

Blue Jello - A Delicious Way to Study Rhythm

by Michiko Yurko

Music Mind Games brings joyfulness and creativity to help students develop skills to read rhythms correctly and independently in musical scores. This is achieved by circumventing three traditional pedagogical practices.

- 1) Using mathematical equations such as “two quarter notes equal one half note”
- 2) Using mostly single notes & rests and simple combinations
- 3) Teaching rhythm in combination with melody

Understanding the mathematical relationships between notes and rests is essential, but an equation alone does not translate into sound. To make this important connection between math and rhythm, Music Mind Games uses a friendly, mathematically pronounced vocabulary of 30+ words called Blue Jello (♩ = blue and ♪ = jello). Students intuit the math rhythm as they say the vocabulary while reading correctly spaced and uniquely designed rhythmic symbols.

Blue Jello uses a full assortment of rhythmic patterns from the beginning. This is similar to how children learn to speak; children absorb language naturally as parents worldwide talk freely without simplifying their speech. Deferring the study of exciting patterns such as triplets, sixteenth notes, and quintuplets sends the unspoken message that they are difficult, even though they are not.

Blue Jello is taught separately from melody and time signatures to help develop musicians who can read with rhythmic accuracy and fluency. This is because it's typical to focus more on the pitch when trying to comprehend both melody and rhythm at once.

A Useful Vocabulary: Students of all ages are enthusiastically drawn to learn and study rhythms with Blue Jello. As they learn the Blue Jello words and hand signs and see the Blue Jello drawings, their natural reaction is to laugh with glee. They are proud of themselves for understanding how to decode various rhythmic symbols and quickly realize that even complex rhythms are not so complicated. Gaining confidence early on enables them to tackle advanced concepts sooner than they would otherwise. This intrinsic desire is inspiring for everyone involved.



Rhythm Bingo (Denmark)







In most cases, one word represents each note, rest, and combination of notes. This helps the eye and ear group notes and rests correctly into beats, highlights rhythmic subtleties and demonstrates how rhythms fit within the musical pulse. As students read musical scores and play games with the *blue jello cards** (use these first), *rhythm bingo cards**, *blue jello word cards**, *real rhythm cards**, and *blue jello rhythm puzzles**, the Blue Jello words quickly become associated with their matching rhythmic patterns.

The words have been carefully chosen to fit the rhythms they represent and to bring smiles and laughter. Blue Jello words are modified slightly from regular speech to match their corresponding rhythms. Teachers should listen to their own voices and those of their students to ensure rhythmic accuracy. Students in non-English-speaking countries love the Blue Jello language. They are quick to learn the pronunciations, so translations are often unnecessary.

Stylized Symbols: Music Mind Games materials use stylized notes that direct students' eyes to the parts of the notes that indicate rhythmic duration, making it remarkably easy for students to read rhythmic patterns.



Hand Signs: Blue Jello hand signs ( = blue and  = jello) add a valuable kinesthetic element to enhance learning, just like Curwen hand signs help with pitch. Teachers are able to observe how well their students see and remember different shapes of notes and rests. Hand signs are excellent for developing finger dexterity, a useful side benefit for playing instruments. Using hand signs is preferred over clapping rhythms as they make it easier to hear the Blue Jello words and are more kinesthetic.

Drawings and Colors: Each Blue Jello word is represented by a drawing ( = blue and  = jello) to be humorous and engage different learning styles. Eight rainbow colors match the eight main rhythmic values, making it easier to understand which notes and rests are equal in value.

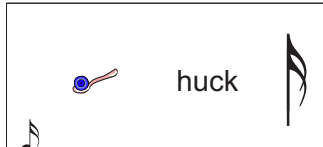

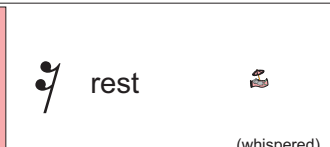
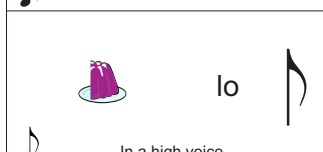
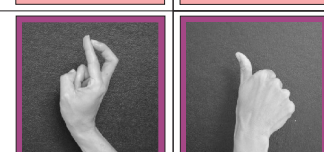


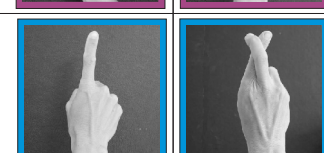
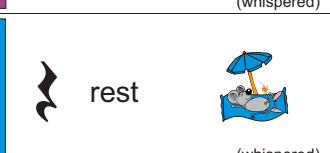

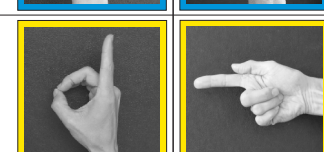


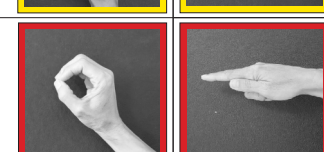
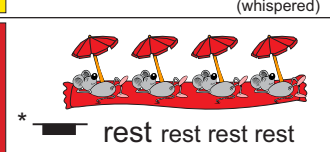



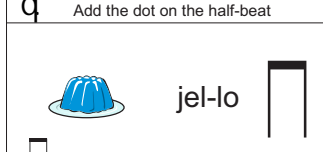

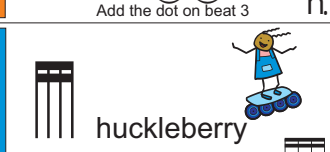
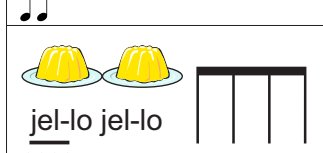



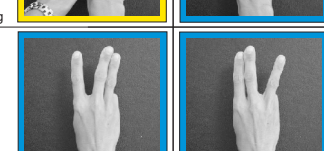

Printed Music and Composition: Using Blue Jello creates a natural progression to decoding simple and complex rhythms in scores. When Blue Jello is used as a tool to read music, tricky rhythmic sections are less tedious, a steady pulse is normal, tempos remain more even, and time signatures are understandable. Rhythmic dictation using Blue Jello words contributes to ease at writing rhythms in original compositions.

Applying Blue Jello is enjoyable and effective for musicians at all levels of music proficiency, building confidence and making it possible to truly understand rhythm.


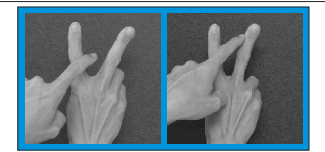
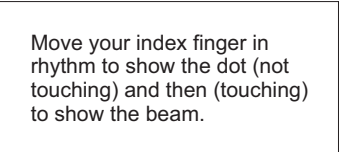

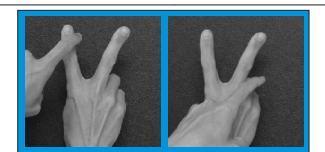
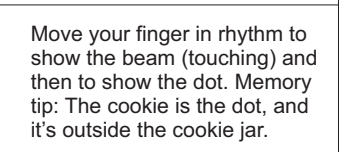

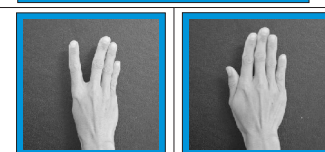
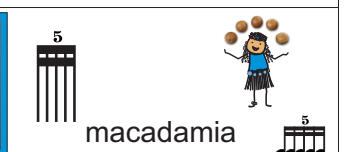

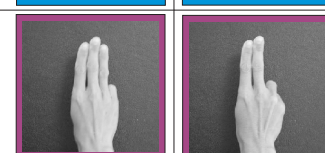
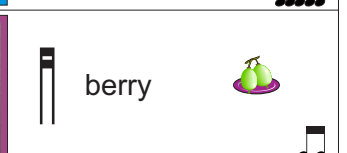
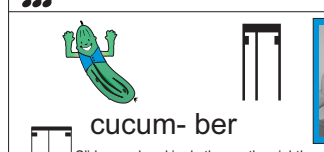


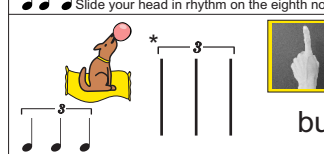
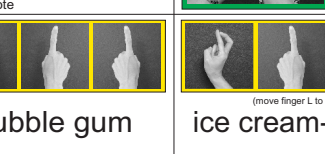
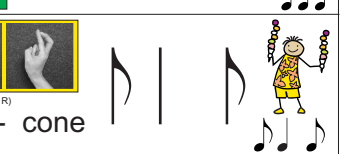
Two Tips: (1) Rather than creating words for note combinations using 32nd and 64th notes, pretend the top beam isn't there and use Blue Jello words. (2) When ties occur, first say the rhythm as if the tie wasn't there. Next, whisper the word “tie” in place of saying the Blue Jello word's syllable. Lastly, hold the tied note and think the word “tie”.




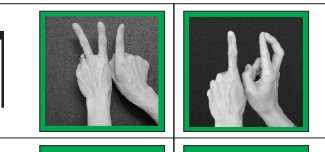
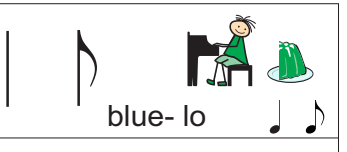

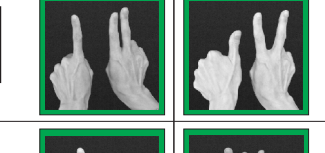
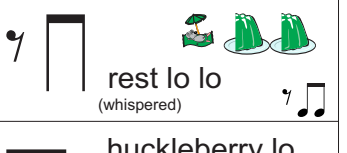
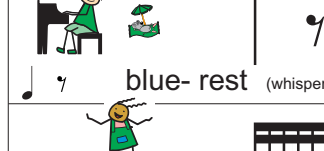
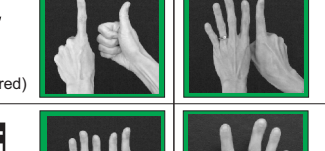
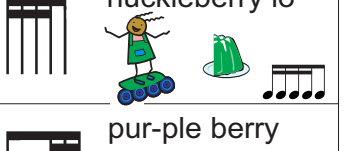

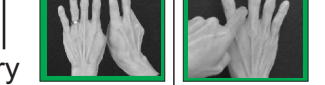

Blue Jello Vocabulary

Key:  * a whole rest is used in all meters for one measure of silence

Blue Jello Vocabulary for  Words are said with a flowing sound

* use the large slur from the real rhythm cards