

DYNAMIC MUSIC LESSONS

TEACHING APPROACH

Elyssa Woods
dynamicmusiclessons.com.au

If you're like me, you know first hand how dry and boring music lessons can be.

We spend years taking music lessons ourselves, and I think we'd be lying if we said every music teacher we ever had created engaging and out-of-the-box lessons. Then, we jump into becoming teachers by mimicking that which we grew up experiencing. Through no fault of our own, we use the same lesson structure, method books, technique, and aural training that our teachers used.

I think it's time we break this cycle!

Are you ready to not only become a more effective music educator, but influence the new generation of music students to set them up for a lifelong journey of musicianship? The fact that you downloaded this PDF tells me you are! You recognise that private music education is a difficult profession we find ourselves in, without a lot of guidance and often struggling to grab and maintain our students' intrigue.

DYNAMIC

marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change; energetic, forceful

What if we, the new generation of music teachers, not only challenged but transformed the way music lessons are taught? What if we break away from the status-quo and incorporate varied and engaging experiences for students to support their specific interests and goals? What if the activities we included in lessons were foolproof to establish a solid foundation of theoretical understanding and skill, without compromising fun or engagement? Rather than following a traditional lesson structure, what if we adopted a flexible framework where activities are implemented to meet the goals and learning needs of each individual student, lesson by lesson?

We need a Dynamic Music Lesson Approach.

The following pages provide actionable changes that when implemented, will transform your teaching effectiveness. Tried and true, I have been building this teaching method for years. My students and their parents can attest to the incredible effectiveness these action items offer. I provide a brief explanation for why and how to incorporate the suggestions. Not only will you feel empowered in your teaching by implementing these tips and tricks, but students and parents will be amazed at how lessons are transformed into fun and engaging learning opportunities.

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Your student is the reason you are teaching a lesson - this seems like an obvious fact, but we often forget it. Every activity and piece of music we incorporate into lessons should serve the student's unique interests. If we optimise lessons to meet their interests and goals, then their practice will be more consistent, and therefore skill development will occur at a faster rate. Here are some tips to create a student-centred lesson:

1. Ask your student what they want to begin with - Pieces? Scales? Show you something they are working on outside of lessons? When students choose, they will build personal responsibility for the lesson, and of course show engagement because they are spending time on something they have intrinsic motivation for
 2. Ask students to write notes and reminders in their music, rather than yourself marking the page for them. This enhances their memory for the aspect they are trying to correct by using multiple senses - critically thinking about what reminder they will write in, physically writing the reminder, and seeing the reminder. This is much more powerful than you writing reminders in for them
 3. Allow your student to choose their pieces. If using a method book, don't feel you **must** follow the page-by-page progression. Instead, play a couple of pieces and allow your student to choose their favourite. If there is something really important to learn in a piece they have not chosen, use it as a sight reading exercise or come back to the piece at a later date
 4. Incorporate student choice music. Your students should always be playing, or know they have the opportunity to play, a piece that is their own choosing. This could be a pop song, movie score, classical piece, etc.
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CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Include creative activities in every lesson. This is vital to allowing your student space to experiment with music and inspire their out-of-the-box thinking to thrive. For example, you might include

- Composition
 - Improvisation
 - Arranging
 - Each of these can be supported by games... for example:
 - Rhythm times to choose rhythm for composition or improv (game instructions available soon in a Dynamic Music Lessons Guide)
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FUN/FOCUS SHIFTER

Incorporate games and competitions that have clear learning objectives, almost *hidden* within the fun. Some game examples include

- Rhythm Bingo
- Note Relay
- Note Matching
- Note Finder
- Rhythm Tiles
- Rhythm Bells
- Piano Merry Go Round
- Music Treasure Hunt
- Simon Says

The function of these suggestions are to:

- Provide opportunities for focus shift. Many children struggle with maintaining focus on one thing for a long period of time. these activities provide focus reprieve

FUN/FOCUS SHIFTER CONT.

- Environment shift. Many children respond well to environment shifts. Something as simple as moving from the piano bench to the floor can help reset focus during the lesson
- Movement opportunities. Many children require movement to channel their energy appropriately during lessons. The following activities allow positive avenues to release energy while continuing productive learning

To maximise effectiveness of the activities, provide options of games for your student so they feel empowered and establish responsibility for their learning.

A free download of Note Relay/Note Matching tiles, with instructions is available on my website. Interested in more? A full games package is coming soon.

COMPLEMENTARY TECHNIQUE

Choose technique that is directly relevant to what the student is learning and what they are interested in.

- Playing a song with lots of thirds? Play broken chords or arpeggios in the related key

Does your student actually love scales? These students do exist! Teach them fun new variations and types of scales

- Blues
- Pentatonic
- Swinging rhythm
- Contrary motion
- Create a song out of the scale pattern with phrasing, dynamics, chords etc.

COMPLEMENTARY TECHNIQUE CONT.

Do not give technique homework for the sake of ticking it off your lesson to-do list. Use technique to your advantage. Find out what your student enjoys and pick relevant and engaging technique from there. Because we should be focussing on technique within pieces as well, playing a scale each week should not be necessary for technical growth.

NEXT STEPS

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