

## Sol-Fun!

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Solfege is an excellent tool for teaching and learning melody. This session explores strategies for reading, writing, creating, and improvising with solfege, as well as practical applications for using solfege in a choral setting.

### Rote Learning

1. Echo singing
  - Begin with SM, SML, MRD, LSMRD. When comfortable with these, add in high do, low sol and la. Once comfortable with pentatonic patterns, move to diatonic patterns by adding fa and ti. Include Curwen hand signs as a kinesthetic reinforcer. See Figure 1 for a diagram of hand signs.
2. Solfege Ladder
  - Useful visualization tool to show melodic contour. See Figure 2.
3. Games to reinforce learning
  - SLM Elimination Game
4. Reading exercise

### Theme from Symphony No. 9

Dvorak



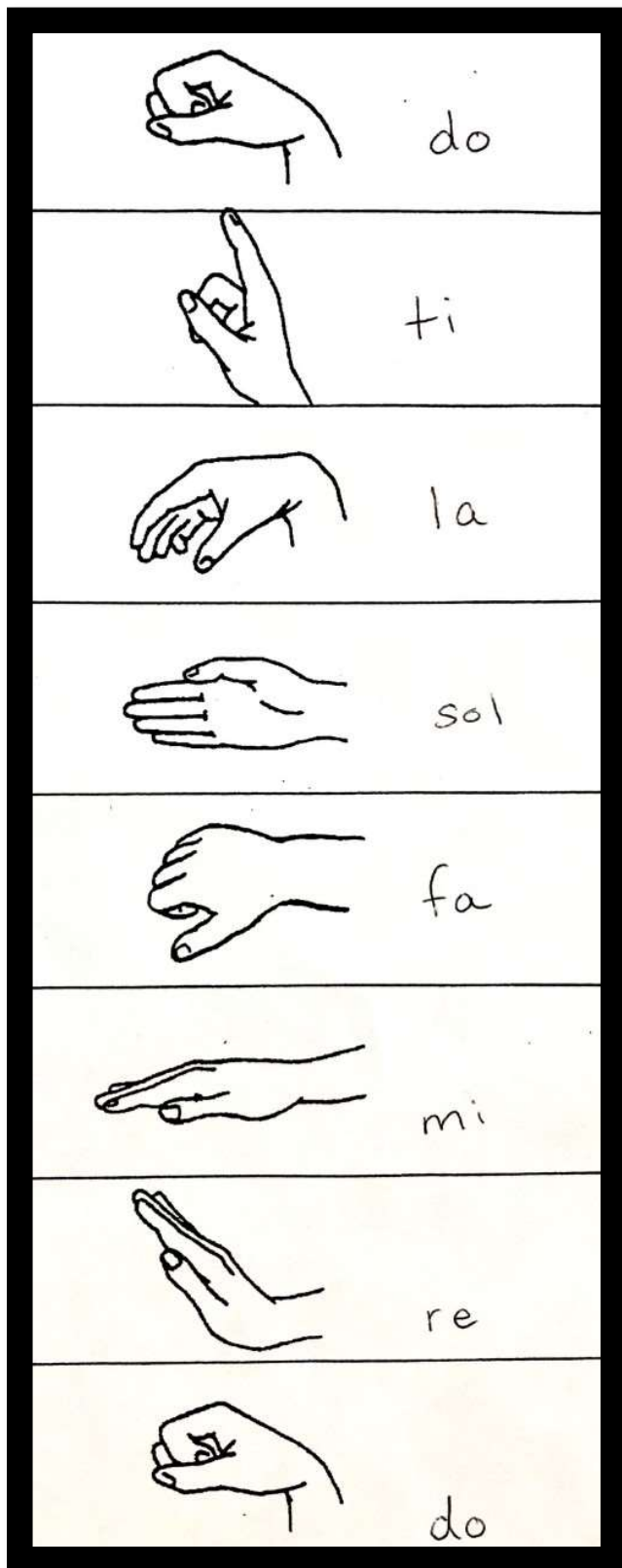


Figure 1. Curwen Hand Signs.

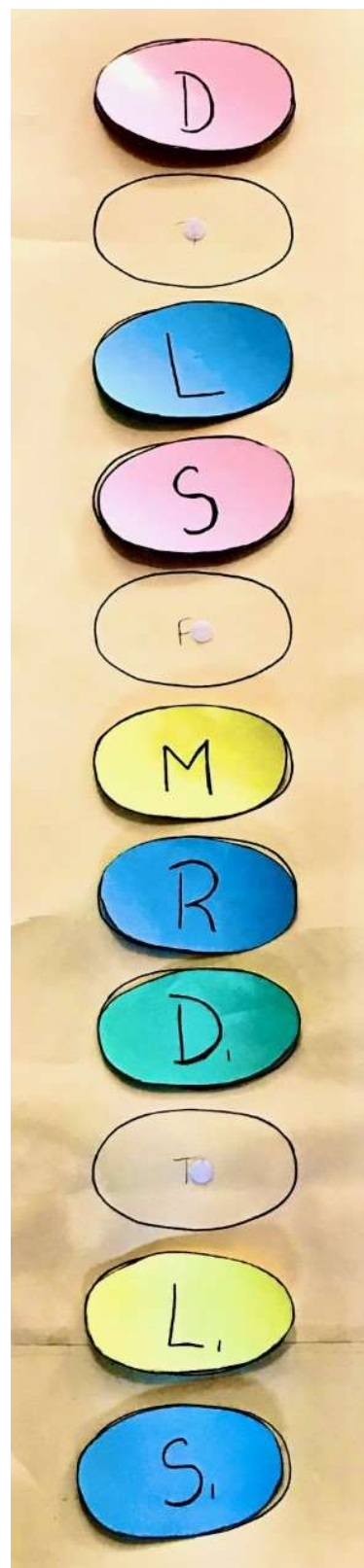


Figure 2. Example of a Solfege Ladder.

## Reading / Composing

1. Sound before symbol
  - Teach repertoire aurally before introducing visual symbols.
2. Begin with simple SM patterns on a one-line, then three-line staff. Refer to Figure 3 below for a guideline on when to introduce new pitches. When students can successfully demonstrate reading, writing, and singing at one level, they are ready to move on to the next level.

|                        | Approximate Grade Level | Song Examples  |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Sol Mi</b>          | K, 1                    | Cuckoo, Rain Rain, See Saw, Star Light   |
| <b>Sol Mi La</b>       | 1-2                     | Oliver Twist, Hickety Tickety, Lucy Locket, Acka Backa, A Tisket A Tasket, Doggie Doggie |
| <b>Sol Mi Do</b>       | 1-2                     | Ring Around the Rosie, Teddy Bear, I See the Moon, Mouse Mousie, Bee Bee Bumble Bee      |
| <b>Mi Re Do</b>        | 2                       | Hot Cross Buns, Closet Key, Hop Old Squirrel, Go Round Mountain, Good News               |
| <b>Sol Mi Re Do</b>    | 2-3                     | Swing a Lady Up Tom, That's a Mighty Pretty Motion, Merrily We Roll Along, Old Blue      |
| <b>La Sol Mi Re Do</b> | 2-3                     | Here Comes a Bluebird, Button You Must Wander, Bow Wow Wow, Rocky Mountain               |
| <b>Low La</b>          | 3                       | Old Mister Rabbit, The Bell Cow, Skin and Bones, Kagome                                  |
| <b>Low Sol</b>         | 3                       | Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Chicken on the Fence Post                                      |
| <b>High Do</b>         | 3                       | Lil Liza Jane, Great Big House   |
| <b>Fa</b>              | 4-5                     | Fiddle Dee-Dee, Lavender's Blue, Naughty Kitty Cat, Oh How Lovely is the Evening         |
| <b>Ti</b>              | 4-5                     | Skip to My Lou (low ti), Bonavist Harbour, Shenandoah                                    |

Figure 3. When to introduce pitches.

3. Example of a SM Song

**Cuckoo**

**Singing game**  
Sound supply: s-m

*Class: s* Cuck - oo, what are you? *Solo:* I'm a bird. *Class:* Do you sing?

*Solo:* Yes I do. *Class:* Sing then! *Solo:* Cuck - oo, Cuck - oo!

*From John Barron's "Ride with Me"*

4. Example of a SLM Song

**Acka Backa**

Traditional  
arr. Kriske/DeLelles

♩ = 116

Ack - a back - a so - da crack - er, Ack - a back - a boo!

All instruments

Ack - a back - a so - da crack - er, Out goes you!

*From DeLelles and Kriske's "Game Plan 1"*

## Improvising on Orff Instruments

**Hill and Gully Rider**

Jamaica  
adapted DeLelles/Kriske  
arr. Wilts

The musical score is for the song "Hill and Gully Rider" in 4/4 time, B-flat major. It features a vocal line and three Orff instrument parts: CBB (teacher), Temple Blocks, and Triangle/Cabasa. The lyrics are: "Hill and gul-ly rid - er. Took my horse and come down. And the night time come a-tumbl-in down. I'm go-in' to town." The score includes performance instructions: "Pat" (pointing down) and "+tambourine on beats 2 and 4".

**Pat**

Hill and gul-ly rid - er. Took my

CBB (teacher)

Temple Blocks

+tambourine on beats 2 and 4

Clip clip clip clip...

Triangle/Cabasa

I'm go-in' to town I'm go-in' to town

horse and come down. And the night time come a-tumbl-in down.

CBB

Tpl Bl. / Tamb.

Tpl / Cbsa

I'm go-in' to town I'm go-in' to town

*Adapted from DeLelles and Kriske's "Game Plan 3"*

### 1. Tips:

- Give students opportunities to improvise at each level.
- Orff instruments can be set in pentatonic keys by removing fa and ti.
- Improvise together as a class before giving students opportunities to improvise in smaller groups, or individually.
- "Playing in the sandbox" - it's ok if what you create doesn't sound good. You can knock it down and start again.

## Choral Applications

### 1. Warm-up: D, DRD, DRMRD...

- Add body percussion (stomp on do, pat on mi, clap on sol, snap on ti)
- Sing in canon

### 2. Learn songs with solfege first, introducing notation and lyrics later.

- The Journey arr. Joseph M. Martin

4/4

m s s m r d

r m s m r

m s s m r d

r m r d d

d t l s

f m r r s

d t l s

f s f m m

m s s m r d

r m s m r

m s s m r d

r m r d d

d t l s

f m r r s

d t l s

f s f m m

### 3. Use solfege to help students navigate tricky intervals

- Tongo arr. Greg Gilpin

65 *Sing and clap three times*

*f* Ton - go, ton - go.

*f* Ton - go, ton - go.

## Conclusion

### 1. Why use solfege?

- It anchors the function of each note. (i.e. Do=tonic).
- Using numbers can be confusing (rhythms, chords, fingerings, frets, etc. all use numbers already).
- Hand signs offers kinesthetic reinforcement, and a way for non-verbal students to engage.

## References

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