

Musical Math

Activity 1 - Shake, Rattle & Roll




Maracas, shakers, rain sticks and rattles are all percussion instruments that you can make at home! Simple rattles and shakers have been made in many cultures by putting seeds or small pebbles in dried gourds, shells, turtle shells and hollowed out wooden blocks.

Today they can be made from a variety of unwanted empty containers, paper towel rolls, plastic wrap and elastics. Add a handful of materials to provide the 'shaking' sound. For 'harsh' sounds use gravel, stones, metal bolts, screws, nuts, buttons, soft-drink bottle tops, bean or pea seeds and peanuts. For 'soft' sounds try grains - rice, barley or sand. For 'very soft' sounds try salt, breadcrumbs, sugar, tea, gum leaves and pencil shavings.

Attach a wooden or plastic rod to the container to make it easier to hold. Decorate with ribbons, stickers or paint. To play the instrument, either shake it or strike it gently against your hand or thigh to the beat of the music.

Activity Instructions: Create a shake pattern using different rhythms. Play the rhythm for yourself and then for a classmate or family member. After performing your rhythm, translate the pattern into symbols on a sheet of paper. For example:

Loud Shake = 

Soft Shake = 

Tap = 

Rest (Silence) = 

Roll = 

Rhythm Pattern:           

Can you believe THIS is math?