

# The Wild Side: Motivation Through Thoughtful Rehearsal Games

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Well planned games are an instructional technique that help with motivation! The following games are a collection of activities that I have learned and tweaked over the years.

*Disclaimer: You must work daily to create and maintain a positive atmosphere in your classroom.*

## **Game need to know:**

- 1) Purpose of game
- 2) Materials
- 3) Level of preparation on music
- 4) Steps
- 5) Desired result

## **Posture Games:**

- 1) Doctor/Epidemic
  - a) Purpose: Correcting posture in a positive and fun way.
  - b) Materials: None
  - c) Level of Preparation: Any level.
  - d) Steps:
    - i) Select one student to leave the room.
    - ii) While the student is out of the room, the class will decide on ONE posture error to make while they perform a warm-up, scale or passage in their music. (No other posture errors allowed!)
    - iii) The student, or "doctor", will come back in and watch the class while they play. They must try to figure out what posture error the class is making.
    - iv) The entire class (including the doctor), must perform the passage with the posture error corrected.
  - e) Desired result: Students will focus on specific posture issues and consciously correct them.
- 2) Do it wrong, Do it right
  - a) Purpose: Notice and correct posture errors. Sometimes knowing what is incorrect will help students more than *just* knowing correct posture.
  - b) Materials: None
  - c) Level of Preparation: Any level of preparation.
  - d) Steps
    - i) Students play a passage.
    - ii) Teacher calls out a posture error for all students to make. (ex. Straight pinky, lean back in chair, feet not flat on the floor)
    - iii) This is a great time to discuss how the sound/body was affected by the bad posture.
    - iv) Students play with the posture corrected.
  - e) Desired result: Students are aware of what correct posture looks/feels like in comparison to poor posture.
  - f) Variation: Use for intonation. Have students play a note in a chord out of tune or without an accidental (C#s!). Then, have them play with the correct note/intonation.

### 3) Bow-lympics

- a) Purpose: Draw attention to the bow hand for an entire class period.
- b) Materials: Life savers, cups of various sizes, prizes (if desired)
- c) Level of Preparation: Can be played at any point of the year.
- d) Steps
  - i) Game 1: Spider Crawl Race
    - (1) All students in the class stand and find an opponent.
    - (2) Students will Spider Crawl Race that opponent.
    - (3) The winner of the race will find another opponent, while the non-winner will follow the winner around, cheering them on.
    - (4) In the end, there will be two opponents with large groups of students following them, cheering them on.
    - (5) The winner gets glory points.
  - ii) Game 2: Life Saver Relay
    - (1) Leaving the Life Savers in their individual wrappers, poke a hole so that they will easily balance on the tip of the bow. (Basses may balance the Life Saver on their hand.)
    - (2) Students line up into teams.
    - (3) Students will relay race to a defined point and back to their team until all team members have gone.
    - (4) The winning team gets glory points.
  - iii) Game 3: Bow-lympic Cup Pass
    - (1) Like hot potato
    - (2) Students will pass around a cup on the tip of their bow until the music stops.
    - (3) You can be creative in regards to who is playing, what they are playing, etc.
    - (4) When a student has the cup on the tip of their bow as the music stops, the other participants will check their bow hand.
    - (5) If their bow hand is correct, they get glory points.
  - iv) Balloon Race
    - (1) Much like the Life Saver race, students will have a relay race while keeping a balloon in the air with the tip of their bow.
    - (2) Students must maintain a good, balanced and relaxed bow hand the entire time.
    - (3) The balloon must stay in the air the entire time. Even in between race partners!
    - (4) Go as fast as you can (without running!).
- e) Desired Result: Students will focus on their bow hand while having fun!

- 4) Get up!
  - a) Purpose: Get kids moving and working in small groups.
  - b) Materials: None
  - c) Level of Preparation: Any level of preparation.
  - d) Steps
    - i) Instruct students to get out of their seats and go....
      - (1) Violin/Viola: Stand with their upper right arm against the wall to prevent a "pirate arm".
      - (2) Violin/Viola: Stand with their scroll against the wall to keep them from sagging scrolls.
      - (3) Find a partner and watch them play \_\_\_\_\_ and give them feedback.
      - (4) Find a partner. One bows while the other plays left hand!
      - (5) Find another place in the room to play \_\_\_\_\_.
    - ii) Come back to your seats.
  - e) Desired Results: Kids will get moving and give each other feedback.

### **Rehearsal Games**

- 1) Pencil Game
  - a) Purpose: Help students keep track of how many times they have played a passage correctly.
  - b) Materials: Pencil
  - c) Level of preparation: Any point in the learning process
  - d) Steps
    - i) Students move a pencil across their stand every time they play a passage correctly.
    - ii) You can generally ask students to move it across in 3-5 moves.
    - iii) Beast mode: If they make a mistake/don't achieve the goal, move the pencil to the beginning.
    - iv) Variation I: Role physical dice or use a dice application on your phone.
    - v) Variation II: Spill the Beans! Have a jar of beans. Spill out an undefined amount. Every time you play something correctly, put a bean back in the jar.
  - e) Goal: Students will focus on correct repetitions while learning a practice strategy.
- 2) Musical Chairs
  - a) Purpose: Familiarize students with other sections of the orchestra and how their part fits together.
  - b) Materials: None
  - c) Level of Preparation: Students should be comfortable with the notes and rhythms in their own part.
  - d) Steps
    - i) Students are instructed to sit in another seat in the room at random. They may not sit next to another student from their section.
    - ii) Run rehearsal as usual.
    - iii) If desired, have students switch a few times during the class.
    - iv) At the end of class (or after each piece/rehearsal section), discuss what students heard that they didn't hear before this rehearsal (encourage them to be specific).

- v) Variation: Group the kids in quartets/quintets/chamber ensembles. You can have them choose their group, or you can choose their group for them.
- vi) Variation II: Set the room up in a large circle and have students sit at random (not next to someone from their own section).
- e) Desired Result: Students will be aware of the parts that other sections play, as well as whether they rely on their section to play their part.

### 3) Hot and Cold

- a) Purpose: Creating effective dynamics
- b) Materials: An object to hide
- c) Level of Preparation: This game is better closer to the concert, as it requires students to pay attention to something going on outside of their music. Students should be very comfortable with their music.
- d) Steps
  - i) Choose one student to leave the room. While they are out of the room, the class will decide where to hide an object.
  - ii) When the student comes back in, they must find the object with the help of the class.
  - iii) The class will play a longer passage or an entire piece. The louder they play, the closer the student is to the object. The softer they play, the further away the student is from the object.
  - iv) You may repeat as many times as desired. Be sure to go back and play the passage/piece after the game with the students exaggerating the dynamics like they did to help the student find the object.
- e) Desired result: Students will play with effective dynamic contrast.

### 4) Balloon Game

- a) Purpose: Listening across and following the conductor
- b) Materials: Balloons
- c) Level of Preparation: Close to performance. Students are comfortable with their individual parts.
- d) Steps
  - i) Students play through a longer passage or shorter piece that they are comfortable with their own parts on, but struggling to listen across the orchestra/watch the conductor.
  - ii) Students THEN must play the passage while keeping a balloon up in the air. (Team work!)
  - iii) If you would like to go pro level, add more balloons each time you play the passage.
  - iv) Instruct the students that if they can play the passage while keeping a balloon in the air, they can listen across/watch the conductor.
  - v) Play the passage without the balloon.
- e) Desired Result: Students will have the confidence to get out of their music and listen across the orchestra/watch the conductor.

5) Invisible Conductor

- a) Purpose: Force students to listen to each other and play as a chamber group.
- b) Materials: None
- c) Level of Preparation: Close to the concert. Students should be very comfortable with the music.
- d) Steps
  - i) Select a piece of music that students need to focus on listening across the orchestra.
  - ii) Play small passages and, eventually, the entire piece without the conductor.
- e) Desired Result: Students will listen across the orchestra and know how their part fits together with other sections.

Know what resources are available to you:

- Playing the String Game by Phillis Young
- The String Play by Phillis Young
- Orchestrateacher.com - Angela Harman
- Former Professors
- Mentors
- Colleagues
- Students

Questions? Feel free to contact me at:

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