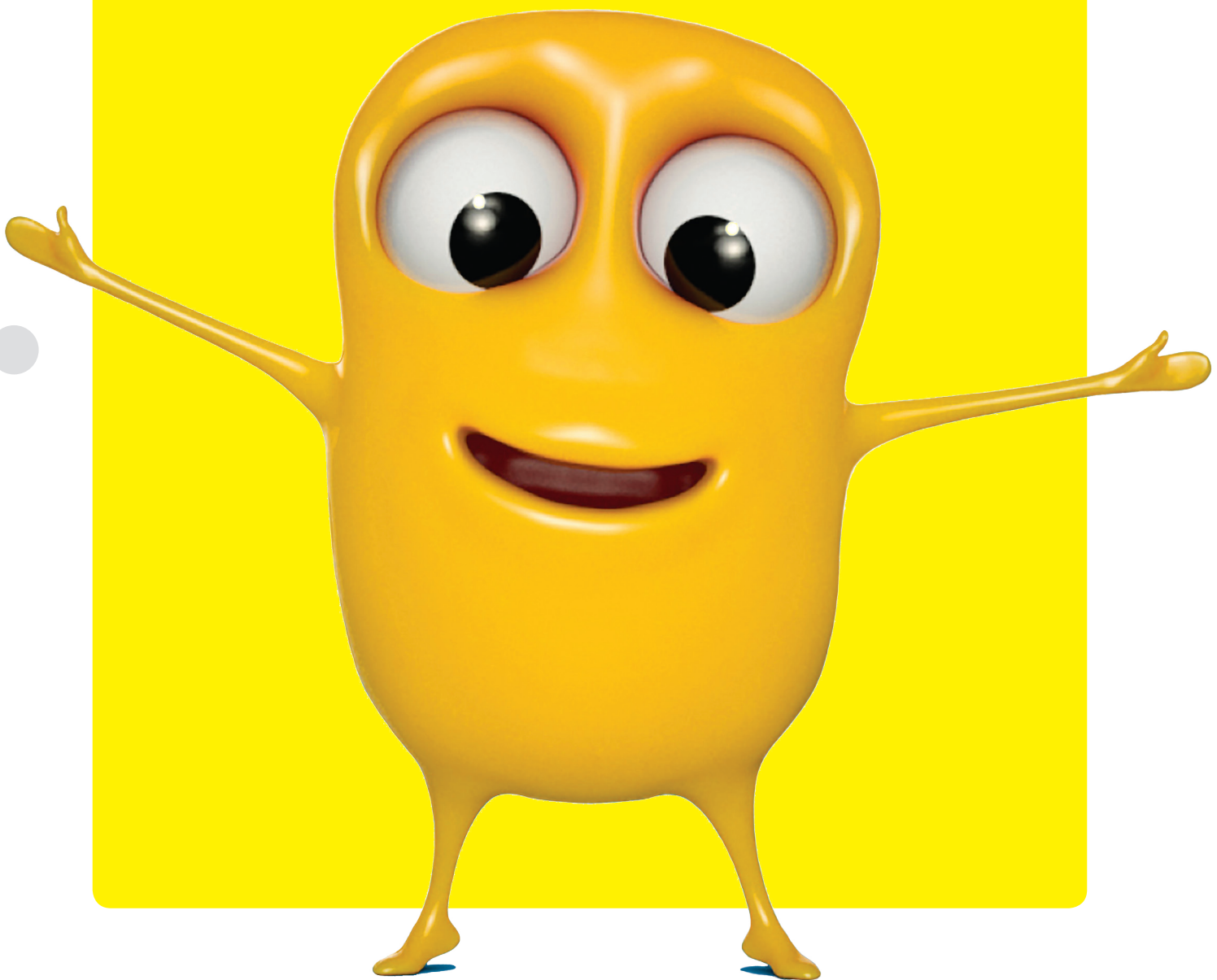


# Tips for teaching music to visually impaired students



## Why adapt lessons for visually impaired (VI) students?

This 90-second video [youtu.be/O7j4\\_aP8dWA](https://youtu.be/O7j4_aP8dWA) demonstrates how much learning is visual and how much audio description is required to make content accessible.

With a few adaptations, VI students can participate fully, understand musical concepts and learn independently.

### General tips

- Always speak to students about what would best help them and how their needs might change over time. They are the experts of their own sight condition and can help you work out the best solution.
- Download **General tips for teaching visually impaired students** from [www.macularsociety.org/teaching](http://www.macularsociety.org/teaching) for introductory information including lighting; emotional support; formatting documents; assistive technology; techniques such as hand-over-hand guiding and further sources of information that have been used to create these resources.

## **Strategies for adapting music lessons**

### **Touch, feel and sound**

VI students rely on other means of communication such as sound and touch. Teachers and support staff should adapt music lessons and instruments in the following ways to help the student overcome not being able to learn by sight.

- Put yellow tape on musical instrument handles to make it easier to see where to hold.
- Use instruments with a high tactile feel, such as a cabasa or chime bars.
- Play a short musical phrase and ask the student to repeat it back.
- Create a musical dialogue based on repeating phrases or songs.
- Use repetition in songs to enable the student to predict and respond in time.
- In group work get the players to sit close to each other and start with a game of passing a rhythm around the group so that everybody knows each other by their instruments' sound, not just by sight.

## **In the classroom**

The following adaptations can help VI students.

- Allow time for the student to process information by:
  - breaking songs down into short memorable phrases
  - using music that allows a response
  - providing electronic or paper-based resources ahead of a lesson, as an mp3 file or in large print.
- Use a music stand with a hard back instead of placing worksheets flat on the floor or table behind an instrument.
- Have a “stop and listen to me” signal for the student to use if the sound is getting too much.
- Walk around the music room with the student, explaining where the instruments are so that they have a mental map of safe pathways and instruments.
- Since playing musical instruments requires manual dexterity, you may need to physically guide students to the correct finger position.
- Demonstrate the difference in sound when instruments are played with light and heavy touches.

## Assistive technology

- Mobile technologies can help students read musical scores as the screen can be magnified using pinch-to-zoom.

- iPads are musical instruments as well. Consider using GarageBand:

**[itunes.apple.com/gb/app/garageband/id408709785?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/garageband/id408709785?mt=8)**

or the simpler Figure:

**[itunes.apple.com/us/app/figure-make-music-beats-remix-on-allihoopa/id511269223?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/figure-make-music-beats-remix-on-allihoopa/id511269223?mt=8)**

- Book Creator makes multimedia ebooks which can help your student access and record songs to rehearse later.

**[itunes.apple.com/gb/app/book-creator-free-make-books/id661166101?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/book-creator-free-make-books/id661166101?mt=8)**

Find out more about teaching music to VI students at

**[www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure-music/music-education](http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure-music/music-education)**

## In this series:

- **General tips** for teaching visually impaired (VI) students
- Tips for teaching **art** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **design technology** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **geography** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **history** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **ICT** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **literacy** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **mathematics** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **music** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **science** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **sport** to VI students
- Tips for VI students on **school trips**

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