

Jazz Chants



... how to use them to help your students speak more clearly, practice vocabulary, and learn and reinforce grammar patterns.

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AMERICAN ENGLISH

Goals for this webinar:

- to introduce (or re-introduce) you to [Carolyn Graham's Jazz Chants](#).
- to show you how I introduce and practice chants in my classes
- to explore a variety of ways you can use jazz chants
 - to help your students speak with the natural rhythm and intonation patterns of American English
 - to practice vocabulary
 - to introduce and reinforce grammar patterns

What are Jazz Chants?

“Jazz Chants are Carolyn Graham's **snappy, upbeat chants and poems** that use jazz rhythms to illustrate the natural stress and intonation patterns of conversational American English.”

[from Oxford University Press]

Let's listen to Carolyn Graham
tell how jazz chants
were born.

Carolyn Graham: “A jazz chant is really just spoken American English with an awareness of the natural rhythms.”

- Chants use **natural** spoken English
- Chants can be used in **classes of any size**
- Chants **don't require any special materials**
- Chants can be used with **all age groups**
- Chants **do not require musical ability**

Let's begin with the simplest of chants.

Listen first. Then we'll practice.

Hi, how are you?

1

2

Fine, how are you.

3

4

Advice from Carolyn Graham. . .

- A jazz chant has a **four-beat rhythm**: 1, 2, 3, 4,
- Each beat will be either a **stressed word** (or syllable) or **clap** (or tap or pause)
- The first **beat** is the first **stressed** word, which may not be the first word.

Example: Do you **like** it? (**clap**) Yes, I **do**.

1

2

3

4

Why is this focus on stress, rhythm, and grouping so useful?

For native English speakers, stress is **key** to **meaning**. It's what we listen for to know what's important and what to focus on.

Jazz chants are a fun, practical way to help students begin to notice and produce natural rhythm.

SYLLABLE-TIMED VS. STRESS-TIMED

Many languages are “**syllable-timed**” -- every syllable gets more or less the same stress or emphasis.

ed u ca ti on = 5 staccato beats

pa pa = 2 even, staccato beats, same vowel sound in both

BUT NOT ENGLISH. . . English is a “**stress-timed**” language.

The **rhythm** is based **on stressed words and syllables, not all syllables.**

ed u CA tion = 1 strong beat

PA pa = 1 strong beat

Rhythm in Sentences

How many **syllables**? How many **stresses**?

Kids play ball.

3 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats

The kids play ball.

4 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats

The kids are playing ball.

6 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats

The kids are playing with the ball.

8 syllables/3 stresses = 3 beats

The kids have been playing with the ball.

9 syllables/ 3 stresses = 3 beats

The beat is set by the number of stresses, NOT the number of syllables. So, each line takes approximately the SAME amount of time to say. Let's try it.

Kids play ball.

1 2 3 (clap = 4)

The **kids play ball.**

The **kids are playing ball.**

The **kids are playing with the ball.**

The **kids have been playing with the ball.**

The many levels of STRESS

- **Words** with two or more syllables will always have **one** primary stress.
 - *photograph, photographer, photographic*
- **Phrases** have stress.
 - an excellent **photographer** (unstressed, stressed, focus stress)
- **Sentences** have stress patterns.
 - My grandmother was an excellent **photographer**.
- We use stress **to focus attention and show contrast**, often to correct, contradict or disagree.
 - My **f**ather liked to paint, but my **m**other was a photographer.
 - She was a **ph**otographer not a **ph**otojournalist.

Stress in English impacts meaning.

(Other languages have stress, but often it **doesn't** change the meaning.)

Word-level: REcord vs. reCORD

Years ago, I was teaching a speaking & listening class.

After class, a student approached me with his cassette tape in his hand. . .

Student: I need to talk to you about my cassette.

Me: Do I know your cousin?

I misunderstood because the stress was incorrect even though he used the correct word.

Stress affects meaning at the phrase and sentence level.

A conversation in a bakery:

Customer: I'd like two large muffins, please.

Server: Here you are.

Can you guess what the problem is in each case?

1. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for **two** large muffins.
2. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for two **large** muffins.
3. Customer: Excuse me, I asked for two large **muffins**.

Regular focus on stress and rhythm will train your students to NOTICE stress in English – even if they don't always get it right, at least they'll be learning to listen for it!

Some general suggestions for using Jazz Chants:

Begin ORALLY. This forces students to listen to what you **actually** say and not what they think words should sound like based on the way things are spelled.

Be dramatic. Exaggerate and make it fun.

Have students listen to the whole chant first.
Then have them listen and repeat each line several times together as a chorus.

How I teach jazz chants. . .

1. Introduce the chant orally first. Explain any idioms. Discuss the context.
2. Begin with group (choral) practice. Then move to pair and individual practice.
3. Focus on **stress, thought groups, and intonation**.
4. For longer, more complex chants, after some oral practice, (group and pairs) show them the written chant. Go through it again several times.
5. Together, **mark it** to show major stresses, intonation, reduced sounds, linking and blending. [Visual learners will appreciate this!]
6. Review chants regularly! They make great warm-ups.

Do you like it?

- Do you **like** it? (clap) **Yes, I do.**
- **1 2 3 4**
- Does he **like** it? (clap) **Yes, he does.**
- Does she **like** it? (clap) **Yes, she does.**
- Do they **like** it? (clap) **No, they don't.**
- **No, they don't. No, they don't.**

Do you like it?

1

2

3

4

Do you like it? (clap) **Yes, I do.**

Does he like it? (clap) **Yes, he does.**

Does she like it? (clap) **Yes, she does.**

Do they like it? (clap) **No, they don't.**

No, they don't. No, they don't. (all together)

How stress works in sentences. . .

- **content words** are usually **stressed** - nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, demonstratives (this, these, those) and negatives (can't, won't, never, no, etc.)
- **function words** are usually **unstressed and reduced** - a, an, the, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, most prepositions, etc.
- in unstressed words and in unstressed syllables, the vowel sounds are **reduced and often move to “schwa”**:
“Do you like it?” *do* and *you* are reduced
- typically the **last content word** in each thought group receives the most stress:

*I put the **groceries** / in the **bag** / on the **counter**.*

Two groups: A – questions; B – answers.
Last line all together.

What do you wear on your head? A hat.

1

2

3

4

What do you wear on your hands? Gloves.

1

2

3

4

What do you wear on your feet? Socks.

1

2

3

4

Shoes and socks, shoes and socks. (all together)

1

2

3

4

Do you think it's going to rain?

(first verse)

Do you think it's going to rain?

I hope not.

Do you think it's going to rain?

I hope not.

It looks like rain.

It looks like rain.

Do you think it's going to rain?

I hope not.

(from *Small Talk*)

It Was Raining When She Saw Him

It was **raining** when she **saw** him.

It was **raining** when they **met**.

It was **pouring** when they **fell** in love,
the **streets** were dark and **wet**.

It was **raining** when they **parted**.

There were **dark** clouds in the **sky**.

It was **raining** when he **left** her,
when he **turned** and said “Good-**bye**.”

Here's another case where you could mark the rhythm in at least two different ways.

1

2

It was **raining** when she **saw** him.

3

4

It was **raining** when they **met**.

1

2

3

4

It was **raining when** she **saw** him. (clap)

1

2

3

4

It was **raining when** they **met**. (clap)

An easy jazz chant.

- Jazz chants can provide students with useful “chunks” of language – expressions they learn as a whole rather than word-by-word.
- Carolyn Graham’s chant, *How do you spell “dog”?* gives student a “template” for asking how to spell a word.
- Try beating out the rhythm by **marching**. You can have students march in a circle as they chant. It gets the rhythm of English into their bodies. (It’s specially great for kinesthetic learners.)

How do you spell dog? (clap, tap, or snap)

d-o-g (clap/tap)

How do you spell cat? (clap/tap)

c-a-t (clap/tap)

How do you spell octopus? (clap/tap)

Don’t ask me! (clap/tap)

In grammar classes. . .

- Whenever possible, introduce grammar points **orally**. Jazz chants are a fun and memorable way to do this.
- Focus on the individual sounds that matter most in English – sounds that indicate grammatical features such as third person singular, plural or tenses. For example:

/s/, /z/, /t/ /d/, and /Id/.

- Here's a jazz chant called "The Hungry Boy Chant."

He wants:

One egg, two bananas,
Three hotdogs, four hamburgers,
Five cookies, six sandwiches,
(clap) He's a hungry boy! (clap)

This provides practice with **plural endings**.

You can also use it to teach students to notice how stress changes to express different meanings. Make true and false statements and have students correct you. Or ask questions. Example:

- You: He ate three **eggs**. Student: No, he ate three **hotdogs**.
- You: He ate three **bananas**. Student: No, he ate **two** bananas.
- You: Did he eat **three** sandwiches? No, he ate **six** sandwiches.

Grammarchant: Irregular Verbs

from *Grammar Chants* by Carolyn Graham

Say, said.

Stop on red.

Eat, ate.

Don't be late.

Break, broke.

Have a coke.

Take, took.

Learn to cook.

Speak, spoke.

Tell a joke.

Write, wrote.

Get off the boat!

Chants can be used to **teach or reinforce grammar points** while at the same time providing speaking & pronunciation practice.

Student can quite easily absorb complex grammar points through this type of quality repetition.

IF IT RAINS I'LL WEAR MY RAINCOAT BY CAROLYN GRAHAM

If it **rains** / I'll **wear** my **rain**coat. (clap)

If it **doesn't rain** / I **won't**. (clap)

When it's **cold** / I **always wear** my **gloves**.

When it **isn't cold**, / I **don't**. (clap)

If it **snows** I **won't** wear **sandals*** (clap)

If the **sun** comes **out** I **will**. (clap)

But if it **rains** I'll **wear** my **brand** new **coat**.*

If I **don't** I'll **get** a **chill**. (clap)

*When three content words appear in a row, we typically alternate the stress.

Habits (excerpt)

Bob gets up at six o'clock.

He never wakes up late. (clap)

He always gets up early. (clap)

He never sleeps till eight. (clap)

He always drinks his coffee black.

He never uses cream. (clap)

...

(from *Grammarchants*)

What's Going on This Morning?

The earth is turning,
The toast is burning,
The water is boiling,
The tea kettle's whistling,
The faucet is leaking,
(etc.)

More grammar with Jazz Chants

For this activity, give the students the written version of the chant before they hear it. See if they can apply the rules of stress. At the same time, they're reviewing parts of speech.

- Have students identify all of the **nouns, adjectives, adverbs and other content words** that will most likely be stressed when you're going to do a chant. Underline the stressed words.
- Then have them identify the **function words** that will be reduced. Draw a line through the unstressed words.
- Let's try it.

Is the Post Office Open Tomorrow?

(excerpt from *Jazz Chants* by Carolyn Graham)

Is the post office* open tomorrow?

It's open from nine to five.

Is the post office open tomorrow?

It's open from nine to five.

What time does it open?

It opens at nine.

What time does it close?

It closes at five.

It opens at nine and closes at five.

It's open from nine to five.



Note: *post office* is a compound or set phrase and has one primary stress.

Is the Post Office Open Tomorrow?

(excerpt from *Jazz Chants* by Carolyn Graham)

~~Is the post office*~~ open tomorrow? rising intonation

~~It's open from nine to five.~~

~~Is the post office~~ open tomorrow?

~~It's open from nine to five.~~

~~What time does it open?~~ falling intonation

~~It opens at nine.~~

~~What time does it close?~~

~~It closes at five.~~

~~It opens at nine and closes at five.~~

~~It's open from nine to five.~~



Note: *post office* is a compound or set phrase and has one primary stress.

Writing your own chants. . .

The language should be

- real
- useful
- appropriate for the level

Let's begin with vocabulary chants.

Why vocabulary chants? Rhythm is a powerful tool for memory.

1. Have students make a list of vocabulary words from a lesson you've done.
2. Ask them to arrange them according to the number of syllables per word.
3. Choose a two syllable, a three syllable and a one syllable word to make a chant.

An example from Carolyn Graham
(you can see her perform this on the video)

ruler (2 syllables)

eraser (3 syllables)

chair (1 syllable)

The chant:

1 2 3 4

ruler eraser chair (clap)

ruler eraser chair (clap)

ruler eraser ruler eraser

ruler eraser chair (clap)

Make it more complex by adding adjectives.

1 2 3 4

purple ruler pink eraser

1 2 3 4

purple ruler pink eraser

1 2 3 4

purple ruler pink eraser

1 2 3 4

yellow chair yellow chair

Vocabulary: places in my town

WORD LIST

drugstore

train station

bead shop

bookstore

hardware store

zoo

post office

mall

ONE SYLLABLE

zoo

mall

TWO SYLLABLES

drugstore

bead shop

bookstore

THREE SYLLABLES

train station

post office

hardware store

THE CHANT:

drug store

train station

zoo

[clap]

(repeat)

More vocabulary chants – just for fun (using the 2 – 3 – 1 pattern):

Words to praise someone's work:

perfect (2 syllables)

fabulous (3 syllables)

great (1 syllable)

The chant:

perfect, fabulous, great (clap)

perfect, fabulous, great (clap)

perfect, fabulous, perfect, fabulous

perfect, fabulous, great (clap)

Writing your own chants. . .

Once you feel comfortable using jazz chants, you may want to try writing your own. Start by listening to the rhythms that native speakers use.

Remember, it should be:

- real language,
- useful,
- and appropriate for the age group.
- And keep it simple.

It's best to listen to something natural and unscripted as a model. Try National Public Radio,

www.npr.org and click on Storycorps. You'll hear American telling stories about their lives using natural language.

Recordings are great because you can listen to them again and again until you hear the rhythm.

Let's recap. . . the many uses of jazz chants -

- Use jazz chants to reinforce and practice **vocabulary**. Rhythm is a powerful memory tool. *[ruler, eraser, chair]*
- Use jazz chants to practice **idiomatic expressions** and “chunks” of **useful language**. *[How do you spell___? Do you think it's going to rain? I hope so. I hope not.]*

- Use jazz chants to practice **grammar patterns** and **features**.

[If it _____ I'll (future). vs When it _____ I (simple present).; Do you . . ? Does he . . ?]

- Use jazz chants to help your students learn and practice producing the natural **rhythms** of spoken English. *[Hi. How are you?]*
- If your students are shy and a bit timid about speaking English, use jazz chants to help them **build confidence**.

Thank you for joining this webinar!

I hope you'll have fun with these chants!

