



**Welcome Songs, Greeting Songs and  
Name-learning Songs & Games**  
Composed/compiled by Donna Rhodenizer

**Welcome songs and greeting songs** are fun and create the opportunity to sing as soon as the music teacher meets students at the door. The next task is then remembering or learning the names of all your students! There are lots of fun options to assist with this part of music activity planning.

**In this post:**

- ✓ 6 welcome songs and greeting songs (recommended for students K-2).
- ✓ 7 name songs and name games (for students across K-6 grade levels).
- ✓ Printed music and instructions for 13 songs/chants, plus teaching strategies
- ✓ 11 audio tracks (There are no audio tracks for the two chants).

# Donna Rhodenizer

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**Composer**

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Donna has participated in some aspect of September back-to-school activities every year since she was five years old. As a teacher, she loves to welcome students to the music classroom on the first day. Learning names is a challenge that is met with energy and focus. Starting off the year with singing and a joyful musical welcome have been two trademarks of her music program for over 35 years. Donna takes great delight in sharing her musical knowledge and education strategies with her teaching peers.

View the full blog and download printed PDFs and MP3s at:

<https://donnaandandy.com/welcome-greeting-name-songs-and-games/>

For printed and recorded music plus other song and teaching resources:

[www.donnaandandy.com](http://www.donnaandandy.com)

(Donna's original songs and classroom activities)

## Five focus areas for the first few music classes

The first few classes of each new year are very important for setting the tone and expectations for the music classroom. There are five focus areas:

- welcoming students to a positive learning space
- establishing a safe space in which students are encouraged to participate and receive support for their efforts
- reviewing or introducing class expectations
- discussing safety protocols
- learning/reviewing names



Music teachers who are fortunate to be in the same school from one year to the next are in the unique position of building on relationships they have established with students from the previous year. It is helpful when returning students are familiar with expectations and can help new students ease into routines. If the teacher is in a new school setting, the task of learning student names is added to the responsibility of establishing a new program (and winning over older students who are resistant to trusting someone new) and it is exhausting! This puts the teacher on similar footing with their first-year students who are overwhelmed with learning routines and expectations, not only in the music room, but also in a variety of settings throughout the school. The first few music classes are exhausting for everyone. Students are returning to more structured days and earlier bedtimes (teachers are too!) and will often be tired.

## Entering Music - Movement



Students (K-6) enter my music room with movement. The music and associated activity vary depending on the age group, but it is a fantastic way to establish focus and set the tone for learning. A march is a great way to start on the very first day (even first-year students will respond to an infectious march tune).

See my blog post [Marching Music & Activities for Kids](#)

Older students often require a more sophisticated piece of music to which to respond. This can be a listening challenge such as naming the instrument they are hearing or being able to use music vocabulary to describe the piece of music they are hearing.

If I have used movement to enter, once the students are in their spots, I sing my welcome to the students. Even a simple s-m melody with “I am glad to see you in the music room” or “Welcome to music class” establishes a singing culture within the first few minutes of the class. There will, out of necessity, be much talking in the first few classes but it is crucial in all my classes to sing from the very first day so it is viewed as a normal part of the environment. This approach is slightly different for students in upper elementary grades. Singing with older students is

important but it needs to be included in ways that allow them to feel supported and comfortable participating.

Whether singing or listening, establishing expectations of focus and participation from the beginning of class sets a positive tone. Keeping things on track is easier than trying to rein things in after they have gone awry (proactive approach vs. reactive approach).

# Welcome! How do you do?

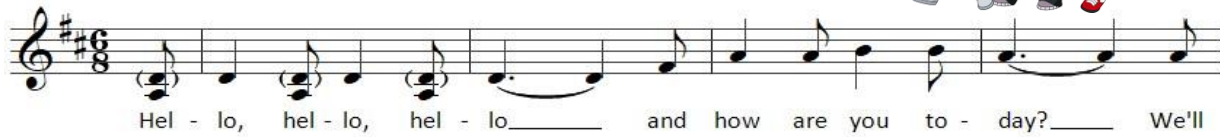
## **Welcome songs / Greeting Songs - two varieties** (for K-2 students)

There are two basic types of welcome or greeting songs. There are songs the teacher sings to students and songs that are for the class to sing together. The song can be more rhythmically and melodically complicated if the teacher is the only person singing the song. There is some merit to a teacher “solo” welcome song in the first few days of the year when students may not be as likely to feel comfortable singing. However, teachers are well advised to move as soon as possible to songs that encourage student participation. Students are more engaged if they are involved and, as stated above, the goal is to establish a singing culture in the music room. Songs that everyone sings together need to be repetitious and have simple words. Actions that can be done while walking can help with retention of words and also helps with focus.

I introduce two hello songs to my kindergarten to grade 2 students throughout the first few months of school. Every time they enter the music room they are met at the door, and they hear the welcome/greeting song. When they become familiar with the song, they join in. I sing the same song for a few classes and then switch to the other song for a few weeks. Once they know both songs very well, I can alternate between the two songs more frequently.

### Hello, Hello, Hello (for grades K-1)

(Collected by Maureen MacMullin, adapted by Donna Rhodenizer)



Actions can be added for students to do while entering the music classroom. The song can be done while standing in spots in the circle, or face to face with a partner as a singing game/dance. (Action instructions are included with the printed music.)

I love songs with multiple options and this one provides a great opportunity for adding other movement. In the classroom we include jumping, swimming, kicking, etc., which are all great fun. E.g.: "We'll jump and jump and jump and jump and then be on our way."

This greeting song can be sung with many repetitions of the simple first verse. We sing this *a capella* and also with a keyboard track (MP3 is included as part of this blog).

In addition to creating a familiar routine, the hello song can be used in concert settings as well. The first year I tried this I was amazed at the positive results. When it was time for the first school concert, the kindergarten students sang their regular hello/welcome song as they filed onto the risers in front of a crowd of excited onlookers. The students were doing something with which they were familiar (which helped settle their first-concert nerves), it got them warmed up, and the audience loved it!

My favourite hello song is one I heard at a workshop with a teaching colleague, Maureen MacMullin. (This is the song I used at my concert.) I asked her for permission to use her song and she explained that she didn't know if it was one she collected over the years or an original tune. I include it for the use of other teachers and if anyone knows a source for this song, I would appreciate knowing about it so I can include proper acknowledgement for the original composer.

### Come Right In (for grades K-2)

(Donna Rhodenizer)



This song can be sung by the teacher to students but eventually students will be able to sing along. The clapping echo provides continued focus without requiring constant singing and the clapping can be replaced with stamping as well.



**Hip Hooray** (for grades K-2)  
(Joanna MacPhee Simpson)

Good morn - ing, good morn - ing, good morn - ing } it's  
Hel - lo, \_\_\_\_\_ hel - lo, \_\_\_\_\_ hel - lo there, }

Hip Hooray is an entering/welcome song written by my job share partner, Joanna MacPhee Simpson (used with permission). This song serves two purposes: providing a greeting song to sing, plus stepping the beat to a lively 6/8 march.



**Bonjour, Bonjour** (for grades K-1)  
(Donna Rhodenizer)

Bon - jour, \_\_\_\_\_ bon - jour, \_\_\_\_\_ ça va, ça va, ça va \_\_\_\_\_ Bon -

I composed a French greeting song for my French immersion students. Simple and repetitious words support the beginning vocabulary of the students and make it easier for me to remember the words without needing to carry music with me!

Simple actions (stamping 3 times at the appropriate spot and clapping once) add a physical element to the song as children are entering and walking to their spots.



**Come and Follow Me** (for grades K-2)  
(Traditional)

Come and fol - low me in a line, in a line, come and

This simple children’s song has been around for decades! As you walk and sing, students “follow the leader” and copy actions being modelled by the teacher. At the end of the song, students stop and freeze on the word “Stop”. This may be a copied position or a free choice option.

“Come and Follow Me” can provide a movement break during music class. It can also be used for reinforcing high and low. Instead of freezing on the word “stop” at the end of the song, the teacher can play a tone that is either high or low and students freeze in a position showing high/low, matching the tone that was played.



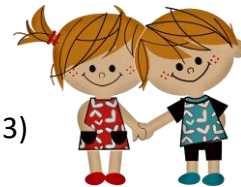
## Learning student names!

**One of the most important tasks for the music teacher is to learn the names of the students in every class.** Learning hundreds of names is quite unique to specialists who see many children every day. Music, physical education, and library teachers all experience this daunting task. For some teachers this also includes more than one school, which is an additional load.

The first few classes on the first day seem to go well and some familiar names return easily to the “memory bank”. I often find a kind of “brain fog” descends midway through the day and it seems insurmountable to deposit any more name information in the “bank”. Songs, games, and activities that assist with this task are crucial and also can be a fun way for students to return to remember and reinforce the expectation that they will respond, sing, and participate in music class activities.

Music teachers must also be very aware of the load they place on their voice in the first few days back at school. As much as we might like to think we have continued to keep our instrument in good shape during vacation, not many are able to practice regularly over summer break and there is vocal fatigue to add to the rest of the things we deal with as we head back to school.

As we learn and refresh the names of students we see each day, songs, games, and activities we use need to be varied so we achieve the goal of learning and reviewing the names of our students, without jeopardizing our vocal health.



**Hello, Hello, How Do You Do?** (for grades K-2, and possibly grade 3)  
(Traditional Children’s Song, adapted by Donna Rhodenizer)



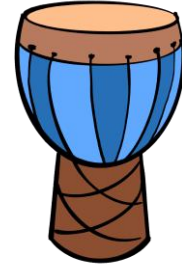
“Hello, Hello, How do You Do?” is one of my favourite songs to sing in music class because it combines greeting students and learning names. Some students may be unfamiliar with saying, “How do you do?” so a quick explanation of this as a term of greeting is a good idea.

The original words of this song instructed students to stand up if they were wearing a certain colour. I have adapted this to ask groups of students with the same first initial to stand up which assists me as I work on learning their names. I find associating students in “shared letter” groups is a helpful strategy when learning names.

After we have heard the students' names, an action is sung for them to do (e.g. balance on one leg, stamp your feet, wave, wink, etc.). They have a few moments to do that action and be in the spotlight and then they sit down. This is a low-key way to encourage participation and let students respond as part of a small group. The name part of the song is helpful to me, and the movement parts of the song are fun for the students. A win-win situation!

### **The Walking Drum (or “Drumming Names Around the Circle”)**

(for grades K-6) (Donna Rhodenizer)



*The Walking Drum* is a great name activity that does not require singing.

Students are seated in a circle, and I keep a steady beat with a drum as I move around the outside of the circle. I stop behind each student, they say their name, and then we (the class and the teacher) repeat their name 3 more times (4 beats). We continue this way around the whole circle.

As hard as I try, it is not possible to remember all the students' names all the time. There are some students whose names I remember more quickly than others, and others that take longer to stay anchored. This game is a “safe” way to review names without drawing attention to those students who have not yet made it into the “permanent memory bank”.

#### **Advantages of using this activity:**

- Establishing a musical context (steady beat) even though no singing is involved.
- Students are the first person to state their name.
  - The teacher doesn't have to search for names on a list or rely on memory.
- Hearing each student say their own name gives everyone the correct pronunciation.
- Students who prefer a shortened version of their name can provide that information.
- The repetition helps anchor each name in your memory.

#### **Bonus application: Cultural context for students**

Use a drum or other percussion instrument that has cultural context for your students. Acknowledge and include the culture of your students, creating meaningful connections for them.

In Nova Scotia, to extend friendship and promote understanding of the Mi'kmaq culture, a hand-made Mi'kmaq drum has been entrusted to every music room in the province. Nova Scotia is settled on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) People first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but, in fact, recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

This is a wonderful time to include this significant cultural item as part of our everyday music making. It is a chance to talk about the importance of the drum in the Mi'kmaq culture, and how it is used in the music and the community of the people of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. We talk about "putting our names into the drum" and it becomes a very respectful time of focus.

### Up the Ladder, Down the Ladder (for grades K-6)

(Children's chant)

See explanation video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YOIDEJKXE8>



This is a great activity for all grades. Adding a drum pattern to the activity creates rhythmic interest to the game.

Up the lad - der, down the lad - der, one by one. — I said,

The musical notation is on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes, with a long rest for the phrase "I said,".

"Up the Ladder, Down the Ladder" allows you to learn student names in groups of four. Students say their own name first (a great advantage when you are unsure of pronunciation or if you cannot remember all the students' names yet). The class repeats the name, providing reinforcement that helps with memory.



### Take a Bow (for grades K-2)

(Donna Rhodenizer)

If your name be - gins with the let - ter I sing, stand up.

The musical notation is on a single staff in 2/2 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes, with a long rest for the phrase "stand up,".

This is a song the teacher sings to the students.

The children stand when they hear the first letter of their name. (It is a helpful memorization tool to associate groups of children with the same first initial.)

Students are invited to stand, give their name, and do a bow. Individual participation is encouraged, but the response is low key and does not require "improvisational" movement. A simple bow will do!





Students love the challenge of trying to guess the voices of their classmates. They think it is just a fun game. From my teacher's perspective, this is a fantastic opportunity to hear students sing individually and do ongoing, quick assessment of singing skill development. I keep my checklist close by and use this game to monitor which students:

- can sing in a head voice
- can match pitch without prompting
- are singing a s-m interval but at their own pitch
- are still developing these skills

Once I know the students well, if a student is not matching pitch, and they can handle a bit of “nudging”, I sing the response at the pitch I want. I then ask them if they can change their voice to find the same singing spot as mine. We take a few seconds during the game to work on that skill. If they get it, I make a big deal about it. If not, we label their response as higher or lower than mine (another teaching moment), we move on, and it is not a big event. Small steps!!!!

Older students also enjoy the challenge of guessing the identity of their classmates. Because it is a challenge, they are more willing to sing and participate, although I do have to remind them that we are not trying to disguise voices or make strange vocal sounds. Singing is still the primary focus of the game!



### **Names Around the Circle** (Chant for grades 2-6)

(Donna Rhodenizer)

Use this simple activity and its variations for establishing and practicing names. Keep a steady beat using body percussion (or use a drum). All names must be spoken so that they fit with the steady beat.

The many variations of this activity allow it to be used multiple times without becoming monotonous. Choosing more complicated variants can make this activity more challenging for older students. Some examples of variants include:

- Each student says their own name around the circle.
- Each student says the name of the person sitting next to them. (This is more difficult than it sounds!)
- Each student says two names: their own name and then the name of the next person.
- One student can try to say the names of everyone in the circle without any stops or getting out of time with the beat.

## My Right-Hand Side is Free (for grades 4-6)

(Children's Chant/Game)



Learn the chant:

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics are written below the staff: "Look, my right - hand side is free. \_\_\_\_\_ come and sit by me." There are 'x' marks above each note on the staff.

Look, my right - hand side is free. \_\_\_\_\_ come and sit by me.

Add student names to the chant while keeping a steady beat using an alternating pat-sch-clap pattern. (Patsching is using both hands to gently pat your thighs.) A drum may be used to help support the steady beat.

Students sit in a circle with one vacant spot. The person to the left of the vacant spot calls a classmate to move from their spot to sit in the empty spot. As a new empty spot is created, the person next to it must call someone else. This is to be accomplished without creating a break in the steady beat.

This is a great icebreaker as well as a fun way to learn the names of the students.

# Art credits

Balloons; row of seven children (Come Right In); 2 children with backpacks (Hip Hip Hooray); 2 children with backpacks (Bonjour, Bonjour); Children holding hands (Hello, Hello, How Do You Do?); playground ladder; fairy door

Images by Annalise Batista <https://www.etsy.com/shop/MeAndAmelieDesign>

Education tree, 3 children walking together

[Image by Dung phan from Pixabay](#)

Marching Soldier, blue djembe, group of students (Learning Student names) – Richard Bennett

Children dancing in a line – [Image by Christian Dorn](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Children with letters – Image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

White horse – Image by [Nikitax11](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Circle of children – Image by [Ckler-Free-Vector-Images](#) from [Pixabay](#)

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