

3.7.3 Sound Exploration

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

The students sit in a quiet environment with their eyes closed and listen to various sounds (e.g., birdsong, rain, train, laughter, dog barking, whispering, door slamming). Afterwards, they express what sound they heard and what emotions it evoked in them – either verbally or through drawing. There is also an opportunity for creative associations and storytelling. This learning activity primarily fosters students' curiosity by inviting them to listen to a variety of sounds with a sense of wonder and openness. With their eyes closed, students become attentive explorers, noticing subtle details, contrasts in both familiar and unfamiliar sounds.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Emotional awareness, regulation and communication

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	whole class working in small groups	40 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. **Preparation** – Teacher's Tasks Before the Activity: Creating the sound material: The teacher selects 6–10 different sounds in advance. These may include from nature: birdsong, wind, raindrops, waves; from everyday life: zipping a zipper, door closing, clinking glasses, buzzing hair dryer; musical sounds: sounds of instruments (xylophone, piano keys), musical excerpts; Self-made sounds: clapping, crumpling paper, footsteps, jingling keys. Providing tools: speaker or smartphone to play the audio, paper, drawing tools, or a worksheet for reflections. Preparing the space: students sit comfortably at their desks or in a circle on the floor. Minimize external noise if possible so that attention is truly focused on the sounds.
2. **Starting the Activity** – Getting in the Mood: The teacher briefly explains the rules: students close their eyes, do not speak, and just listen. They may explain that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers — the goal is to observe what they feel, what images or memories come to mind when hearing the sounds.
3. **Listening to the Sounds** – One by One, with Conscious Attention: The teacher plays or produces each sound live (lasting about 10–20 seconds). After each sound, there is a short pause (1–2 minutes) so students can write down or draw: What feeling did the sound evoke in them? What memory or story did it remind them of? What image did they visualize during the sound? Drawing is also an allowed option for those who still find written expression chafing.

4. **Sharing and Processing** – Experience Exchange, Reflection: Small group discussion (3–4 students per group): How did they react to the same sound? Were their emotions similar or different? Which sound was the most interesting for them, and why? Whole-class discussion (moderated by the teacher): Which sounds evoked shared different? Are there any noticeable differences between boys and girls, or based on age? Which sounds were easily recognizable, and which were more mysterious?
5. **Conclusion** – Systematization, Emotional Summary: At the end of the session, the teacher collects responses from the group together: Which sound was: the most calming? the happiest or funniest? the scariest or most surprising?

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

Flexible classroom seating is ideal to support pair or group work.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

The “Sound Exploration” learning activity primarily fosters students’ curiosity by inviting them to listen to a variety of sounds with a sense of wonder and openness. With their eyes closed, students become attentive explorers, noticing subtle details, contrasts, and unexpected qualities in both familiar and unfamiliar sounds. This exploratory listening encourages them to ask questions: What could this be? Why does it sound this way? What does it remind me of? and sparks an intrinsic desire to understand the world through auditory discovery. The immersive process of listening, followed by creative expression such as drawing, storytelling, or free associations, further deepens their curiosity by encouraging them to translate sensory impressions into imaginative ideas. Group sharing provides an opportunity for students to compare diverse interpretations, learn from each other’s perspectives, and remain open to surprising viewpoints. Altogether, the activity cultivates a mindset of curiosity, wonder, and sensory openness toward the world of sounds.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of this activity, students will be able to explore sounds with curiosity, listen with focused attention, and describe what they notice using imaginative and open-minded thinking.

- They will understand how curiosity helps them ask questions about what they hear, notice subtle differences, and form personal interpretations.
- They will be able to express their sensory impressions through drawings, words, or creative associations, and reflect on how sounds evoke ideas, images, or questions.
- Through shared reflection, they will practice being open to others’ perspectives and staying curious about diverse interpretations.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

As a Warm-up Activity: Ideal at the beginning of a music or drama class to attune students to listening, inner attention, and emotional awareness. It also functions as an “emotional entry point,” helping children slow down and shift into a different rhythm of learning.

As a Cool-down or Calming Activity: Used after more active, noisy, or structured tasks (e.g., after P.E. or a math lesson), it supports a soothing, relaxed transition and promotes self-regulation. It can also be used in after school or pre-bedtime programs as a kind of “sound meditation.”

Examples of Sounds and Their Possible Processing Methods

- Natural sounds: birdsong, rustling leaves, babbling brook, sound of raindrops. Reflection questions: “What feeling did it evoke in you?”; “What place did you imagine?”; “Have you ever been to a place like that?”; “What colours come to mind when you hear this sound?”
- Everyday artificial sounds: vacuum cleaner, elevator noise, traffic, kettle boiling, typewriter. Reflection: “Was it disturbing or calming?”; “What time of day or activity did it remind you of?”; “Do you like this sound in real life?”
- Musical excerpts, mood-evoking melodies: slow piano music, cheerful flute phrases, drum solo, soft string sounds. Creative processing: “What kind of story did you imagine?”; “Who could be the main character?”; “What colour scheme would your story have?”
- Abstract or mysterious sounds: reversed audio, glass chime, electric noise, rumbling. Questions: “What could it be?”; “Could you invent a story or a new world where this sound is heard?”
- Playful Extension Possibilities: "Sound Match Drawing": Children try to draw the object that produced the sound, then compare with others' interpretations. "Emotion Scale": After each sound, students place a sticker on a shared poster to represent the emotion they felt (e.g., joy, calm, fear, curiosity). "I Can Make That Sound!": Students try to imitate or recreate the given sound using their own tools, instruments, or everyday objects.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Speaker or smartphone/voice recorder
- Pre-recorded sound clips (or live sounds)
- Paper
- Coloured pencils (for emotion drawings)
- Emotion picture cards (to support verbal expression)

Guiding questions

For pair/small group discussions:

- Which sound did you like the most? Why?
- Was there a sound that scared you or made you feel calm?
- What image did you see in your mind while hearing the sound?

For whole class discussion:

- What differences did you notice in how people felt about the same sound?
- What did you learn about the connection between sounds and emotions?
- Why do you think it's useful to pay attention to sounds in everyday life?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** Difficulty expressing emotions or impressions verbally
Tip: Use emotion cards, sound cards, colour cards as scaffolds. Offer metaphor prompts: “If this sound were a texture/colour/weather, what would it be?”
- **Challenge:** Difficulty concentrating in silence
Tip: Begin with micro-sounds (1–2 seconds), then gradually increase listening time. Use simple breathing or grounding routines (e.g., “turning on listening ears”)

- **Challenge:** Sound sensitivity or overwhelm
Tip: Pre-screen potentially triggering sounds; ask for student feedback. Trick: Allow “step-out options” (listening corner, shorter participation).
- **Challenge:** Feeling self-conscious during sharing
Tip: Offer multiple expression modes (drawing, gestures, movement). Trick: Encourage pair-sharing before whole-class discussion.
- **Challenge:** Some children rely only on identifying the sound—not exploring it
Tip: Ask curiosity-based questions (“What surprised you? What did you wonder about?”). Hide the identity of certain sounds to trigger deeper exploration.
- **Challenge:** Surface-level thinking (literal only)
Tip: Model deeper associations (“This sound makes me imagine a hidden forest...”). Invite children to build micro-stories based on a single sound.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can adapt the activity to three difficulty levels based on students’ curiosity, readiness, and ability to explore sounds in increasingly complex ways:

- **Beginners (6-7 years old):** Students listen to a small number of familiar sounds (e.g., 2–3). The focus is on awakening curiosity by noticing simple differences—loud vs. soft, high vs. low, smooth vs. rough—and connecting these sounds to basic impressions or images. Visual aids such as emotion or sound cards may support exploration. The goal is to spark initial wonder and attentive listening.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** Students explore a wider variety of sounds (e.g., 5–6), including unfamiliar or abstract ones. They reflect on what the sounds made them imagine or question, expressing their ideas through drawing or short verbal descriptions. Curiosity becomes more active as students form personal associations, identify surprising elements, and describe what caught their attention.
- **Experts (9–10 years old):** Students investigate numerous sounds (8 or more) and engage in deeper, curiosity-driven interpretation. They may create short stories, imaginative soundscapes, or group discussions based on what they heard. At this level, students compare interpretations, examine how the same sound can evoke different ideas, and articulate the inner images sparked by listening. The aim is to cultivate sustained curiosity, openness, and creative inquiry into the auditory world.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

On curiosity and wonder:

- What sound made you the most curious, and why?
- What new question came to your mind while listening?
- Which sound surprised you the most?
- *On attentive listening:*
- What helped you notice small details in the sounds?
- How did closing your eyes change the way you experienced the sound?

On imaginative interpretation:

- What image or story popped into your mind?
- How did your ideas change after hearing others' interpretations?

On openness to other perspectives:

- Did someone imagine the same sound very differently? What did that teach you?
- How can different interpretations help us stay open and curious?

On transferring the skill:

- How could curiosity about sounds help you in music, storytelling, or science?
- When in everyday life might you need to stop and truly listen?