

ATC Language & Travel
Certificate in English Language Teaching
Authentic Materials: Handout 2

Ideas for Using Songs in Class

Reading or Listening Comprehension

Use the song text as a normal reading or listening text with the bonus of hearing it sung afterwards

Listen and Discuss

Students listen to the whole song once or twice, or to a shorter section. Discuss what happened, reactions, interpretations, predictions, etc. Printed lyrics could be given if you wish.

Gapped Text

Give students the lyrics with certain words blanked out. They have to listen carefully and fill in the missing words. This is the most common way of using songs in the classroom (perhaps a bit overused!). Vary the task usefully by, for example, using the gaps as a pre-listening exercise, with students predicting what the missing words are.

Song Jumble

Cut up lyrics into separate lines. In small groups students try to work out the original order. When ready they listen and compare their guess with the actual song.

Sing Along

The aim is to learn the tune and to get the rhythm well enough to sing along with the original recording. This can be quite challenging and requires some careful preparation work on practising stress and rhythm.

Compose

'Here's the tune – now you write the lyrics!'

Matching Pictures

'Here are 20 pictures connected with the song. Listen and put them in the order in which you hear them in the song'

Action Movements

Listen to one line at a time. For each line, the students invent a mimed action, which they teach each other and then all perform. Regularly replay the song from the beginning for them to recall and do the relevant actions. After they have done one or two verses, hand out the complete lyrics; in small groups, the students find movements for the rest of the song. At the end, all come together to watch a performance of the different versions (great with young learners).

Dictation

Dictate the chorus or the whole song. Compare with the recording.

Picture Dictation:

Decide on a representative picture of something that happens in the song. Dictate the information about this picture, a line at a time, to the students who draw (not write) their interpretation. For example, 'The sun is shining in the sky, there are a lot of people in the street, there is a dark cloud overhead, it's just starting to rain,' etc. By the time you've finished, a lot of the essential lexis and phrases from the song will have been circulating, and the song should not be too difficult to follow (also great for young learners)