

TEACHER'S GUIDE

FOUNDATION PROGRAMME FOR LITERACY
NUMERACY AND SKILLS

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

GRADE 7

**TITLE : SITTING AND HANDLING
OF THE INSTRUMENT**

**MOE
MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE
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GRADE 7

GUIDE TO EDUCATORS

TITLE :

SITTING AND HANDLING OF THE INSTRUMENT



Competency

C 1 : Handling and Practice

Element 1

Demonstrate posture, grip and technique.

Performance Criteria

Level 1 : Shows basic posture and grip with teacher guidance

Purpose of Activity

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the students to the correct sitting posture and safe handling of the musical instruments (Sitar and Tabla) as a foundation for effective instrumental learning. By practising the proper sitting and handling postures, learners develop physical comfort, control, and discipline. Moreover, this activity helps prevent poor habits and prepares students for accurate sound production and confident performance in later lessons.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Sit correctly while playing their instrument, maintaining a balanced and stable posture.
- Position the instrument appropriately according to basic performance conventions.
- Handle musical instruments and accessories with care and respect.
- Demonstrate correct basic hand placement and grip under teacher guidance.
- Show readiness for instrumental practice by maintaining focus, discipline, and safe handling habits.

Resources & Materials

- Musical Instruments (Sitar, Tabla)
- *Mizraab* for Sitar Students
- Student Workbook
- Appropriate Seating arrangement
- Whiteboard and Marker

Teaching Trajectories / Implementation Guidelines

INSTRUMENTAL SITAR

Note to Sitar Educators: All below activities should be demonstrated by the educator first followed by student practice.

Activity 1: Selection of an appropriate mizraab



The *mizraab*, also known as the wire plectrum, should be worn on the index finger of the right hand.



The *mizraab* should fit tightly on the index finger to ensure that it does not move nor come out while playing the sitar.



The corners should fit over both sides of the first joint of the index finger.



A plastic coated *mizraab* should be avoided as it tends to slip away with the impact of powerful strokes.

Activity 2: Proper Sitting Posture

The sitar should never be played in a standing position. This instrument provides relaxation, so it is best for the player to choose a suitable sitting position and most importantly, handle the sitar with proper care. The aspects which indicate the correct sitting position while playing the sitar are as follows:



The player should sit in a comfortable and normal position, with the body upright to the ground and it is highly recommended to sit on a hard surface.



Holding the vertebral column straight in an effortless way, the player should be relaxed and both the shoulders should be kept at the same level.



The player should make sure that his / her right foot is placed on the side, without allowing it to directly face the audience, as it is regarded as a sign of disrespect towards them.



The player should adopt a convenient cross-legged sitting position, so that the *tumbaa* is safely placed on the curvature of the sole of the left foot.



The sitar player must not wear socks while playing as otherwise the instrument will tend to slip away.

Activity 3: Handling of the Sitar



The *tumbaa* is kept at an inclined position with the help of the elbow and the right thigh. These two points help to hold and stabilise the sitar.



The *tabli* must be vertical to the floor level. The *daandi* of the sitar should be almost at an angle of 45 degrees from the floor.



While securely holding the sitar in a playing position, the right forearm and the right thigh should be firmly placed against the *tumbaa* of the sitar.



The player can also raise and place his right knee in the semi-curve of the *tumbaa* and then adjust his / her body in a relaxed way to enjoy playing the instrument.

Activity 4: Hand and Finger Position

The proper position of the hands is another important aspect while playing the sitar. The right posture and the swift movement of the fingers are considered as the ornaments honouring this art.



The fingerboard must remain in front of the body at an angle of about 45 degrees and should not touch the body. It should remain about 15 to 25 cm away from the chest.



Students should learn to locate the *swara-s* from the back of the fingerboard by looking at the various fret tying threads. The index finger should be positioned just before the desired fret while pressing the main string.



Normally, it is said that the correct placement of the right hand thumb on the *daandi* should be at the end of the last fret.



Both hands should be properly placed on the sitar so as to avoid having strained hands and fingers.



The mark of the strings should be on the first phalange at about a quarter of one inch away from the tip of the fingers.



The thumb should be visually seen resting on the back of the fingerboard just before the corresponding fret thread.











The index finger should be positioned just before the desired fret while pressing on the main string. Proper care should be taken that it is neither placed directly on the fret nor in the middle between two frets.













Students should never make the mistake of looking at the fingerboard to locate a *swara* while playing the sitar. They should avoid looking at their fingers while playing the main string.

Activity 4.1 Position / Movement of the left hand

	Do's	Don'ts
The left hand index finger should not be placed flat on the fret but should be slightly curved and the other three fingers of the left hand should always be kept closer to the frets.	 ✓	 ✗
There must also be a gap between the left hand and the <i>daandi</i> , so as to allow free movement of the left hand as it does not hold the sitar.	 (Gap) ✓	 (No gap) ✗
The index finger should be inclined and so should be the lining cut on the finger.	 ✓	 ✗
The index finger and the thumb should move parallel along the fingerboard in order to avoid creating distorted notes and unnecessary tension on the fingers.	 ✓	 ✗

Activity 4.2 Position / Movement of the Right hand

	Do's	Don'ts
The right hand should be placed on the <i>tumbaa</i> in a natural manner to provide the required pressure to stabilise the instrument.		
The forearm resting on the <i>tumbaa</i> should be adjusted to ensure that the plucking part of the fingers is right above the main strings.		
The palm should be in a position to ensure that the natural line at wrist joint between the forearm and the palm is maintained.		
The thumb should be firmly placed without tension at the end of the last fret and should act as a pivot.		
The fingers should be kept in a rounded, cupped position above the main strings.		



Assessment Criteria

Students will be assessed through observation during guided practice. Assessment focuses on posture, handling, and readiness for instrumental playing.

1. *Mizraab* / Hand Usage

Learners are able to use the *mizraab* (for sitar) or demonstrate correct basic hand placement (for tabla) under guidance of the teacher.

2. Sitting Posture

Learners are able to sit in a balanced and stable position suitable for instrumental playing.

3. Instrument Positioning

Learners are able to place and support the instrument correctly on the body with support of the teacher.

4. Handling and Care of the Instrument


Learners demonstrate respectful and careful handling of the instrument and its parts.

5. Attention and Response

Learners listen attentively to instructions and respond appropriately during demonstrations.

**Rubric
Assessment**

Criteria	Basic	Intermediate	Proficient
Mizraab / Hand Usage	Uses <i>mizraab</i> or hand position incorrectly and needs constant reminders	Uses <i>mizraab</i> or hand position mostly correctly with guidance	Uses <i>mizraab</i> or hand position correctly and confidently
Sitting Posture	Sits with frequent reminders and visible imbalance	Maintains correct posture with occasional reminders	Maintains correct posture independently and consistently
Instrument Positioning	Positions instrument incorrectly or with constant help	Positions instrument mostly correctly with some guidance	Positions instrument correctly and confidently
Handling and Care	Handles instrument carelessly or inconsistently	Handles instrument carefully with reminders	Handles instrument with consistent care and respect
Attention and Response	Needs repeated prompts to follow instructions	Follows instructions with occasional prompts	Listens attentively and responds promptly



Extension Activity

Students may observe a short demonstration video or live performance of a sitar player and identify correct sitting posture and instrument handling. Learners can also practise the posture at home using a non-playing instrument or mock setup to reinforce correct positioning.



INSTRUMENTAL TABLA

Introduction

According to traditional practice, tabla is a musical instrument which is played by sitting down on the floor. Fingers and the palm of the hand are used to strike on tabla in order to produce sounds. Therefore sitting posture, hand and finger positions as well as the positioning of instruments is very important while playing tabla.

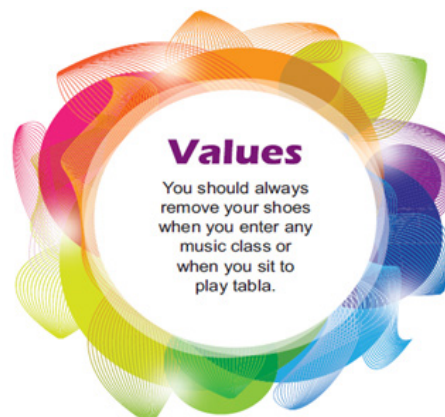
Part 1 - SITTING POSTURE

Listen carefully as your teacher explains the importance of correct sitting posture in tabla playing.

Sit comfortably on the floor with your shoulders, arms, wrists, and fingers relaxed. Make sure your body is not strained while playing.

Sit cross-legged, keeping your back straight. If possible, practise sitting in the lotus position, as it is considered the best posture for playing the tabla.

Remember, good posture helps you execute the syllables clearly and comfortably.



PART 2 POSITIONING THE INSTRUMENT

Listen carefully as your teacher explains the correct positioning of the tabla.

Place the right drum (tabla/dayan) on your right-hand side and the left drum (dagga/bayan) on your left-hand side. If you are left-handed, place the drums in the opposite position.

Keep the right drum slightly inclined (tilted) towards you, and keep the left drum straight.

Make sure the drums are placed comfortably in front of you so that you can play with ease and proper control.



PART 3 ALPHABETS OF TABLA

A variety of sounds are produced by striking either on the tabla or the dagga individually or on both drums at the same time. Each stroke is known as a 'bol' or syllable.

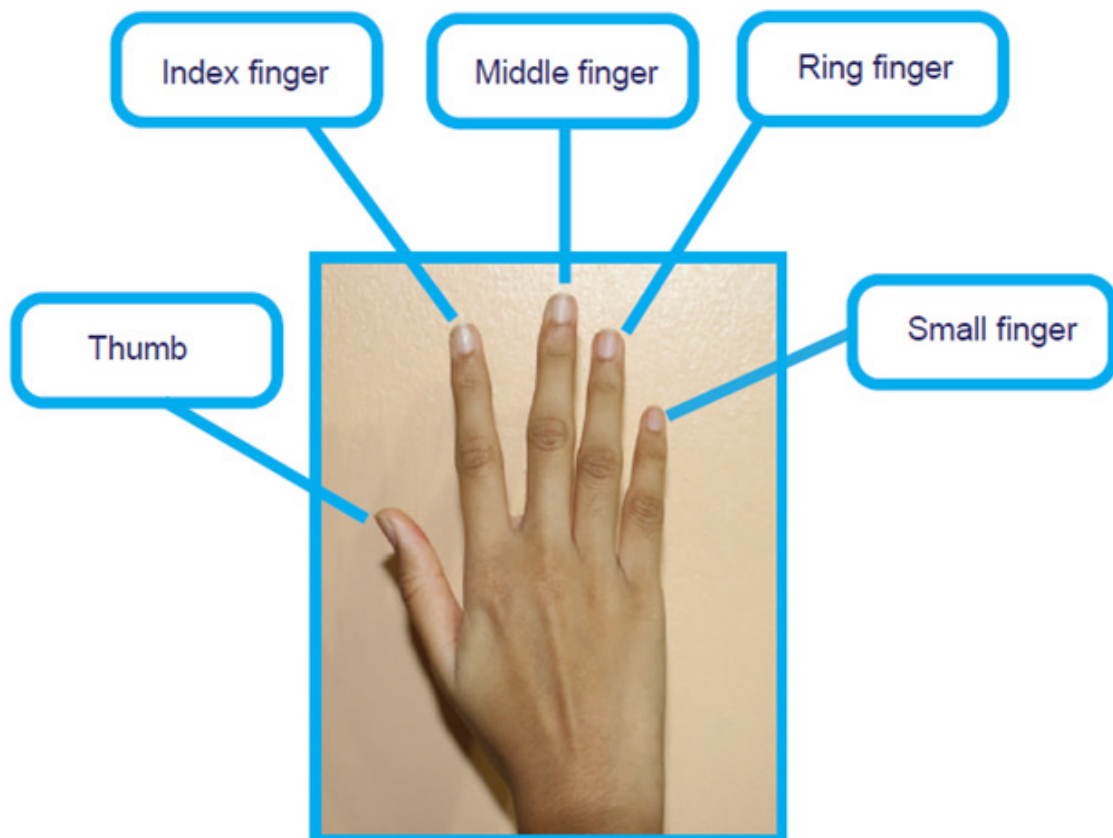
<i>Tabla Bol-s</i>	
Left hand drum (<i>Dagga</i>)	Right hand drum (<i>Tabla</i>)
<p><i>Ghe, Ge, Gi, Ghi</i> <i>Ke, Ki, Ka</i></p>	<p><i>Ta or Na</i> <i>Tin</i> <i>Ti</i> <i>t</i> <i>na</i></p>

A simple syllable is played on only one drum. A compound syllable consists of two or more bol-s played either on one or both drums. There are two types of strokes namely open or resonant (*khula*) and closed or non-resonant (*bandh*).



PART 4 HAND AND FINGER POSITIONS ON THE TABLA

In order to play the specific syllables specific fingers are used. So let us first have a thorough knowledge about the names of the fingers used.



PART 5 THE BASIC SYLLABLES OF THE RIGHT DRUM

Ta , Na

Place the ring finger on the right edge of the *tabla* and join the small finger. Raise the middle finger and play the syllable 'Ta' with the index finger by striking on the left edge of the *maidan* and lifting it immediately to create an open and resonating sound.

1ST STEP



2ND STEP



3RD STEP



Tin

The position of hand and fingers are exactly the same as for 'Ta'. The grip that is the ring finger and the small finger is pushed slightly forward and play the syllable 'Tin' by striking on the left edge of the *syahi*. It is again an open and resonating sound.

1ST STEP



2ND STEP



3RD STEP



Tin (as used in Dadra taal)

The position of hand and fingers are exactly the same as for 'Ta'. The grip is pulled slightly towards the left. Then the hand is slid towards the right by striking lightly on the border of the *syahi* with the index finger. This gives a resonant sound.

1ST STEP



2ND STEP



3RD STEP





5.6 SAFETY FIRST:

- ✓ The instrument should be carried with precaution to avoid it from falling on the legs.
- ✓ A proper mat should be used for sitting.
- ✓ One should always carry out warming up exercises before sitting to play *tabla*.
- ✓ Sitting in the proper position is a must to avoid any type of pain in the long run.
- ✓ The hands should always be dry while playing in order to prevent the *tabla pudi* from getting damaged.





EXERCISE 1

Play the following patterns under the guidance of your teacher.

Patterns of basic syllables in cycles of 4 beats.

BEATS	1	2	3	4
Ex 1	Ta	Ta	Ta	Ta
Ex 2	Tin	Tin	Tin	Tin
Ex 3	Ta	Tin	Tin	Ta

Exercise 2

State whether the following is True or False.

1. Bad sitting posture can lead to back problems.
2. The correct and ideal sitting posture is to sit on the floor, cross-legged and spine straight.
3. Both drums should touch each other when placing them.
4. Both drums are kept straight.

Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks with the words given in bracket below:

(resonant, bol-s, pudi, dha, non-resonant, index finger)

1. The sounds produced on the tabla are called
2. There are two types of syllables namely..... and
3. All the tabla syllables are excuted on the
4. The syllable "Ta" is played with the



Exercise 4

Classify the tabla syllables (Ge , Ke , Tin , Ta , Ti , Dhin , na, Dha, t , Dhi) in the table below :

Resonant syllables	Non- Resonant syllables



Assessment Criteria

Students will be assessed through observation during guided practice. Assessment focuses on posture, positioning, hand technique, and basic performance skills.

1. Sitting Posture

Learners are able to sit in a balanced and comfortable cross-legged position with a straight spine and relaxed shoulders while playing the tabla.

2. Positioning of the Instrument

Learners are able to place the right drum (tabla) and left drum (dagga) correctly according to performance conventions.

3. Hand and Finger Position

Learners demonstrate correct basic hand and finger placement for producing simple syllables (bol-s) under teacher guidance.

4. Execution of Basic Syllables

Learners are able to play simple tabla syllables (e.g., Ta, Tin) clearly and accurately in a steady 4-beat cycle.

5. Handling and Care of the Instrument

Learners demonstrate careful and respectful handling of the tabla before, during, and after practice.

6. Attention and Response to Instructions

Learners listen attentively, follow teacher demonstrations, and respond appropriately during practical activities.

**Rubric
Assessment**

Criteria	Basic	Intermediate	Proficient
Sitting Posture	Sits with frequent reminders; posture is unstable or incorrect.	Maintains correct sitting posture with occasional reminders.	Maintains correct posture independently, balanced and relaxed.
Positioning of the Instrument	Positions tabla and dagga incorrectly or needs constant help.	Positions instruments mostly correctly with some guidance.	Positions instruments correctly and confidently without assistance.
Hand and Finger Position	Demonstrates incorrect finger placement and needs repeated correction.	Demonstrates mostly correct finger placement with guidance.	Demonstrates correct hand and finger position confidently and consistently.
Execution of Basic Syllables	Struggles to produce clear sounds; rhythm is inconsistent.	Produces mostly clear sounds with minor rhythmic errors.	Produces clear, accurate syllables in a steady rhythm.
Handling and Care of Instrument	Handles instrument carelessly or inconsistently.	Handles instrument carefully with reminders.	Handles instrument carefully and respectfully at all times.
Attention and Response	Needs repeated prompts to follow instructions	Follows instructions with occasional prompts.	Listens attentively and responds promptly and appropriately.



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