

Musiskill 101 Frère Jacques Keeping the Beat

Learn / practise three essential rhythm skills where you have to do two things at once.

You may find all three of these challenges really easy - don't waste any time practising them.

If you are to become more competent and confident with music, both understanding it and making it with other people, you need to master them all. The ability to do two things at the same time transfers to being able to combine your part with others. These challenges are learnable. Take them steadily and practise small bits at a time. Don't feel silly for not being able to do something that looks as though it should be easy. Nothing is easy if you haven't had the chance to learn how to do it.

Challenge 1. Sing the tune, clap the beat

Sing Frère Jacques out loud. Feel the regular beat of the music – it goes at the speed of the first 4 syllables: *Frè-re Jac-ques*. Clap the beat while you sing the song.

Clapping is just one option. You could tap your foot, slap your knees or tap your hand on a surface. It doesn't matter what you do as long as it is comfortable and you can keep it going steadily.

If you find it difficult in any of the challenges to keep the beat steady (sometimes you may find it seems to try to join in with the tune) try walking.

Challenge 2. Clap the rhythm, tap the beat

This time you don't sing the tune. You need to think it in your head while you clap the rhythm. While your hands are doing that, your feet keep the beat.

This can be harder than Challenge 1. Converting a familiar song into a rhythm takes more thought than singing it.

Challenge 3. Count the beat, clap the rhythm

This is likely to be the toughest challenge – it's the least like singing the tune. Feel how the beat goes **1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4** over and over again. Each time you get to number **1** there's a feeling of a new start.

Try the start of the tune - count the beat out loud while you clap the rhythm for *Frè-re Jac-ques Frè-re Jac-ques*. That shouldn't cause any problems as long as you remember to go back to 1 after 4. The tune sticks closely to the beat.

Dor-mez vous can catch you out – *vous* is a long note – make sure you don't clap on 4.

Son-nez les ma-ti-nes asks for some faster clapping.

Ding dang dong has the same rhythm as *Dor-mez vous*. Practise any bits you find hard.

4. Try the same challenges with other simple tunes.

Lots of other tunes share the **1 2 3 4** beat with Frère Jacques.

Try: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Au Clair de la Lune, Ten Green Bottles, Good King Wenceslas, Ding Dong Merrily on High