

# First, We Sing! 100 Little Songs and Rhymes

## About the Revised Materials

The collection reflects a commitment to discovering, documenting and sharing accurate, interesting and useful information about each song. The research involved also provided an opportunity to examine and reconsider widely used “standard” repertoire and to suggest more culturally sensitive and relevant options. As teachers, we must understand the critical importance of adjusting and reworking curriculum materials as times and the needs of our students change. Consequently, several books in the First, We Sing! series have undergone significant revisions, including the Teaching Guide and Teaching Strategies for both primary and intermediate grades. New editions contain updated song lists and revised lessons for teaching various elements. A movement glossary is also included in this collection, along with suggestions for modifying traditional singing games and play-parties for contemporary classroom use.



# Down Came a Lady

Anglo-American Singing Game  
Adapted from Child Ballad No. 81

Down came a La - dy. Down came two.  
Down came Lord Dan - iel's wife, and she was dressed in blue.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the staff. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics.

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**Formation:** Circle, with hands joined, one player in the center.

**Action:** All sing and step clockwise. On the final word (“blue”), the center player points to someone who is wearing blue. The chosen player comes to the center, and the original chooser steps out of the ring and walks counter-clockwise. The new center player names another color. The game continues until all except one are in the outer circle. On the final round, they point toward the center player and name her color.

# Dry Bones Come Skipping

Traditional American Camp Song

Dry bones come skip-pin' up the val - ley, some of them bones are mine, —  
Dry bones come skip-pin' up the val - ley, some of them bones are mine.  
Some of them bones are 'Zek - i - el's bones, — some of them bones are mine, —  
Some of them bones are 'Zek - i - el's bones, — some of them bones are mine.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the staff. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics. The third and fourth staves continue the melody and lyrics.

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# Naughty Kitty Cat

Hungarian Chase Game  
American Adaptation



Naugh - ty kit - ty cat!

You are ver - y fat!



You have but - ter on your whisk - ers, naugh - ty kit - ty cat!

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## Translation:

*Cirmos cica, jaj!*

*Oh, tabby pussy cat!*

*Hova lett a vaj?*

*What happened to the butter?*

*Ott látom a bajuszkodon,*

*I see it there on your whiskers.*

*Most less naked jaj!*

*Now you are in trouble!*

# Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow

English Singing Game



Oats, peas, beans and bar - ley grow. Oats, peas, beans and bar - ley grow. Do



you or I or an - y - one know how oats, peas, beans and bar - ley grow?

2. First, the farmer sows his seeds.  
Then he stands and takes his ease.  
He stamps his foot and claps his hands  
And turns around to view the land.

3. Waiting for a partner.  
Waiting for a partner.  
Open the ring and take one in,  
While all the othes dance and sing.

4. Tra la la la la la...

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**Formation:** Circle, all hands joined, with one player (the “farmer”) in the center of the ring. Action:  
Verse 1: All sing as the circle steps to the left (clock-wise).

Verse 2: All stand and join the “farmer” in acting out the words.

Verse 3: All sing and clap as the “farmer” chooses a partner and draws them into the ring. Verse 4: Circle steps to the left; the “farmer” and their partner join hands and skip to the right.

At the end of the verse, the chosen player becomes the new partner. er becomes “Dinah.”



# Frequently Used Terms in Dance and Movement Activities

## Formations

**Contra or Longways Set:** Two lines of dancers facing each other. Each player stands across from their partner. In traditional dance, the “gents” are on the right, and “ladies” on the left, but partners can be counted off as “1’s and 2’s,” “A’s and B’s,” “reds and blues,” or any other designation of pairs. The *head couple* stands at the *top* of the set; the *last couple* is the pair at the *bottom* of the set.

**Circle (single):** Players stand side by side, facing in, often with hands joined. In circle games with partners, each player has their *partner* on one side and another player (their *corner*) on the other.

**Circle (double):** Partners face counterclockwise and stand side by side, often with hands joined. In traditional dance, the “ladies” are on the outside of the circle, and the “gents” are on the inside, but partners can be designated as “1’s and 2’s,” “A’s and B’s,” or “reds and blues,” etc.

## Actions and Dance Figures

**Arch:** Two (or more) players join one or both hands and raise arms as others walk under.

**Cast Off:** Players turn away from each other and walk down the outside of a long ways set. Alternatively, couples may hold hands in *promenade position* and *cast off left or right*, walking down the outside of the set and back up to their places.

**Circle Left:** Players join hands in the ring and step clockwise.

**Circle Right:** Players join hands in the ring and step counterclockwise.

**Contradance:** Dance played in a longways set.

**Couple:** Two players dancing together.

**Do-Si-Do:** Two players (each with their arms crossed) walk toward one another, passing right shoulder to right shoulder, then step slightly to the right so that they are back-to-back. Without changing the direction they are facing, they step backward, passing left shoulders and stepping back into their original places.

**Grand Right and Left:** Partners face each other and join right hands (“1’s” face counterclockwise and “2’s” face clockwise), passing right shoulders. “1’s” and “2’s” move around the circle in opposite directions as they drop their partners’ hands to join left hands and pass left shoulders with the next person. Players continue alternating right and left hands around the circle.

**Left-hand Star:** Couples form small circles, placing their left palms down on top of each other’s, stepping counterclockwise until they return to their places.

**Mixer:** Players change partners every time through the dance. A “snowball” mixer usually begins with two players, each of whom chooses a new partner to make four, then eight and so on, until all players have joined the action.

**Play-party:** The term used to describe a specific dance-like activity, as well as the social event where it was the main attraction. Held mostly in rural settings, these gatherings included young people in their teens and early twenties, along with parents, grandparents and young children. Most play-parties were originally sung

and “played” without instruments since many communities did not allow instruments or dancing at the time. Today, play-party games are taught in schools and folk music camps and are enjoyed by players of all ages.

Promenade: Partners walk together side by side, holding hands in “skating position” (right hands joined, left hands joined below).

Reel (or Strip the Willow): The head couple in a longways set joins *right arms* and *swings* (*clockwise*) one and a half times around, then crosses the set for a *left arm swing* (*counterclockwise*) with the next player in the opposite line. The head couple returns to the center of the set for a *right arm swing*, then continues alternating between *left arm swings* with each player in the opposite line and *right arm swings* with their partner in the center until they reach the bottom or foot of the set. This is called “reeling down the set.”

Right-hand Star: Couples form small circles, placing their right palms down on top of each other’s, stepping clockwise until they return to their places.

Sashay: Partners face one another, hold both hands and gallop sideways up or down the set.

Swing: Players face one another and hook arms with bent elbows. They step or skip around one another either clockwise (*right arm swing*) or counterclockwise (*left arm swing*).

Wring the Dishrag: Players hold hands in skating position. Keeping hands clasped, they raise their arms, turn to the outside away from one other, turning back-to-back under one’s own arm.

**Teacher Tip:** Use color-coded silicone wristbands (latex-free) to remind students which part they are dancing, which line or where in the circle they should be standing (1 or 2, red or blue, etc.). This visual aid helps them quickly adjust or correct. As an added bonus, have students wear the bands on their right wrists to remind them which hand to shake, which direction to step or turn, etc.