

## Christmas Jam

This is a great activity to use with small groups or ensembles before Christmas. It is a lot of fun, plus it **develops aural, creative and ensemble skills** along the way. Here, I have arranged it for easy strings, woodwind, brass, guitars, piano and keyboards. However, you can use the principles explained below for any level by changing the keys and rhythms appropriately. And, of course, you can adapt the words to fit the season! The words are there to provide fun and to help remember rhythms, but do not necessarily need to be sung by learners.

Please see below the easy-to-follow instructions, followed by the material to use for each family of instruments.

- 1) Teach each part aurally. Each part is quite short, and should suit the technical level of the pupils - so it shouldn't take long to learn each one. Here is a brief description of how you might teach the parts aurally. *For more help, advice and ideas go to <https://musicwild.co.uk/videos-1>*
  - a) With the learners, play through the notes that are going to be used in that part.
  - b) Sing the part, name and play the first note, and ask learners to work out the other notes. You can do this by singing the part and asking them to copy back as an echo until they have the correct notes. Good questioning also helps, such as: 'is the next note the same as the previous one; if it was different, did it go higher or lower'.
  - c) With the learners play the part over a few times without a break - i.e. on a loop - to embed it.
  
- 2) Next, the learners are going to play their part on a loop, and will be playing it simultaneously with other parts. They will need to know when to play, and when to stop, following a visual signal from you. Explain to them what signs you are going to use to stop and start them playing. Stop and start each part at different times, overlapping them, and experimenting with different combinations. Any number of parts might be playing at any one time.

- 3) You can now bring in dynamics if you wish. The sign for this could be hands close together = quiet, hands far apart = loud.
- 4) Ask learners to volunteer to be the 'teacher'. Ask them to direct as you did, in other words, bringing in the different parts, and – if they are confident to - indicating dynamics. The decisions will be the learner's. In other words, they will be creating their own arrangement. Be ready to offer help when needed. They will need to concentrate hard on phrase structure, for example, when does the phrase of a particular part finish? At exactly what point can a part start/re-start to fit in with the other parts? Inexperienced learners may need a little guidance on this. They should be advised on indicating to a player/section that they need to get ready – a 'watch me' gesture - and helped with counting 4 beats in. More experienced learners might be able to make decisions about, and to indicate, dynamics regarding balance between the parts.
- 5) Try to give as many learners as you can the chance to direct. You may wish to repeat the activity in subsequent sessions.
- 6) Encourage evaluation at the end, for example: what went well? What sounded particularly good? Which parts sounded good together? What made a good start or a good finish?

# Strings

This can be used in group lessons or string groups. Parts can be played on single instruments - e.g. all violas, or a combination of different string instruments – e.g. the top three parts could be violin or viola and the bottom cello and/or double bass. Don't forget that the parts are learnt aurally, so there is no need to worry about clefs!

## Christmas Jam

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Christmas Jam". It consists of four staves of music, all in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has the lyrics "Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney". The second staff has "Christ - - mas pudd - - ing". The third staff has "Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree". The fourth staff has "Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes". The music is written in a simple, accessible style suitable for a string ensemble.

# Woodwind

These can be used in group lessons – including for mixed instruments, such as flute and clarinet, or ensembles. The first version is in concert pitch, and the second is transposed to Bb and down the octave. They can be played together.

## Christmas Jam

Musical score for "Christmas Jam" in concert pitch (B-flat major, 4/4 time). The score consists of four staves. The lyrics are: "Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney", "Christ - - mas pudd - - ing", "Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree", and "Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes".

## Christmas Jam

Musical score for "Christmas Jam" transposed to B-flat major and down an octave. The score consists of four staves. The lyrics are: "Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney", "Christ - - mas pudd - - ing", "Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree", and "Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes".

## Brass

This can be used in group lessons or ensembles, with single instruments – e.g. all trumpets - or any combination, so long as instruments are in the same key.

### Christmas Jam

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The lyrics are as follows:

Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney  
Christ - - mas pudd - - ing  
Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree  
Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes

# Guitars

This can be used in groups of any size. Chord symbols are given for those wishing to use them.

## Christmas Jam

*Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney*

*Christ - - mas pudd - - ing*

*Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree*

*Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes*

*Em Em G G*

## Piano/keyboard

Two versions are given – one using just black notes, for added fun. Parts can be played at any octave, so there could be more than one player on each instrument if needed. Chord symbols are given for keyboard players in the first version.

### Christmas Jam

Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney

Christ - - mas pudd - - ing

Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree

Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes

Em Em G G

### Christmas Jam (all black keys)

Fath - er Christ - mas is stuck up the chim - ney

Christ - - mas pudd - - ing

Pre - sents un - der - neath the tree

Snow - - flakes snow - - flakes