

Activity 4

Count on Me

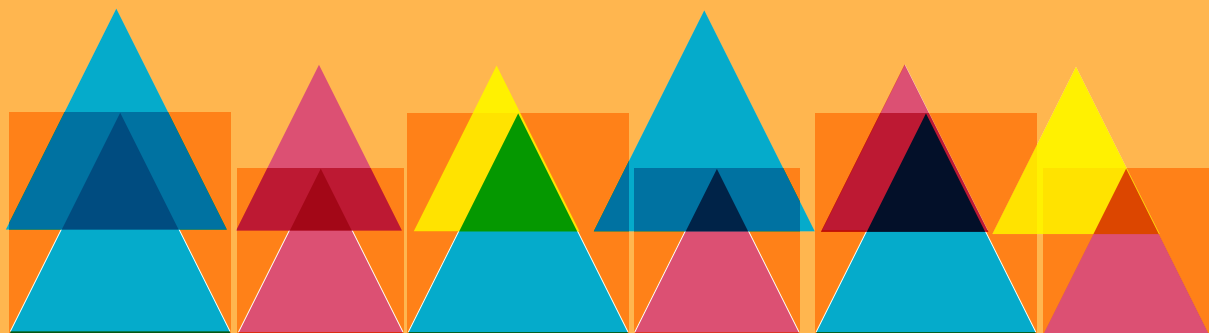
Focus Question: How does the addition of pitches change the way cycles sound when layered?

Objective: I can compose melodic cycles and experiment with layering them.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- ☐ Household musical objects (from Activity 3)
- ☐ Family member or recording device or layering software
- ☐ Method to take notes



Step 1:

Composing Pitch Cycles

Line up your 6 instruments again from lowest pitch to highest pitch. Listen carefully. You may find it helpful to use a virtual piano like this <https://pianu.com>.

Try counting as you play from low to high. You should always play the 1 on your lowest instrument.

Repeat a 2 cycle: **1-2, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2**, etc.

Repeat a 3 cycle: **1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3**, etc.

Repeat a 4 cycle: **1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4**, etc.

Repeat a 5 cycle: **1-2-3-4-5, 1-2-3-4-5, 1-2-3-4-5**, etc.

Repeat a 6 cycle: **1-2-3-4-5-6, 1-2-3-4-5-6, 1-2-3-4-5-6**, etc.

Practice repeating each number cycle with a metronome until you can play with the steady beat.

Step 2:

Layering Pitched Cycles

Decide on 2 number groups to play on your instruments. Record 1 part or ask a family member to help you. (If playing with a family member, face each other and set the instruments up between you so you can play on opposite sides.)

Here is an example of a 5 beat and a 3 beat:

Your recording or family member:



You:



Try different cycle combinations to hear how they sound. Try counting out loud and also in your head so you can hear the instrument sounds. Keep practicing until you get it to line up accurately!

Listen as you perform and then reflect by answering the following questions:

- How did it sound when you played the same and different numbers at the same time?
- How would you describe the sound of the music you're making?
- What strategies work best for starting and stopping?

Step 3: Creating an Arc

Create a short piece using cycle layers. Select a feeling or energy for your piece and plan out 3 sections like this:

**first cycle
combination**

middle section

**end cycle
combination**

For the beginning and end, use cycle combinations to match your feeling and energy choices (calming down, gaining excitement, etc.). You can make the middle section another cycle combination or something totally different with your instruments. Maybe you improvise! Use the following questions to refine your piece:

- How do I want my piece to feel at the beginning?
- What tempo (speed) would work best?
- How many times do I want to repeat my cycles and how should I stop?
- How long do I want each section to be?
- Do I want to add something surprising?

You should use your counting and layers to inspire your piece, but if your ideas build into something slightly different, that's okay too! Just check with your teacher about what they expect if you are sending them a recording.

To Continue Exploring

- Experiment with how dynamics (volume) and accents (strong energy on a beat) can add more interest to your layered cycles piece.
- Increase the tempo for an added challenge!

Step 4: Practicing and Performing

Practice your short piece to make it even better. Try these practice tips:

- Make sure you have a steady beat. Try a metronome to see if that helps.
- Work on your transitions so you start and stop each section cleanly.
- Perform with a family member or record yourself playing each part and use layering software to overlay them. (Ask your teacher or search online for free layering programs.)

Practice until you can perform your layered cycles piece all the way through. This might require some time and patience, but you'll get it! Have fun with it, and record your best, most accurate performance.

Submit your final recording to your teacher or classmates.

To Continue Exploring

Listen to some music that uses repeated patterns, cycles, or ringing instruments:

- Glass harp: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdoTdG_VNV4
- Steve Reich's "Clapping Music": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNZOzpWCTIA>
- Steve Reich's "Piano Phase": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P_9hDzG1i0
- Indian classical music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=248&v=SQoY-gYiYQ8&feature=emb_logo
- Traditional Indonesian gamelan music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEWCCSuHsuQ>