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Using Song Gap Fills with ESL/EFL Students

Songs are an enjoyable way for students to learn English. They provide students with an authentic source of English language usage. [Using music in class](#) has many benefits and musical activities should be used regularly to help improve your students' listening skills. Before you do a song gap fill with your ESL/EFL students, there are a few things you should consider.

First, think about the purpose for doing a song gap fill. Make sure you have a clear purpose for listening to a song in class. Don't do a song gap fill for the sake of it or to fill in time. This will come across as a waste of time to your students and you will lose credibility.

Do you want to concentrate on listening or reading skills? Generally, slow songs are used to improve listening skills. Long songs are used to practice reading. Also, you can use a song with repetitive lyrics to concentrate on pronunciation and language structures.

Do you want to use a song to review a recently covered topic or introduce a new one? Using a song helps to create interest in a topic and focuses the students' attention. It also provides students with a context for using the language.

Do you wish to use a song to introduce or revise a grammar point? There are many websites that cater for teachers looking for songs. By searching online you can easily find a song that relates to a particular tense or grammar focus.

Will the students be interested in your song choice? Don't just choose a song you like personally. Try to choose a song that will best suit the purpose of the gap fill. If it is a modern song that the students like, all the better.

You will also need to think about the content of the song. Songs with explicit lyrics may cause offence to some students. If you are teaching a fairly advanced level, you could use songs to teach slang expressions or idioms to your students. Advanced students are usually keen to learn slang terminology and idioms as this helps them to sound more fluent.

As well as looking at the language, students want to come away from a gap fill understanding the song and its meaning. It is always worth having a short classroom discussion about the meaning of the song you listen to in class. Understanding the meaning of the song will give the students a great sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Depending on the length of the song, you should take out 15 to 20 words or phrases that you wish to concentrate on. Number all the missing words or phrases in the song gap fill. Then, make a copy of the gap fill for each student.

On the next page is a general procedure for doing a song gap fill.

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Song Gap Fills

Procedure

Divide the class into small teams and assign each team with a number.

On the board, write the title of the song and then write up the numbers for the missing words.

Hand out a copy of the gap fill to each student.

Have the students listen to the song two or three times, depending on your students' ability.

Students should work on their own the first two times they listen to the song.

Then, after you have played the song a second time, have the students compare their answers with their teammates.

Give the students time to discuss their answers, and then play the song a final time.

After that, teams take it in turns to write their answers on the board. A team chooses a number. Then, a team member comes to the board and writes the missing word.

Give a team one point for a correct word and an extra point for spelling. If a team spells a word incorrectly, you can ask the other teams to give the correct spelling. If another team manages to give the right spelling, award them with the spelling point.

Continue like this until all the missing words have been written on the board. If the teams are really struggling, play the song one more time.

After all the words have been written on the board and the winning team is announced, discuss the meaning of the song. Ask the students what they think the song is about. Get their ideas and opinions and round off the activity.