**The Orff Approach to Music Education for Children**Haut du formulaire

**Duckings and Chicks**

The Orff approach is a [method of teaching children about music](http://www.thoughtco.com/major-methods-of-teaching-music-to-kids-2456776) that engages their mind and body through a mixture of singing, dancing, acting and the use of percussion instruments. For instance, the Orff method often uses instruments like xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels.

A key characteristic of this approach is that lessons are presented with an element of play, which helps the children learn at their own level of understanding.

The Orff method can also be referred to as Orff-Schulwerk, Orff approach, or "Music for Children."

**What Is the Orff Method?**

The Orff approach is a way of introducing and teaching children about music on a level that they can easily comprehend.

Musical concepts are learned through singing, chanting, dance, movement, drama and the playing of percussion instruments. Improvisation, composition and a child's natural sense of play are encouraged.

**Who Created the Orff Approach?**

This approach to [music education](https://www.thoughtco.com/benefits-of-music-education-2455865) was developed by [Carl Orff](https://www.thoughtco.com/major-methods-of-teaching-music-to-kids-2456776), a German composer, conductor and educator whose most famous composition is the oratorio "[Carmina Burana](https://www.thoughtco.com/carl-orffs-o-fortuna-723648)".

It was conceived during the 1920s and 1930s while he served as music director of the *Günther-Schule*; a school of music, dance, and gymnastics that he co-founded in Munich.

His ideas were based on his belief in the importance of rhythm and movement. Orff shared these ideas in a book titled *Orff-Schulwerk,* which was later revised and then adapted into English as *Music for Children*.

**Types of Music and Instruments Used**

[Folk music](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-folk-music-1322534) and music composed by the children themselves are mostly used in the Orff classroom.

Xylophones (soprano, alto, bass), [metallophones](https://www.thoughtco.com/wind-instruments-2456742) (soprano, alto, bass), glockenspiels (soprano and alto), castanets, bells, [maracas](https://www.thoughtco.com/profile-of-the-maracas-2456892), triangles, cymbals (finger, crash or suspended), tambourines, timpani, gongs, bongos, steel drums and conga drums are but some of the [percussion instruments](https://www.thoughtco.com/profile-of-the-bass-drum-2456883) used in the Orff classroom.

Other instruments, both pitched and unpitched, that may be used include claves, cowbells, djembe, rainmakers, sand blocks, tone blocks, vibraslap and wood blocks.

**What Does an Orff Method Lesson Look Like?**

Although Orff teachers use many books as frameworks, there is no standardized Orff curriculum. Orff teachers design their own lesson plans and adapt it to suit the size of the class and the age of the students.

For example, a teacher may choose a poem or a story to read in class. Students are then asked to participate by choosing instruments to represent a character or a word in the story or poem.

As the teacher reads the story or poem again, students add sound effects by playing the instruments they selected. The teacher then adds accompaniment by playing Orff instruments.

As the lesson progresses, students are asked to play Orff instruments or add other instruments. To keep the whole class involved, others are asked to act out the story.

**Orff Method Sample Lesson Format**

More specifically, here is a very simple lesson plan format that may be used for young children.

First, choose a poem. Then, read the poem to the class.

Second, ask the class to recite the poem with you. Recite the poem together while keeping a steady beat by tapping hands to knees.

Third, choose students who will play the instruments. Ask the students to play certain notes on cue words. Note that the instruments must match the words. It is important that students maintain correct rhythm and learn proper mallet technique.

Fourth, add other instruments and choose students to play these instruments.

Fifth, discuss the day's lesson with the students. Ask them questions like, "was the piece easy or difficult?" Also, ask questions to assess students' comprehension.

Finally, clean up! Put away all instruments.

**Notation**

In the Orff classroom, the teacher acts like a conductor who gives cues to her eager orchestra. If the teacher selects a song, some students will be chosen as instrumentalists while the rest of the class sings along.

Parts may or may not be notated. If notated, it should be simple enough for the students to understand. The teacher then provides students a copy of the notes and/or creates a poster.

**Key Concepts Learned in the Orff Process**

Using the Orff approach, students learn about rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, form and other [elements of music](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-elements-of-music-2455913). Students learn these concepts by speaking, chanting, singing, dancing, movement, acting and playing instruments.

These learned concepts become springboards for further creative pursuits such as improvisation or composing their own music.