

The B Happy Blues

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Summary

This is the first lesson from *Recorders Without Borders*, where students will begin to learn to play the recorder. Students will visit New Orleans, Louisiana to discover a type of musical expression called the blues. Students will then perform “The B Happy Blues” by *Ruaridh Pattison* as a class, and share it with peers, friends, and family.

Objectives

- Summarize important information about the blues.
- Set up, hold, and make a sound on the recorder.
- Play the note “B” on the recorder.
- Perform “The B Happy Blues.”

Materials

- [Google Slides: The B Happy Blues](#)
- [Map of New Orleans](#)
- [The Blues and Its History](#)
- [Setting Up the Recorder!](#)
- [How to Hold the Recorder!](#)
- [How to Blow Into the Recorder and Make a Beautiful Sound](#)
- [How to Start a Note! \(Articulation\)](#)
- [How to Play the Note “B”](#)
- [Learn the B Happy Blues!](#)
- (Backing Track) [Songs to Play: The B Happy Blues](#)
- [Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Didn't It Rain](#)
- [Louis Armstrong - West End Blues](#)
- 1:1 recorder
- Assistive technology or devices for holding the recorder
- *Optional: masking tape*

Teacher Background

This lesson was designed for two full classes/school periods, but teachers should amend the lesson duration to meet student needs, abilities, and accommodate class schedules.

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Explore

1. Display the [Google Slides: The B Happy Blues](#). Introduce students to a type of music called the blues and explain that it comes from a part of the United States called New Orleans. Using the [Map of New Orleans](#), allow students to explore the city's geographic location, relative to their classroom. Ask: *How would we travel to New Orleans from where we are — could we walk, cycle, drive, fly or swim there?*

2. Introduce students to the sound of the blues by playing these recordings:

- [Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Didn't It Rain](#)
- [Louis Armstrong - West End Blues](#)

Learn

1. Play the video [Setting Up the Recorder!](#) Allow students to follow along with the instructions presented in the video. Take some time to check each student's recorder individually, making sure it is set up correctly. *Optional: Place a small square of masking tape on the rear side of the recorder, between (and opposite) holes 4 and 5, to indicate where the thumb is placed.*

2. Play the video [How to Hold the Recorder!](#) Encourage students to participate in the activity, discerning their left and right sides from one another. Facilitate through the room, checking that each student is holding their recorder correctly. If a student is using an adaptive tool or instrument, please follow the instructions accompanied with the product.

3. Play a brief game of "Simon Says," making a point of highlighting the following positions with the recorder:

- **Resting Position:** Have students hold the recorder with both hands in the proper position (fingering the note "B") with the instrument resting on the thigh. (This can be done sitting and standing.)
- **Ready Position:** Recorders in hands, lifted off the thigh, with fingers in their proper position, but recorder *not* yet touching bottom lip.
- **Playing Position:** Recorders in hands, with mouthpiece on bottom lip.

4. Play the video [How to Blow Into the Recorder and Make a Beautiful Sound](#), pausing the video where appropriate, to allow students a moment to participate in the activity, and experiment to find the appropriate volume of air to blow. Demonstrate the imaginary act of blowing a bubble that bursts from too much air.

5. Play the video [How to Start a Note! \(Articulation\)](#), once again pausing where appropriate to allow students to practice the use of their tongue in "articulating" or starting a note.

6. Tell the students they are now ready to learn their first note on the recorder: the note “B.” Play the video [How to Play the Note “B.”](#) and pause to make sure each student has their left thumb and pointer finger sealing the topmost holes of the recorder’s body, and their right thumb supporting the bottom half in the correct position.

7. Using the note “B,” engage the students in a game of “Call and Response,” reminding them to make sure they are:

- Holding the recorder with their left hand on top and right thumb supporting the bottom half.
- Blowing a gentle stream of air to create a beautiful sound.
- Using their tongues to say “du” at the start of each note.
- Using their left pointer finger and thumb to completely seal the topmost holes on the body of the recorder.

8. Tell students they are now ready to learn their first song on the recorder: “The B Happy Blues.” Play the video [Learn the B Happy Blues!](#) Pause as necessary to ensure each student is building the skills and confidence to play the new song. Repeat any of the above steps as necessary to reinforce understanding and develop routine skills for future lessons.

Perform & Share

1. Once students have participated in the entirety of the [Learn the B Happy Blues!](#) video, and are comfortable with each of the above steps, tell them they are ready to perform their first song on the recorder. Prepare students to be in “playing position” with correct technique, then play the backing track video [Songs to Play: The B Happy Blues](#).

2. Record a video or audio version of your students’ performance, then upload it to the [S’Cool Sounds Padlet](#).