

Do you have trouble explaining dotted rhythms to your students?
Do you have students who struggle with syncopation?...
or triplets?... or hemiola?...

Try using

RHYTHM RODS

by Nikhil Dally

“Rhythm Rods make the explaining more fun and the explanation clearer.”
- Mark Schneider, former President of the Danish Kodály Society



For students to play music well, they need to have a deep-seated understanding of rhythmic values and their relationships in music. This understanding needs to develop in both brain and body simultaneously, so that the students' understanding of rhythmic concepts is not only an intellectual one, but also deeply and instinctively felt. The great challenge for any music teacher is to ensure that students develop both these ways of understanding rhythm, not just in parallel but also in conjunction, so that each supports and confirms the other. What is needed, then, is a mediator between the physical and the intellectual; a tool which is as concrete, clear and measurable as stepping or clapping, but as easy to manipulate, to record, to fix or to change as written notation. It is to meet these needs that I have developed **Rhythm Rods**.

Rhythm Rods come in the following values: semibreve, semibreve rest, dotted minim, minim, minim rest, dotted crotchet, crotchet, crotchet rest, dotted quaver, triplet crotchet, quaver, quaver rest, triplet quaver, semiquaver.

The following standard sets are available (*please contact us for an up-to-date price list*):

Full Set: 4 semibreves, 2 semibreve rests, 5 dotted minims, 8 minims, 4 minim rests, 12 dotted crotchets, 24 crotchets, 8 crotchet rests, 8 dotted quavers, 6 triplet crotchets, 32 quavers, 8 quaver rests, 12 triplet quavers, 16 semiquavers.

Reduced Set: 2 semibreves, 2 dotted minims, 4 minims, 4 dotted crotchets, 8 crotchets, 4 crotchet rests, 16 quavers, 6 triplet quavers, 8 semiquavers.

Mini Set: 8 minims, 24 crotchets, 8 crotchet rests, 32 quavers.

optional extra: Wooden Box (suitable for the Full Set).

Sets of **Rhythm Rods** can also be made to your specifications. Please enquire if you are interested.

Rhythm Rods are a welcome addition to my favourite teaching toys. As we have learned from Kodály and from Géza Szilvay, it is important to involve all the children's senses in our music lessons. Rhythm Rods give the children a unique opportunity to see simple or complex rhythms unfold themselves physically, precisely and clearly (each note or rest value having its own defining colour). At the same time the same rhythm can be grasped as a whole, depending on the perspective with which the teacher and pupil see the rhythm: following it, beat by beat from start to finish, or backing off, seeing the whole rhythm as a picture. Goethe called architecture "frozen music". With the Rhythm Rods we have a good start with "frozen rhythm". Just as important for the children, but perhaps not so obvious for the adults, is the fact that the children can hold and feel each Rhythm Rod, each note value, yes, even each rest! For many children, this experience may make the difference between understanding and not, remembering and not. The workmanship of the wooden rods is excellent, they are a pleasure to handle and to see.

An example: One of our often encountered difficulties is explaining dotted note values. The Rhythm Rods make the explaining more fun and the explanation clearer, easier to grasp. Another example: two children learning to play together, or a child learning to play together with an unaccustomed second part, can get a head start by seeing both rhythms simultaneously without the constrictive concentration on the finger work. So my new Rhythm Rods have their place on the shelf.

- Mark Schneider, former President of the Danish Kodály Society, Colourstrings teacher and trainer

I used the rods to help reinforce the understanding of syncopation with some 6 yr olds, who loved using the red and blue blocks to fill the length of a black block and then clap the rhythm back. Seeing the length of the crotchets as double that of the quavers really helped give an extra dimension to their understanding and they would have done it for hours if I had let them!

Again, in the same week, a piano pupil was struggling with playing quavers evenly in the right hand whilst playing crotchets in the left. We got the rods out and used them to reconstruct two bars of the rhythm that he was trying to play: one for the right hand and one for the left hand.

The rods seem to have endless uses. They are beautifully made, strong, bright and colourful and extremely precise. The children love to use them and they are, as I have said, immensely versatile. Now, I can't imagine being without them!

- Emma Palmer, Colourstrings Cert. music kindergarten and piano teacher

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