

Listen Up!

There are many different styles of music across the African continent and traditional drumming is just a small part in this rich and varied musical culture. In certain regions of Africa drums play an important part in music for celebrations, gatherings and religious occasions.

Listen to "**Jambo Bwana**" a Kenyan pop song. It was first released in 1982 by Kenyan band [Them Mushrooms](#), and later covered by a number of other groups.
Try to join in with the song.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUrVeRGo5IM>

The song lyrics include several common phrases and greetings in **Swahili**, such as
Jambo Bwana – "Hello Sir"
Habari gani? – "how are things going?"
Nzuri sana – "very well"
Hakuna matata - "no problem"

Can you feel the pulse of the music? Count 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4 and join in by tapping the beat on your knees. Tap the red circles with your **LEFT** hand and the black circles with your **RIGHT** hand.

1	2	3	4
●	●	●	●

Next, try to play the following drumming patterns in time with Jambo Bwana.

Remember to count one beat of silence in the blank boxes.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
●		●	●	●		●	
✋		✋	✋	✋		✋	



And then...

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
●	●		●	●	●		
✋	✋		✋	✋	✋		

Which pattern do you prefer?

Explore

The **DJEMBE** is a single-headed, goblet-shaped drum. It is played with the hands and can produce a number of different sounds. The basic sounds are as follows: 🗒

Bass : a low-pitched sound made by striking the middle of the drum. 🗒

Tone : a medium-pitched sound made by striking the drum halfway between the edge and the centre. 🗒

Slap : a short, high-pitched sound made by striking the edge of the drum.



The **DUNDUN** is a large drum played with a stick. A double-headed drum, it is often worn on the shoulder, and often a bell-like instrument is mounted on the drum. Basic sounds are: 🗒

Open : a full sound (hit the drum with the stick and let it ring).

Muted : a muted sound (rest one hand on the drum to 'mute' the sound and hit the drum with a stick). 🗒

Bell : hit the bell mounted on the instrument.



Watch some traditional African drumming using Djembes and Dunduns.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOS0kA_O6IQ

Extras

In an African drumming performance, often a **master drummer** controls everything: the tempo, the rhythms, and the structure of the piece. The master drummer is a brilliant musician who leads the ensemble, often improvising complex rhythms over a repeating cycle. The master drummer often plays the **talking drum**, an instrument played with a hooked stick, using strings to control the pitch of the drum. Using this drum, the master drummer can copy the rising and falling sounds of human speech and convey messages with the drum



Ayan Bisi Adeleke Master Drummer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4oQJZ2TEVI>



Talking Drum

Find something in your home that you can use as a drum – a pan, an upturned bucket, a table or desk.

Compose your own Master Drummer Rhythm using this grid as a guide. You may need to draw it out on some scrap paper first.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Place your drumming beats in the top row and write **L** or **R** (Left or Right) in the second row to show which hand each beat should be played with.

Top Tip: you do not have to use every square. Blank squares mean 'count a silent beat in your head'.

Now listen to Jambo Bwana once more. This time, play your own Master Drummer rhythm in time with the music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUrVeRGo5IM>

