lesson. Use these handy forms to get them evaluating songs and sharing their opinions. **Get Resources.**

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21. Subtitle Songs. The apex of all teacher activity is when the students themselves are constructing the classroom materials and learning English in the process. Students will enjoy subtitling English music videos and sharing their fav. tunes. Here's one of the first videos I ever did (in MovieMaker but I now recommend [Video Pad](#)) **View It.**

22. Perform A Musical. Bring dry words to life by singing them. Take a play and then make it into a musical to perform for the class. It's loads of fun! **Try it with this one.**

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23. Learn The Basics Songs make it easy to remember things. Use them for the basics: **numbers**, the alphabet, telling time, the days of the week etc **View It.**

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24. Lastonestanding. This game works like a charm. Choose a popular song, select some vocabulary that repeats often. Students choose one word and write it large on a piece of paper. Listen and students stand and sit when their word is sung. Lastonestanding wins! **View it.**

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25. Discussion. Songs are a great way to introduce a topic and get students "emotional" and ready to voice their feeling and opinions. Here's one I've used to discuss regrets about not valuing family until it is too late. . **Listen To It.**

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26. Kidz Karaoke. There is no better method on earth for teaching English to young learners than a song with some TPR thrown in. Get students standing and moving and doing the actions to songs. **Get Some**

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27. Musical Chairs. It sounds childish but even with adults it works great. Just get a great song or two to keep things moving along. **View It.**

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28. Get Creative. Assign students parts of the song and have them present their own interpretation with text. Put it all together as a play or performance. **So many great "text"songs** out there. **View It.**

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29. Just Sit Back 'N Enjoy. There are so many wonderful songs out there with so much powerful context, a teacher just has to let the students learn on their own and enjoy the ride. Here is my all time fav. **View It.**



**CEFR Aligned
Leveled Readers**



30. “Recommend A Song” Box. Get your students to share with you what songs they’d like to study in class. I used to have a recommendation box by the door which students could anonymously put in notes for songs they’d like to study. The teacher isn’t the only expert! **Get More Recommendations**

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31. Finish It Off. Play a popular song line by line. Before the end of the line, stop the audio and ask students to finish the line. Repeat as necessary. Continue until the song is finished and then handout the song lyric sheet and play again. **View it.**

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32. Act Out The Songs / Perform aTableaux. Students will naturally want to act out, mime and play parts in a song. Get students to do mini presentations for song!. **View It.**

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33, Get Literal. Literal videos replace the original audio with a "literal" description of what the characters are doing. Loads of fun and if you are ambitious, get students to make their own literal videos! **View It.**

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34. Writing Prompt. Music provides powerful imagery. Choose an instrumental song and ask students to relax, listen and write the story which the music “tells”. **Go Here.**

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35. Invitational Concert. Invite a student in the school or someone from the community to come and play for the students. They’ll love it. Just keep it in English. Even better if you the teacher can play and sing! **View It.**

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36. Changing and inspiring the world. Music makes a powerful statement. Students, especially teenagers, want to make a difference and sharing a song will get them started. Plus, they’ll learn a heck of a lot of English. **View It.**

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37. Make a music video. Your students will love this and have a lot of fun. They’ll remember it forever and also every line of the song they perform. Start by showing the original video in class and then asking students to write, then film their own versions. **Original vs Student version.**

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38. Learn about something. There are so many educational songs, teaching students about a topic. Find one and use it to teach your topic. Can be parts of the body, dinosaurs or WWII. **Schoolhouse Rock** rocks! **Listen To It.**

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39. Lyrics Training. This site is good for students to practice online and do some independent learning. They type the blank words into a form under the video. Two peeves – many videos just disappear (because they come from youtube and are deleted) and sometimes 2nd language students have poor keyboard skills. [Find Out More](#)

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40. Draw It. Play a song and as students listen to it, have them draw what they feel, see, think, understand. Afterwards present and share and ask for the reasons they drew what they did. [An example.](#)

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41. Deconstruct It. Give students a lyric sheet and have them underline or circle the grammar forms or vocabulary that you'd like to focus on.

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42. Guess The Title. Play a song the students are unfamiliar with. Put 3 possible titles up on the board. The students listen and decide which one is correct. Take words/lines from the song to make it more difficult. Is this one: 1. Miner for a heart 2. Heart of Gold 3. I'm getting old? [Listen To It.](#)

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43. Strip it Cut the song into strips. Give each student one strip to memorize. Students put the strips in their pockets. They get up and tell each other their part of the song, without looking at their part or showing their part to anyone else. Students then organize themselves in the right order, speak the song and then listen and check. You can also have students put the strips on a table in order.

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44. Rap It. Rapping, like chanting has powerful undercurrents of sound and soul that help students learn language. Get students to try being [The Rapping Flight Attendant](#) or not be afraid to be Eminem. [View It.](#)

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45. Lip Synch and Air Guitar. Many students are shy or have a long silent period. But I'm sure they'll participate in singing with others if they only have to pretend. Just put on a song and use something for a microphone. Get performing! [View It.](#)

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46. Nursery Rhymes. These are very short and full of great language and cultural knowledge. Students may also be familiar with them in their own language. Even maybe get students to record themselves on [Voicethread.](#) [View It.](#)

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47. Project Peace. Get song materials so your class can make a Project Peace video and help spread the message of goodwill and peace. It's really easy to participate.
View It.

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48. Go KT. Kinetic Typography is a design feature that allows words to be visually presented in video. Amazing stuff for any language teacher, combining words, audio and images. So many great ones students will enjoy. **View It.**

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49. Karaoke Day. Yes, hold a concert of a karaoke day each week. All in English. If “**The Hey Jude Kid**” can do it, so can your students. Also try the thousands of instant songs you can use with **Go Sing. View It.**

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50. Fav Singer Bios. Singers and groups are huge stars. Get your students writing about them and harnessing their interest. Maybe even use Fakebook and get them to set up a **fake FB page** for the person. **Or use this handy template.**

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