

5 Squirrel songs

RESOURCES ► CD track

Information

These two contrasting squirrel songs work well alone or, when sung together, offer a satisfying and accessible way into part-singing. The accompanying percussion ostinato has the feel of a quiet, still squirrel, and then a squirrel quickly running up a tree. These are good songs for reinforcing melody shapes and basic sight-singing skills.

Starting

- Start by learning the drum, shaker, and guiro ostinato patterns. Teach them as a body-percussion pattern first (drum = patsch, shaker = clap, guiro = click):

Guiro/click	Z	Z	Z		
Shaker/clap	Z		Z		
Drum/patsch		Z		Z	

- Start with just the patsching | Z | Z , saying the rhythm syllables (slug, *sh*, slug, *sh*, or ta, *sh*, ta, *sh*).
- Then transfer some children to the drum, eventually inner-hearing the syllables.
- Do the same process with the other two instruments, shaker (*clap*) and guiro (*click*).

Let us chase the squirrel

- Hand sign and sing 1, 2, 1 (doh, ray, doh), then sing 'up the hickory tree' while hand signing.
- Sing the song to your group, asking them to listen carefully and see if they can join in when they hear 'up the hickory tree'. Try this a couple of times, then sing the whole song together.

Hop old squirrel

- Hand sign and sing 3, 3, 3 (me, me, me), then sing 'hop old squirrel' while hand signing.
- Sing the song to the group, and invite them (with an open hand) to join in with this line; do this several times, gradually adding the 'eidledum's.

Teaching and rehearsing

- When the songs can be sung confidently, add the percussion parts. Wait until the group can sing the song while doing each pattern before adding the next one. This will probably need to be done over several sessions.

Listen out

- Make sure the group is making a really nice singing sound throughout the songs.
- Try to breathe after each two-bar phrase; this should give enough breath to keep each phrase smooth.
- Watch out for the two-note slur on 'squirrel'; keep it smooth and connected, without punching the last note of the phrase.

Performing

- My arrangement of these songs is a suggestion and not definitive, so feel free to adapt it to the needs of your group. There are lots of elements to work with. Try exploring dynamics (how loudly or quietly they sing) and tempo (how fast or slow they sing). Put the various parts of the arrangement in any order, letting your group decide which to include for each performance.
- Use the instruments you have to hand and experiment with the timbre. What does a scurrying squirrel sound like?

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Let us chase the squirrel

Trad. American
arr. Jo McNally

Musical score for the first system of "Let us chase the squirrel". It features four staves: Guiro, Shaker, Drum, and Voice. The Guiro, Shaker, and Drum parts are marked with 'x' symbols indicating rhythmic patterns. The Voice part is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics "Let us chase the squir - rel," are written below the voice staff. The Piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature, providing harmonic accompaniment.

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Musical score for the second system of "Let us chase the squirrel". It features three staves: Voice, Piano (treble and bass clefs), and a blank staff at the top. The Voice part continues with the lyrics "up the hick-ory, down the hick-ory, let us chase the squir - rel, up the hick-ory tree." A checkmark is placed above the first note of the second measure. The Piano part continues with accompaniment. The blank staff at the top contains a bar line and a repeat sign.

Continues overleaf

Hop old squirrel

7

Hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum,

10

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee.

Both songs together

13

Part 1
Hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum,

Part 2
Let us chase the squir - rel,

16

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum, hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum dee,
up the hick-ory, down the hick-ory, let us chase the squir - rel, up the hick-ory tree,

19

hop old squir-rel, ei-dle-dum, ei-dle-dum.
up the hick-ory tree.