

## **YOUR FIRST GRADE HOMESCHOOLERS EURYTHMY EXERCISES**

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### **Notes on the videos**

In these lessons I am offering a few eurythmy exercises for you to do with your first grade students. Please begin by watching the Introduction to Eurythmy for Homeschooling Video, to orient yourself to the purpose and scope of this exciting opportunity.

Then, watch the first grade eurythmy video to watch how I do the first grade exercises and how I do them with a child. In the first part of the video, I explain the movements, and in the second half I do some of them with a child.

### **General first grade movement exercises**

Before we begin, I want to encourage you to give your children lots of age-appropriate movement experiences. Your first grader should be able to jump rope and skip in September. If they haven't learned to do so yet, then please allow them lots of opportunity to learn how to do it this year. Play ball tossing games with them. Some children will already be able to play with tennis-size balls, but others will still need large balls. Make games out of catching and throwing skills! They should be able to balance effortlessly: if they can't, continue to give them a balance beam to work on. Be sure that they can do cross-crawling, can wriggle on their belly like a lizard. If any of these skills are not yet developed, the children will not be able to read and calculate freely, and you should consider investigating remediation!

If your child has not reached certain movement benchmarks, which lay the foundation for being able to stand tall, sit quietly, and move freely in all directions, they are probably having difficulties with the senses of movement and self-perception. These are very often the foundation for a host of other troubles, including what are called ADD, ADHD, and also problems with reading, writing, mental imagine, and math skills. Children need to use BOTH SIDES OF THEIR BRAINS when they read, so they can have mental images of what they are taking in. They can only do that if their body-geography is well developed, if they have "crossed their midlines" and "overcome primitive reflexes" so their minds can now be free to process while they are sitting still. If you are concerned about these things, I strongly encourage you to consult the website of developmental pediatrician Dr. Susan Johnson, at [youandyourchildshealth.org](http://youandyourchildshealth.org).

### **How do I prepare myself?**

In eurythmy terms, everything in the first three grades will be done in the mood of “B.” This sound denotes a mood of wrapping protection and love around another person. You will be wrapping your mood of protection around the child as you work with them. I warmly encourage you to go to my website [eurythmyonline.com](http://eurythmyonline.com) and find your way to my Freebie lessons. Download the lesson called “B, the Consonant of Boundaries,” and use the instructions to learn how to change your own energy field and offer an atmosphere of peace and protection to your young child.

### **How do I learn the exercises?**

It is very important that you begin by learning the exercises yourself. Consider it your own path of eurythmy, your own journey for self-development! (After all, as a homeschooling parent, you get to work on your own skills as well as on your child’s!)

Then, once you are confident that you can model the exercises, turn off the video, and teach the child out of your own experience. **It is important not to let the child watch the videos!**

And remember: don’t let the child speak while moving. And remember: don’t let the child speak while moving. **You** should speak, and the child should pour all of their “consciousness”, their etheric presence, into their movements.

We are thereby truly encouraging mindful movements.

### **How do I teach my child?**

When you practice with your child, stand in front of him or her, about 3 feet away. Speak gently, expect participation, and work with a light touch. Be sure that you do the exercises correctly, but don’t correct the child. A standard guideline in eurythmy is that you should only correct 1 in 9 mistakes. Don’t hesitate to repeat each exercise up to 7 times, but never pedantically.

Don’t expect your child to be able to master everything at once. Build skills sequentially, starting with the easier exercises in the first weeks of eurythmy. Practice each one about 20 times (that number is flexible), with good will and fun. Add verses or poems if you can, to make the movements more engaging.

Once an exercise can be done smoothly, only do it about seven times, and then move on to the next exercise. Encourage engagement, but avoid boredom!

### **How long should we do eurythmy?**

This exercise sequence takes about 5-15 minutes to accomplish. As with all of my grade sequences, you can do it every week, all year long, or you can alternate it with other opening series. In that case, I would recommend doing it for 7 weeks in the autumn, 7 weeks in the winter, and 3-7 weeks in the spring. If the child had an opportunity to work with a trained eurythmy teaching, they would have lessons all year long, and learn a multitude of musical and poetic pieces, building on the spatial skills you are learning here.

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### **The first grade eurythmy exercises**

Your curriculum includes videos and pdfs describing the reason behind learning to move in space fluidly (“How to move in etheric space”) and how we use rod exercises (“About Copper Rods”), as well as General Guidelines for how to do eurythmy at home.

The following exercises are specific for the lower grades.

**Exercise #1: Body geography** I like to begin lots of my eurythmy sessions with a body geography game. Begin with a nice feel-good stretch. Then follow these words, and place your hands on your body. When your child is good at it, add other body parts, and also cross the midline sometimes. When your child think it is too easy, then go faster! In this way, your child wakes up into the body, and is ready for engagement.

“Hands on your hips!  
Hands on your knees!  
Hands behind you, if you please!  
Hands on your shoulders,  
Hands on your toes!  
Touch your ears!  
Touch your nose!  
Reach up to the sky,  
And curl up like a big brown bear.  
Reach up high to the sky,  
And stand straight and tall.

**Exercise #2: IAO (ee-ah-oh)** This exercise is a standard exercise given for children and adults to stimulate and balance energy in the head, legs and arms---in thinking, willing and feeling. You will say these words as you move, but your child will not say any words with you.

1. Put your feet together. Drop the head, and then straighten very deliberately. Hidden in this experience is the eurythmy sound I (ee), which is the sound of uprightness. Speak to the child **“Straight as a spear I stand.”**
2. Then jump the legs apart. Speak **“Strength pours into my legs.”** Underlying this is the sound Ah, which we are doing with the legs. The Ah is the sound of openness, and when we do it with the legs we are grounding ourselves.
3. And then round the arms into a big circle. Speak **Warm is my heart with love.**“ What you are looking for here is a beautiful round circle. The fingers should not overlap. The circle should be harmonious and proportionate. The back should be straight, the head upright. There should be balanced energy in head, feet and arms. What is hidden here is the sound Oh, the sound of the loving soul.
4. Then drop the arms, then jump the feet together, and then bow the head slightly.
5. Repeat this sequence several times. As the child becomes skillful, become fast with each repetition.

### **Exercise #3: Right and left self-perception**

The next exercise is very good for helping the child to experience and exercise feeling the right and the left sides. This skill will likely be tentative in the beginning of first grade, but will develop during the course of the year. It is very important for children to feel their right and left sides all the way into their legs—not only in their hands and arms. Don’t push them with rational explanations, but rather give them lots of chances to practice developing an internal feeling: in time they will be able to do it with ease. Repetition and practice will build the skill they need. When the child uses the wrong leg, I don’t correct with words, but rather by pointing to the correct leg in a friendly way.

I stand in front of the child, recite the text, and do the movements that I describe here: the child will imitate. Begin standing straight, with feet together. The text is as follows:

“I have two feet (go up on the toes –U with the legs)  
“With them the earth I greet” (lower on to flat feet—also U with the legs)  
“The right foot comes first” (point the right foot—I (ee) with the leg)  
“And then comes the left” (point the left foot—I (ee) with the leg)  
“The right foot is fast” (quick)  
“The left foot is slow” (slow)

*Repeat as many times as you like)*  
*End by repeating the first two lines.*

#### **Exercise #4: Foot agility and balance**

The next exercise is great for distinguishing some fun foot agility. I may do this many many times in a row. Like the previous exercise, this will develop during the course of the first grade.

I begin with the feet together, and then begin these words:

“Open the front door” (heels together, toes apart as if you are opening a little door (ah with the feet))

*Repeat several times if you like. Then, unexpectedly:*

“Open the back door “ (toes together, heels apart (ah with the feet backwards)

*Again, repeat as you like. Then, alternate front and back.*

“Open the curtain wide” (jump the feet wide apart—Ah with the legs)

“Close the curtains side by side” (jump the feet together---U with the legs)

*Repeat a few times, then*

“Open the curtains” (jump the feet wide apart)

“Criss-cross-applesauce” (Jump and cross the legs 3 times---E (ā with the legs)

“Open the curtains “ (jump the feet apart)

“And put them side by side.” (jump them together)

“Put your feet together and go up, up up to look out the attic window,

What do I see? I see a little bird looking at me.”

*(Go up onto your toes with great control)*

“Go down, down, down to the ground,

Look around, what have we found?

We have found where the squirrels (or cats, or mice, etc.) are running around.”

*(Staying on your toes, squat down, without using hands or knees to touch the ground)*

“And stand straight and tall.”

#### **Exercise sequence #5: Rod exercises**

We do many copper rod exercises at all ages in eurythmy. These can be introduced sequentially to children through the grades. Your first graders can do the very simple exercises described here.

For this you will need to purchase a child-size eurythmy rod, which is a piece of ½ inch copper plumbing pipe. You can purchase this at the hardware store, and have the clerks cut you a piece 24 inches long. If you can, buy rubber caps to put on the ends.

I have not included the instructions for the rod exercises on in the “Second Grade Eurythmy video”

***You will use the special video sequence that shows you how we do rod exercises as adults. When you do these with children, use a light and playful touch, but strive to teach the child precision, agility and skill.***

For the first graders, I use these little exercises:

1. Little birds, or “qui-qui”

We hold the rod horizontal at shoulder height, and I make a little story to tell that a family of birds has flown to my tree branch. I “dance” the fingers of my right hand on the rod, with the intention of seeing that every finger touches the rod separately. Then, the friends of that bird family fly to join them, and I dance the fingers of my left hand on the rod. Then I dance the fingers of both hands on the rod. The birds initially dance on top of the branch, then below, then above and below, merrily moving up and down.

Then the birds “fly away.”

2. Squirrels

My tree branch then turns into a tree trunk, and I hold it straight upright. Two little squirrels run up the trunk of the tree: I climb my hands up the tree, hand over hand. Each squirrel touches, or “tags” the other as they run up, which requires that the child places her hands very carefully on the rod, and focuses on holding the tree straight.

3. Jumping squirrels

The squirrels then run to a tree branch. Hold the rod horizontally again. Two squirrels (“Timmy and Tommy”) are playing together. The right hand squirrel (Timmy) jumps over the left hand (Tommy), and you cross your arms. This doesn’t please Tommy, so he jumps over Tommy, and you cross your arms the other way. Tommy jumps over Timmy, Timmy over Tommy, and so one, back and forth.

At length, Tommy decides to jump under the rod, and you cross your arm below the rod. Then Timmy jumps below to cross under him. Back and forth and back and forth they jump.

Finally, Tommy jumps on top of the rod and crosses Timmy, then Timmy jumps over the top of Tommy. Tommy then jumps and crosses below, and Timmy follows. Back and forth they go.

Then they take a little rest, and watch two rabbits on the ground playing their own game. Billy hops in front of Bobby, then Bobby in front of Billy. This goes on for a while, and then they do the same backwards.

And to end, the arms and the legs play their games together: Tommy and Billy jump together, and Timmy and Bobby jump together.

#### 4. Rod rolling

I make a story about the squirrels then discovering some branches that they can slide down. Alternately, I tell the children that we have come to a sledding hill, and they get to slide down the hill and run up to the top again.

Extend the arms in front of you, palms up, and place the rod on your shoulders. Carefully let the rod roll down the length of your arms to your fingertips, and then let it roll back up again. Strive for beautiful form!

Then, turn your palms over, and let the rod roll down and up again.

When you are nimble, you can start with the palms one way, and then, when the rod is at your fingertips, flip it lightly in the air, turn your hands the other way around, and catch the rod—either on the backs or the fronts of your fingertips.

Then put one of your rods away and stand closely in front of your child, with fingertips touching. You have the rod on your shoulder, and let it slide down to your fingertips, across to your child, and up his arms. Then he lets it slide back to you. This is a wonderful cooperative exercise that really helps children to make connections with you or with others.

#### 5. Jack be nimble

Place the rod on the ground in front of you.

“Jack be nimble” Tap the ground in front of the rod with the right foot. (I (ee) with the left foot)

“Jack be quick” Tap the ground with the left foot (I (ee) with the left foot)

“Jack jump over” Put both legs together and jump over the rod (U with the legs)

“The candlestick” Jump back over the rod again.

*The same exercise can be done backwards: begin standing in front of the rod, and tap backwards.*

### **Exercise #6: Prayer of the Angel**

It is very wonderful to end the first grade session with this eurythmy poem. This is the first real “eurythmy” poem that you are offering your child, complete with flowing sound gestures.

“Angel of God who is guiding me,  
Be thou a bright star above me,  
Be thou a firm ground beneath me,  
Be thou a smooth path before me,  
Be thou a kind shepherd behind me,  
Today, tonight and forever.”

The first grade eurythmy instruction video teaches you how to do the appropriate eurythmy sound gestures for this lovely piece.

Remember, you alone will speak this piece: your child will move their arms with you but not speak it.

### **To close your session:**

At the end of every eurythmy experience, stand very quietly for 15-30 seconds or longer. I always say “no wiggling, no jiggling, no squiggling, no giggling,” in a firm but friendly voice.

### **Watching the child doing eurythmy**

I close the video by showing myself working with a boy named Zachary, who has done eurythmy therapy with me periodically for the last two years. In the movements you will see that not all the exercises are easy for him: he gets his right and left sides confused sometimes, and has a hard time coordinating his feet.

As you watch him, see how his movements gradually progress. Notice that he is able to end in a wonderful way, standing straight, tall, and quietly, and, we sense, feeling at ease in his body and good about himself.

### **What is Essential?**

To be a eurythmy teacher, we have to learn to pay attention to what is essential. The *learning process itself* is more important than immediate success. It is fine to make mistakes in the beginning, as the child learns to coordinate the unruly limbs, and to move smoothly with beauty, grace and style. Confidently, firmly but gently repeat the exercises often enough (perhaps 20 times when learning, and then 7 times once learned), until the child has “mastered” them and can do them well.

Remember, we are *building etheric strength through repetition!* Practicing the integrative movements of eurythmy is analogous to playing a piano: one has to repeat things often enough until the body can do them skillfully. Thereafter, the soul can build upon the foundations to *feel* and *bring self-perception* to them.

Cynthia Hoven  
Eurythmyonline.com  
[info@eurythmyonline.com](mailto:info@eurythmyonline.com)