



What are STACCATO and LEGATO?

Age Range: Elementary

Learning Objective: Students will. **FORMATTING NOTE:** This text box is 7.6". The type is Poppins Light, size 10. With the bold being Poppins Medium. The pink box is 7.8" wide

ENGAGE students

INTRODUCE. Here is sample language to introduce the fundamental concept of articulation, beginning with staccato/legato. Modify as necessary.

"Music is full of opposites: high and low, loud and soft." (*Use your voice to reinforce each concept. Say "high" in a high voice, etc.*) "Did you ever notice that sometimes music can sound smooth, and sometimes it sounds bumpy?"

"Here are some smooth, connected sounds." (*Demonstrate by playing a few connected notes on a piano, keyboard, classroom instrument, or by using your voice. Examples should be short.*) "If I add some space or separation between each note, it sounds bumpy." (*Play same phrase with staccato articulation. Repeat a few times.*)

"Musicians call smooth connected sounds *legato* (leh-GAH-toe). When they see a smooth line like this" (*hold up legato cue card*) "connecting the notes in their music, they know to sing or play *legato*."

"When I hold up the *legato* card, practice saying *legato* with me." (*Do this a few times.*)

"Musicians call those bumpy, bouncy sounds *staccato* (stah-KAH-toe.) When they see dots like these" (*flash staccato cue card*) "under or over notes, they know to play or sing *staccato*."

"Let's add try making a smooth motion when we see the *legato* card, and a short, bumpy motion when we see the *staccato* card." (*Demonstrate a legato motion by using a hand or a few fingers to paint broad strokes in the air. Demonstrate a staccato motion by using a few fingers to "hop" up and down your forearm.*)

Note to teachers: Extend this activity by using large-motor movements, like pretend ice-skating for *legato* and whole-body hopping for *staccato*. Add in a "freeze" if necessary to encourage regulated movement. Adjust as necessary to include all learners.

EXPLORE sounds

SING. "We can sing *staccato* and *legato*. Let's practice singing staccato." (*Select a simple, familiar classroom song and lead the class singing it with short, chopped words.*) "Now let's try the same song, *legato* this time." (*Repeat, singing legato. Exaggerate the differences to reinforce comprehension.*)

PLAY. Using the *legato* and *staccato* cue cards, prompt students to play body percussion, found objects, or classroom instruments. For percussion-related instruments, *legato* might seem tricky at first. Encourage students to get creative. *Legato* on a hand drum might mean dragging a finger across the head of the drum. *Legato* using rhythm sticks might mean rubbing one stick down the length of the other.



STACCATO and LEGATO, cont.

EXTEND learning

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

- COMPARE. Listen to these two pieces of music from *Carnival of the Animals* and ask students to figure out which is *staccato* and which is *legato*. (Hint: Kangaroos are *staccato*, Swan is *legato*.) Listen again and move around the room like those animals. (Audio links embedded in website version of lesson.)
- SHOW. Show students the notation of *legato* and *staccato* using the pictures below. Play a game of “I Spy” using [Prelude No. 2 by Ruth Crawford Seeger](#). The video shows the music, so students can look for the *legato* arc and the *staccato* dots.
- LISTEN. “Listen to [this music](#), by Antonio Vivaldi. Do you notice that one musician is playing a smooth, *legato* melody, while the others are playing a *staccato* accompaniment underneath?” (For older students, ask half the class move to the *staccato* part while the other half to move to the *legato* part.)