

- **read** some traditional pitch notation to determine a starting pitch for a song and to play ostinatos or short passages of songs on bells.

Pitch surrounds you. Every day you hear high and low sounds. Yes, “high” and “low” are relative, but the terms do have generally accepted meanings. To clarify the meaning, imitate the tweeting sound of a small bird such as a sparrow or robin, then imitate the quacking sound of a duck. Alternate the sounds to hear the pitch difference and to feel the difference of the placement used to produce the sounds. The sound of the small bird is a high sound that seems to come out of the top part of your head. In contrast, the sound of the duck is comparatively low and seems to come for the bottom of your neck or from your chest. Therefore, most people would agree that a small bird makes a high sound and a duck makes a low sound.

In everyday life, people change the pitch of their voices. They do that to express different emotions. The sound of a crowd cheering “yea” at a game is higher than the sound of “boo.” Make those two sounds and simultaneously show the gesture that would naturally accompany the sound; your arms go up for the high sound of “yea” and down for “boo.” Just for fun, try cheering “yea” while making the “boo” gestures. It’s difficult! Now try the opposite gesture for “boo.” It feels strange. Make the sounds and gestures again the natural, spontaneous way with your voice and body moving together.

According to the pitch inflection used when saying them, the same words can convey different meanings. Say “It’s time to go.” Say it as if you’re pleased and excited, anxious to get to a special place. Chances are you said it in a generally high voice. Say it as if you’re sorry to leave: lower and lower. Say it as a command: middle of the voice without much pitch movement. As if it were a question: rising at the end. Variations in pitch make speech not only interesting but comprehensible. In the rhythm of “It’s time to go,” speak nonsense syllables such as “bap, bap, bap, bap.” Change the pitch to reflect one of the previously described situations. See if a friend or classmate can identify the situation by hearing the pitch inflection you use.

In speech, pitch conveys meaning. In music, pitch is essential for communicating emotion. The high, middle and low tones and the ascending and descending melodic lines change the feelings of the listener. The more the listener can perceive, the more she/he will be affected.

Children respond to the pitch of speech and to the pitch of music. As with the aspects of rhythm, tone color and dynamics that you previously covered, they are capable of developing concepts of the pitch aspects presented in this chapter. The included activities and skills, too, are appropriate for children. Therefore, you can take this chapter’s contents into your future classroom.

## HORIZONTAL PITCH

“I know that song,” is a phrase you might use when you hear a tune you recognize. You could just as correctly say, “I recognize that series of single pitches arranged horizontally.” A consecutive series of single pitches shaped by rhythm produces the **melody** or **tune** of a song. When you recognize a song, you actually are remembering the specific series of varying pitches that form the song’s melody. Just for fun, your instructor might sing the beginning of some familiar songs using a neutral syllable. You’ll recognize the melodies without hearing the words. When you think of a song, you think of the melody. Melody is the heart of song. Let’s explore melody, starting with the most obvious characteristics and moving to finer discriminations.

### PITCH AREAS FOR COMPARISON AND VOCAL PLACEMENT:

#### HIGH, MIDDLE AND LOW

You have contrasted high/low vocal sounds and explored the effect of pitch inflection in speech. Now we’ll move on to the general placement of the high, middle and low pitches in your voice beginning with speech. Let’s do a few more imitations of familiar sounds. You already imitated the sounds made by a small bird and a duck. Now let’s take another example: bells. There are different sizes and shapes of bells. We’ll start with an average, typical bell in a tower. People usually imitate its sound by saying, “ding-dong.” Speak that sound now in the middle part of your voice where you

normally speak. Try to imitate the resonance of the sound. You might even sway a bit to get into bell mode. Now think of a great big bell that will have a lower and longer tone. Say “bong” in the low part of your voice. Alternate between the “ding-dong” and the “bong” with attention to the different pitches and where they lie in your voice. Now think of jingle bells. They’re little and make a high jingly sound. Quickly say “jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle” to imitate their sound. Contrast the bell sounds. Make a gesture to show the high, middle or low sound. You might use your whole body by standing, sitting and stooping. Perhaps you’d prefer to use just your arms. The choice is yours.

Pitch and dynamics frequently become confused. For clarity of the two components, repeat the bell sounds loudly as if you’re next to the bells. Now say the sounds quietly as if the bells are in the distance. Just for fun, return to the crowd yelling “yea” and “boo.” First, make the sounds loudly as if you are in the crowd reacting to the events, then quietly as if you hear them from outside the venue. Be sure to retain the intensity and emotion. Make high-low sounds at different points along the loud-quiet continuum. You might find it difficult to make high sounds quietly. This is not uncommon. Try your best.

Now let’s imitate the sounds of different dogs and cats. Start with the dogs. Different sizes and types of dogs produce sounds of different pitches. We can imitate their sounds in different pitch placements of our voices. To imitate a medium-sized dog, say “bow-wow-wow-wow” several times at your normal speaking pitch placement. A small dog makes a “yipping” sound. Imitate it by using the upper part of your speaking voice. Now for a big dog. Say “woof” in the low part of your vocal range.

In order for the whole class to make a common gesture appropriate for the pitch placements, stand and move your arms into a position you would use to hug a tree. Your stretched, curled arms probably will be below your shoulders, but not as low as your waist. Keep your dominant arm in that position, but let your other arm go to your side. Now, turn the palm of your dominant hand to face the floor and move your arm a bit closer to your body. It should not touch your body, but should not be stretched forward. Look at Figure 5.1.

This position identifies the middle, most natural and comfortable placement of your voice. It defines the center of an area of middle pitches. Keep your arm in that position while speaking “bow-wow” in the middle placement of your voice.

When you move your hand up to the top of your head or above the top, as shown in Figure 5.2, you are identifying the high placement area. This gesture is appropriate for “yipping.”



Figure 5.1

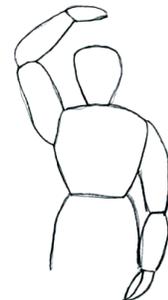


Figure 5.2

The gesture for the low placement area will be at your waist and sometimes down across your belly. See Figure 5.3.



Figure 5.3