

Middle School Exploring Music Course Syllabus

What you will learn in this course

Middle School Exploring Music

What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘music’? Do you think about your favorite band or artist? Or do you think about instruments and scales and chords? The word music means something different to everyone. Which is why in this Music course, there’s a little bit of something for everyone! You will learn about how we hear music; how music affects our lives; important elements of music like rhythm, pitch, and harmony; different musical genres; singing and your voice; various instruments; music composition; and the history and culture of music over the years. Tune up your understanding and appreciation for all things music by signing up for this course!

Unit 1: Good Vibrations (Intro to Music)

Imagine a baseball game that began without singing the National Anthem. What about a birthday party where, before cutting the cake, no one sang “Happy Birthday,” or a wedding where the bride walked down the aisle to silence? Music has been an important part of human life for thousands of years, and we are just now discovering the impact that music can have on the human brain, emotions, and even the forces that shape history. In this Unit, we will explore the origins of music and the role that music plays in our lives.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Reflect on the different places and times that music is heard
- Discuss the origin of music in human culture
- Summarize the roles that music plays in human society
- Understand the way our brain processes music
- Examine careers in the music industry

Unit 2: Elements of Music

Have you ever been to a concert and wondered where the musicians learned how to perform so powerfully? They all started by learning the basics: the elements of music! You might be familiar with rhythm, pitch, melody, and harmony. We will explore these elements a little deeper so that you have the tools you need to create beautiful music!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Tap the steady beat to any song
- Recognize note values and rhythms when written
- Understand how rhythm and melody work together
- Describe how a piano keyboard can help us understand steps, scales, and chords

Unit 3: Start With Your Ears

In our busy world, how do we learn to really focus on the music all around us? Should we listen for the beat, the melody, or the harmony? What is most important? Well, the answer of course is—all of them! In this unit, we will learn how to sharpen our listening skills in order to hear the details of music. Doing so will help us to begin thinking about music in a new way.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Use active listening when enjoying a piece of music
- Apply the listening checklist to any piece of music
- Discuss the grand staff and how it relates to the musical elements
- Describe the importance of transcribing for musicians

Unit 4: Exploring the Voice

Even if you just sing in the shower, it's important to understand how our voices help us connect to ourselves and others, and also how our voices help us to express ourselves musically. In this unit we will build on our knowledge of musical elements to start reading real music!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Follow the five steps to reading a new piece of music
- Find the key signature, time signature, and your vocal part
- Use solfege syllables to begin singing new music
- Practice guidelines for vocal health to make sure your voice stays healthy and flexible

Middle School Exploring Music Midterm Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from the first four units in this course (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

Unit 5: Instrumental Skills

Picture yourself listening to your favorite song. What instruments can you detect? Even modern music, which is heavily dependent on electronic “instruments,” is based on instruments you may know well: guitar, trumpets, drums, piano (synthesizers). Maybe you're familiar with video games where you competitively play virtual instruments—Guitar Hero, anyone?

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify the different instrument families
- Define the difference between classical music and world music
- Become familiar with world instruments
- Discuss musicianship and musical repertoire

Unit 6: Musical Cultures

Human beings have been creating and enjoying music for thousands of years. Because we're such a creative species, we use music to communicate, solidify social bonds, and entertain ourselves, so this music has evolved into different categories. As you can see from our study of world instruments, the sky's the limit when it comes to creating new music and new instruments. Now, let's become familiar with the ways music has evolved over time and in different places!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Understand why music developed differently in different times and places
- Summarize the history of music from the ancient period through the 20th century
- Distinguish the music of various genres
- Discuss the role of technology in the evolution of music

Unit 7: Dynamic Performing

Let's rock! It's time to finally put all of our musical skills to work as we learn to play the guitar together. But first, we'll talk about good performances. Have you ever felt chills down your spine as you listened to a piece of music? How does that happen, and how can we make sure we are performing well for the audience? Let's find out!

What will you learn in this unit?

- Discuss why preparation and musicianship are essential for an effective musical performance
- Identify signs of performance anxiety and develop tools to combat it
- Understand how to hold, tune, and use proper finger positioning on the guitar
- Practice a simple guitar progression

Unit 8: Composing and Arranging

By sticking with a few guidelines, we all have the power to follow in the footsteps of Beethoven or Bernstein! When we compose new music, we will draw upon our musical elements and put them together to create a new piece of music.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Discuss why the definition of a "good" composition will vary
- Craft melody and harmony
- Explain how a melodic motive and chord progression work together
- Utilize various compositional techniques such as repetition, contrast, and variation

Middle School Exploring Music Final Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.

- Take a course exam based on material from units five to eight in this course – the last four units. (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

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