

# *Basic Rod Exercises: Building Coordination and Skills for Adults and Children*

## 1. Introduction for Adult Learners

Eurythmy, as a movement meditation, supports the way that your spirit and soul live on earth in your body. The first eurythmy exercises have opened up for you the tools to awaken this sense of yourself as the conscious spirit in your life, and learn how to move in harmony with spirit laws.

To further develop your practice, the next step in the eurythmy curriculum will be a series of practices done with copper rods. Rod exercises are introduced in the eurythmy curriculum from the very first lessons. Your rod work will help you develop a very awake sense of space and movement, and develop your agility in your hands and fingers.

This block of exercises focuses on the four primary and three of the subsidiary copper rod exercises.

The simplest way to get a copper rod is to go to your local hardware store and purchase a 36 inch piece of ½ inch hollow copper plumbing pipe. Buy two rubber caps as well, to put on the ends of the rod. The exact length of the rod might vary a bit: your personal rod should be exactly one half the distance between your fingertips when you stretch out your arms to the sides. If you are working in a class, however, all students should have the same 36-inch rod.

If you would like to find an even better rod, contact a eurythmy supply source (such as [steinercollege.edu/bookstore](http://steinercollege.edu/bookstore)) and purchase a copper rod that has been specifically made for eurythmy rod work. These are beautifully weighted and hand-hammered to offer a wonderful sensation for the hand and fingers.

Copper is used in the eurythmy practice because it is an excellent conductor of heat, and warms up quickly when used. Most people experience it as a very comforting and friendly metal to work with. Copper corresponds to the planet Venus: we could say that Venus manifests in the mineral realm through copper. (Iron, in contrast, corresponds to Mars. It feels hard and unyielding. The sun metal gold, on the other is exquisitely agreeable to the touch.)

You can care for you copper rod by polishing it with copper polish or with lemon and salt.

The four primary rod exercises school the human being on the four levels of the physical body, the etheric or life-body, the astral or soul-body, and the sense of spirit in space. The subsidiary exercises that Rudolf Steiner himself developed aim to develop agility and confidence in movement. Eurythmy teachers have developed dozens of other exercises over the years, and I hope you will have a chance to learn some of them as you progress.



## *2. Addendum for working with Children*

When we do eurythmy exercises as adults, we focus our energy on our own development.

As an adult, your capacity for working on yourself is very different from a child's. You can engage your own mind and your own feelings, you can direct your own forces of attention. This is because your four bodies---physical, etheric, astral and I-AM (ego) are no longer completely body-bound.

Children, however, are engaged in a 21-year "descent" to the earth. In the first seven years of life a child is simply learning how to move in gravity, overcome primitive reflexes, build inner organs and neurological processes that will help him or her become ripe for the earth. In the next two seven years, other equally important milestones are addressed and met.

Eurythmy can help these processes in very profound and specific ways. The rod exercises will play a very special role in this. However, they must be done with a very different mood than they are done by adults.

Children are not taught these exercises through verbal explanations: they are taught them through imitating the moves of a teacher. Thus, you as their home-schooling parent or teacher need to first internalize each lesson you want to teach through practicing it diligently on your own. You must understand it, learn to love it, learn to be precise and imaginative with it.

Then, when you teach it, you must create fun narratives and challenges for the children so that they are engaged with the proper mood of soul.

Because each of the rod exercises affects a different level of learning in the child, they are each appropriate for different ages. It is good for older children to be able to master ALL of the exercises, but younger children should not try exercises that are beyond their grade level.

I recommend that you do the exercises in blocks. Choose the exercise or exercises that are appropriate for your children's age, and then work on them for about 5-15 minutes a day. Do this more than once a week, perhaps as part of your "morning circle." Continue for seven consecutive weeks, and then take a break for the rest of the season. I recommend doing three blocks a year: one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring.

By grade 7, children can work with all of these basic rod exercises. If you are working with high schoolers, you can expect far greater beauty, grace and style with all of the exercises than middle schoolers are capable of.

Exercise	Minimum grade appropriate	Benefits for children
Qui-qui and little squirrels	Kdg, 1, 2	Finger agility, small motor skills, learning to cross the vertical midline
Jack be nimble	Kdg, 1, 2	Foot agility and precision
7-fold rod exercise	3	Agility, precision, right-left, vertical midline, spatial orientation, posture
12-fold exercise	4	Front-back, spatial orientation, support the rhythmic system
Rod-tossing	5	Right-left, collegiality and partner work, eye-hand coordination, sense of rhythm
Waterfall	7	Front-back, up-down, sense of "back space, overcoming fear
Staff of Mercury	7	Elegance, front-back, up-down, right-left, integration of all the above skills
Spiral	7	Supports the developing soul life by coordinating expansion-contraction with rod work

*Please remember that this personal practice course is not a substitute for a eurythmy training and does not qualify you to teach classes to children or adult (beyond the in-home work you are doing with homeschoolers). Feel free, however, to share these exercises in an informal way with friends and family. Contact me for more information.*