



**Count Tap Clap:
Coordinating the Relationship Between
Rhythm and Pulse**

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Coordinating the relationship between rhythm and pulse

TBA CONVENTION

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COUNT TAP CLAP

Coordinating the relationship between rhythm and pulse

CTC is a practice method that helps players develop a strong relationship between rhythm and pulse. Humans are not naturally super-coordinated. We need tools.

COUNT - time TAP - foot CLAP - rhythm

A Few Examples

4/4 - four quarter notes per measure

COUNT (1 2 3 4) TAP (quarter notes) CLAP (rhythm)

COUNT (1+2+3+4+) TAP (quarter notes) CLAP (rhythm)

COUNT (1 2 3 4) TAP (half notes) CLAP (rhythm)

3/4 - three quarter notes per measure

COUNT (1 2 3) TAP (quarter notes) CLAP (rhythm)

COUNT (1 2 3) TAP (dotted half note) CLAP (rhythm)

6/8 - six eighth notes per measure

COUNT (1-2-3-4-5-6) TAP (dotted quarters) CLAP (rhythm)

COUNT - ? TAP - ? CLAP - rhythm

When students Count a steady, repeating pulse out loud *and* Tap their foot, they externalize the feeling of pulse more dramatically than when they just tap their foot. When they Clap the rhythm of the music along with this steady, audible pulse, they can feel and hear where the notes belong in each measure. With practice, they are better able to coordinate rhythm and pulse and make music with a stronger feeling of time. Ultimately, students are able to play together more successfully.

Getting Started (Beginners)

1. Develop a steady, even foot tap (see Master of the Alphabet).
2. When it's time to play a song or even a few notes, begin CTC with quarters, halves and wholes (one, two and four - count notes).
3. Show students how this transfers to reading music.
4. Or, alternately, just begin CTC when you begin reading music.
5. CTC everything: exercises, songs, ensembles, band pieces.

Getting started (More advanced students)

1. Perform foot tap "check-up". Do students have a steady, even foot tap?
2. Practice Basic Coordination/Rhythm exercises.
3. CTC everything: exercises, region music, ensembles, band pieces.

When to CTC

1. CTC before teaching a new or unfamiliar rhythm or time signature.
2. CTC before positioning/fingering/rehearsing a piece.
3. CTC when the ensemble is not playing in time or moving together.
4. CTC to prepare to rehearse a piece at a new tempo.

How to CTC

1. How you use CTC depends on the skill level and experience of the students. It also depends on the meter, tempo, style and the rhythmic demands of the music.
2. Choose what you are going to Count (a steady, repeating pulse), choose what you are going to Tap and then, Clap the rhythm.
3. Count big beats or Count with subdivisions.
4. Count quarters, half notes or dotted quarters. Count eighths or 16ths. You decide.
5. Tap your foot with the count or count subdivisions and tap big beats.
6. Experiment. Be creative. Have fun.
7. You decide or let your students decide.

Why to CTC

1. CTC helps students learn to feel and coordinate rhythm in time.
2. With improved rhythmic coordination, students are better able to listen and play together.
3. Students become more aware of how their individual part fits into the music.
4. Rhythmic coordination allows ensembles to breathe and move together which ultimately allows the ensemble to play with more beautiful phrasing and tone.

MASTER OF THE ALPHABET

7 letters. Repeating. Forward and backward. Starting on every letter.

Sequence of Instruction

1. Practice going forward (repeating).
2. Practice going backward (repeating).
3. Practice with a steady beat (hands on lap).
4. Practice from A to A (forward and back), one note per beat.
5. Practice B to B, C to C, D to D, E to E, F to F, G to G.
6. Practice 2 notes per beat.
7. Practice 4 notes per beat.
8. Add the foot tap (matching the hands).

Class notes

1. Students match the instructor's correct *playing position*.
2. Students match the instructor's correct *hand position*.
3. Students match the instructor's *tone* and *articulation*.
4. Students match the instructor's hands (up and down).
5. Students "watch the conductor," "listen to one another," "match," and "stay together."

Mastering the Alphabet

1. Students perform from memory (with student exceptions).
2. Students perform or "pass-off" one line (scale) at a time, one note per beat.
3. Students perform or "pass-off" one line at a time, two notes per beat.
4. "Master of the Alphabet" is achieved when students can perform the alphabet 2 notes per beat from A to A through G to G at a steady tempo with no mistakes.
5. "Super Master" is achieved with 4 notes per beat (2 on the down, 2 on the up).
6. "Ultra Super Master," for crazy over-achievers, is with 8 notes per beat.

Before students learn to play (or even hold) their instruments, many important lessons are taking root. Critical behaviors – including sitting correctly (playing position), tapping the foot and keeping a steady beat – are becoming automatic.

Benefits of “Master of the Alphabet”

1. Students are continuing to develop an internal feeling of pulse and the ability to externalize it.
2. Students are learning to feel 1, 2 and 4 notes per beat (subdivision).
3. Students are learning to perform at faster and slower tempos.
4. Students are learning to find their best performance tempo.
5. Students are hearing the words “Check your playing position;” “Check your hands;” “Listen to your neighbors;” “Match;” “Watch me.” They’re learning ensemble skills.
6. They’re practicing scales (they just don’t know it yet).

Alphabet Bonus Stuff

1. Students have something fun to practice starting on the 1st day of school. We are creating a culture of practicing and “playing” our instruments. We don’t do homeWORK in band. We PLAY. *Band is different than other classes.*
2. Right away, beginner students are **performing**, learning to manage feelings of excitement and also dealing with anxiety, frustration and disappointment. They are practicing their “inner game.”
3. Students experience the exhilaration of achieving something that is both challenging and meaningful to them.
4. Students learn that practicing works and can talk about good and bad practice habits.
5. Since every student has the opportunity to achieve “Master of the Alphabet,” students learn to support one another and celebrate each student’s success.
6. There is no time-limit on learning and achieving. *Band is different than other classes.*

Master of the Alphabet

A B C D E F G A

B C D E F G A B

C D E F G A B C

D E F G A B C D

E F G A B C D E

F G A B C D E F

G A B C D E F G