



7 Ways to Maximize Learning with Music Games

In school, I always enjoyed playing classroom games. Learning technologies such as MusicLearningCommunity.com have not only taken classroom games to a new level, they also enable teachers to create customized learning experiences for each student. Then students are challenged to compete against their own scores to achieve higher levels. Here are some thoughts from our members about how to make the most effective use of learning games in teaching.

1. Emphasize learning over winning

Remind students that the games are learning games, not tests.

"The mother of my youngest student told me that her daughter sometimes gets frustrated when she can't get the high scores right away. So we had a heart-to-heart about the fun and encouragement of easy activities and the really important learning we accomplish with the more difficult ones. The icing on the cake is that the hard ones soon become easy for us when we go back and review them regularly. This brought a big smile from all the mothers in my Introduction Class!!"

Mary Gae George, NCTM, Sandy, UT
author of [Artistry at the Piano](#)

2. Use learning games to facilitate effective practice of basic skills

Mastering music skills requires thoughtful repetition. Consider having students achieve the "target score" two or three times.

"I have a 12 yr old student who has resisted learning to read music for 5 years! This year I put him on a steady diet of **60 Second Club**. This week I took an easy book and had him sightread. He could do it! We moved to harder and harder music and finally to his normal level. I was so excited and he was grinning. I exclaimed, "James, you are reading the music!" He replied sheepishly, "Yeah, that **60 Second Club** ruined me."

Dorothy Menke Smith, Bellville TX

3. Encourage independent learning

Research has shown that when students take greater responsibility for their own learning, they achieve at higher levels, are more motivated to learn, and are more efficient in their learning. Playing the MusicLearningCommunity.com games in the studio and at home encourages students to be independent learners and creative thinkers. Teachers can help students to take responsibility for their learning by:

- assigning games that support what they're learning in the lesson
- creating clear expectations
- establishing lines of communication with parents

4. Share learning goals with students

Music learning is a spiral – each new skill reinforces what has already been learned and builds the bridge to the next level of learning. Each MusicLearningCommunity.com game has a clear objective. When you assign games, let students know what you expect them to learn – and then follow up regularly. The Teacher's Guide and the "All Levels – All Games" menu list the learning goal for each game. As students master new skills, make sure that their repertoire makes use of those new skills.

5. Engage the parent before the very first lesson

Outline your goals and expectations before you accept any new student into your studio.

"Your site comes in handy when prospective families come in to interview for lessons. It is always a big hit!"

Jerry Cornish, Mesquite, TX

"I interviewed a new student today (a 12 yr. old beginning boy). We pulled out the laptop and took a spin around your site. He and his mother were VERY impressed. I'm sure it helped to encourage them to choose my studio."

Kathi Russell--North Stonington, CT

6. Set up friendly competitions

Friendly competitions in the studio help to keep students playing the learning games year after year. Trying to achieve one of the top twenty scores in the world is another great motivator. (See the High Score Boards for the Challenge levels of some games.)

"The High Score Sheets work well with my students. On certain weeks I leave one by the computer. When my students come for their lesson they know which game I want them to do and they keep track of their points on the High Score Sheet. They like to try and beat each other's score. Competition can be a useful tool."

Karla Williams, Concord, NC

7. Provide incentives

Providing incentives shows students that you value what they are learning from the music games. This encourages them to continue playing over a longer period of time.

"Monthly I run a competition to encourage student participation and award the most active student. Since the website so beautifully keeps track of student use and progress, I use that to determine the winner each month. The winner receives a \$2 gift certificate from Baskin-Robbins, which happens to be conveniently located two blocks down the street. The gift certificates are well-received by students and parents. On the occasion that I have a student with dietary restrictions, or a parent that prefers no candy or sweets for their child, I have small cans of playdough that I give instead. The gift certificates are a small business expense at \$24/year, but it really does keep kids interested."

Melinda Vickrey, Folsom, CA

"This year, to help motivate my students to go on the website we did "Pennies from Heaven." During the months of February and March, I put out a jar full of pennies. For every 10 activities completed on MLC students got to make a guess of how many

pennies were in the jar. I kept track of all their guesses on individual index cards. At the end of that time, I determined who was the closest and announced the winner at our spring recital yesterday. No one knew who had won until then. This kept everyone involved in the contest to the very end, because, often once an over-achiever gets ahead, everyone gives up. In this case, even if someone went crazy doing activities, they might not be the closest guesser to win the pennies. It was such an easy motivator and the cost was only \$12.19!”

Linda Poquette, Wilmington, IL