

Canons help develop musical memory, concentration, coordination, mental recognition of rhythmic patterns, and rhythmic independence. They can range from very simple interrupted canons - "my turn - your turn" - to difficult canons with long, complex patterns. Here are five canons you can move to, and adapt to fit your own classes.

1. **Canon at One Beat.** Step (or clap) the rhythmic elements heard starting one beat later. This canon requires quick reaction more than memory.
 - a. How to play for this canon
 - i. A single voice works well, so this could be played on any instrument. It could be tonal, or not.
 - ii. Keep a relatively slow, steady beat. A metronome helps, especially when teaching virtually. I'm using beat = 48.
 - iii. Think phrase by combining subdivisions and beats. This will make it sound more like real music, and also help your movers be successful. Challenging the movers is fun, but not if it's so hard they can never feel successful.
 - iv. Vary the subdivisions - 2, 3, 4, and if appropriate, 5.
 - v. Mix in combinations of subdivisions, such as 8ths and 16ths.
 - vi. Start with subdivisions in 2:1 proportions, i.e. 8ths and 16ths, so your subdivisions and theirs are not in conflict. If successful, challenge the movers by introducing polyrhythms 2:3, 4:3, 5:2, or 5:3.
 - vii. This canon can get tiring quickly, so avoid constant subdivisions and keep the whole canon fairly short.

2. **Third Beat Canon.** Listen for the third beat in each 4/4 bar. Step whatever was played on the third beat for the entire next bar. Wait until the downbeat of the new bar to begin stepping what was heard on the third beat. I recommend conducting 4 while stepping to help feel, think, and remember the third beat.
 - a. How to play for this canon.
 - i. Keep the tempo moderately slow, making it possible for movers to execute 16ths. I'm using quarter = 60.
 - ii. A single voice works well, so any instrument could be used.
 - iii. To make sure they can execute the directions, play only quarters initially. Once quarters are clear, play 2-8ths on beat 3. You might stick with these two possibilities until you're sure they have it.
 - iv. If all goes well, add another subdivision to one of the other beats (beats 1, 2 or 4) along with 8ths on beat 3. This requires extra focus on beat 3 to filter out subdivisions they don't have to respond to.

- v. Incrementally introduce a triplet, 8ths, 16ths, dotted 8th - 16th, on beat 3 when movers are ready.
- vi. Initially play subdivisions in the new bar that align with movers' subdivisions
- vii. To increase the challenge, create polyrhythms. If beat 3 is a triplet, play straight 8ths on the next bar, or play triplets against movers' 16ths.
- viii. Too many subdivisions will tire the movers, so mix quarters with various subdivisions.
- ix. Try a half note on beat 3 for variety

This canon may also be done on the other beats of the measure. Each has its own particular complexities and pleasures.

3. **Pattern Canon in 4/4.** I'll play a 4-beat pattern four times while you listen in stillness. Then I'll play a new 4-beat pattern four times. You'll move to Pattern 1 while listening to Pattern 2. At the end, you'll move the final 4-beat pattern four times in silence.
 - A. Movement choices:
 - a. To show one level of rhythm (Pattern), step or clap the pattern
 - b. To show two levels of rhythm (Pattern and Beat), step beats and clap the pattern, or clap beats and step the pattern
 - c. To show three levels of rhythm (Pattern, Beat, and Meter), conduct 4 and step the pattern.
 - B. How to Play for this
 - a. Have all patterns written in order, generally beginning with simpler patterns
 - b. Harmonic rhythm can be one chord per bar consistently, which will help you and the movers keep track of where you are
 - c. Think 4-bar phrases so the music aligns with the whole activity
 - d. You may use a single voice, but it's nice if you can play with more than one voice. If you play multiple voices, both hands must play in rhythmic unison for clarity
 - e. I'll use a harmonic progression on a descending chromatic scale. The handout shows two plans for the descending chromatic scale. Learn this with two voices (as per the handout) to learn the "tune." Once you have it, work toward playing both hands. When you have that, then practice playing both hands in rhythmic unison.

4. **Texture Canon** If you hear a single line, step the pattern one bar later. If you hear chords, step and clap the pattern one bar later. This will be a canon in 6/8.
 - a. How to play for this
 - i. Play in closely related keys, i.e. relative M/m, to keep track of where you are, especially until you get your bearings.
 - ii. When playing chords you need to be very clear, so rhythmic unison in both hands is important.

- iii. Simple chord progressions are fine. People have made a lot of money playing just I vi IV V.
- iv. You may want to signal the change with a long note/chord initially. Once they are successful adding/subtracting their hands, you can change more quickly and without warning.
- v. You could make this a listening exercise for any two conditions, not just texture. For example, if you hear staccato, stand in place and clap the pattern like staccato notes. If you hear legato, move around the space, stepping the pattern with smooth, flowing, legato steps.

5. Inhibition-Internalization Canon. Listen to the one measure pattern in 6/8, think it/hear it internally first before moving it, then move it. I'll play a measure while you listen in stillness, then you'll conduct in place while internalizing the measure, and finally you'll conduct and step the measure. After that sequence I'll give you a new measure and we repeat the process. Phase II - Now I'll skip my second measure of rest, so that you'll be moving the old measure while listening to the new measure. There will still be the one bar of silence to internalize before you move.

a. How to play for this

- i. In virtual teaching I'd use a metronome, which is especially important in the blank/internalized measure.
- ii. Two voices work well here, but you could also use just a single voice. This canon rides on melody.
- iii. It's often a good plan to begin a canon of this type with straight beats, in this case two dotted quarters to set the tempo. Make sure you feel the subdivisions internally.
- iv. You may want to start with an interrupted canon, which in this case means you play one bar, then rest for two bars. For a more advanced version, you could rest for just one bar. They will move the old pattern while listening to the new pattern, internalize that in the "blank" bar, then move it while listening to the next new pattern.
- v. Alternate beats and longer notes with typical patterns in 6/8.
- vi. Play phrases, that is, create cadences by playing long notes.
- vii. Have a mixture of half cadences and full cadences if playing tonally