

# Choir Practice

Prep Time: 5-15 min



**Aim:** To help students focus on producing tones in a way that involves vision and movement  
**Level:** Elementary  
**Time:** 5-10 minutes  
**Materials:** Cards of five colors for each student (or anything of five colors, e.g. markers, blocks)  
**Arrangement:** Ideally very small groups of students with a teacher/tutor for each

## Description

An activity that gives students a chance to focus on tones in connection with 'singing' and gestures.

## In Class

- 1 Before beginning, the teacher writes a set of single Chinese syllables on the board without tone marks. For example: **dou rui mi fa sou la ti dou** (or any others). These syllables are the 'music.'
- 2 Students stand as a 'choir' toward the front of the room facing the chalk board. The teacher stands in front as the 'director.'
- 3 First do 'warm ups.' The director leads the choir through the syllables all on the first tone. For each syllable the director motions with her hands a long, flat, high tone.
- 4 The director now leads the choir through the syllables on the second tone. For each syllable the director motions with her hands a quick, rising tone.
- 5 The director does the same with the third and fourth tones, making appropriate gestures.
- 6 Now the choir is ready to 'sing.' The director points to the first syllable and makes a motion to indicate the tone the choir should sing. After the first syllable is sung once, the director indicates the choir should move to the next one, then indicates the tone and the choir sings.
- 7 As the 'choir' figures out the pattern, the director speeds things up, directing a new tone for each syllable.
- 8 The choir keeps singing until the speed is too fast.

			
			
	<b>dou rui mi fa</b>	<b>sou la ti dou</b>	<b>mi rui dou sou</b>

## Variations

- ✓ After students are familiar with the activity, a student could assume the role of director.
- ✓ You could give students a handout of 'sheet music' with multiple rows of syllables (or you could write multiple rows on the board). When one row has gotten too fast, start over with the next row.

## Notes

While tones are not musical, it can still be helpful for some American students to think in terms of music. This activity makes the connection obvious and may help some students get past their initial inability to hear tones. On the other hand, the teacher needs to make it clear that the ability to produce tones is not the same as the ability to sing. Plenty of native Chinese can't carry a tune and they still have very clear tones.