

How to be a good audience member



Photos courtesy of Thomas Ulch, rpb1001, Derek Tam, Ted van Pelt

Teaching kids about concert etiquette does not have to be difficult. Keep it light and fun with one of these activities:

Act it out

1. Ask students to describe places where they were members of an audience. Answers could include attending a movie, a play, some sort of sporting event, a concert, even sitting at home watching TV with their family. List answers on the board.
2. Discuss and compare the appropriate audience behavior for each of those settings. For example, would audiences behave differently at a golf tournament or a football game? How does a rock concert compare to a classical concert or a play?
3. Choose students to act as performers in some of these scenarios. Have them pretend to play a sport or put on a play or perform in a concert. Have the rest of the class pretend to be the audience, using the appropriate audience behavior you discussed.
4. After the pretend performance is over, ask the performers if they felt that the audience's behavior was appropriate for their performance and why.

Be the bad guy

1. Put on a video of a symphonic concert for the students to watch.
2. While they are watching, be a bad audience member yourself: answer your phone and talk loudly, open up a loud snack, play with the Velcro on an item of clothing, kick the seat of the person in front of you, applaud in the middle of the music, etc.
3. After the video, discuss your behavior with the students. Ask them what you did wrong and why your behavior was inappropriate.

A few more points to consider

Why should I listen quietly during a concert?

Have respect for the musicians. Musicians have worked hard to become really good at what they do. It took each of them years of practice and competitive auditions to become a professional musician. Show your respect by being a good audience member.

You are part of the concert! When you make noise or wiggle around, the musicians can see and hear you and it might make it hard for them to perform. And it will definitely make it hard for other audience members to enjoy the concert.

It's okay to close your eyes during the concert. This might make it easier to listen to the music and think about what story it's telling or how it makes you feel.

Or open your eyes and enjoy the experience of live music, where you can see what the musicians are doing. Try watching individual players to see what part they are playing, or notice how musicians use silent body language to communicate with each other during the performance.

The start of a symphony concert

When you arrive in your seat, the musicians might already be on stage warming up and getting ready for the concert. Here are four steps to follow so that you'll know when the concert is about to begin.

- 1. Ready...** The orchestra gets quiet and the concertmaster – the leader of the violin section – stands up or comes onto the stage. You can clap to show your excitement and appreciation, but be quiet once he or she turns around to face the orchestra.
- 2. Set...** The orchestra tunes by playing the same note at the same time so that they sound like one big instrument. The first oboe player leads the tuning.
- 3. Go...** The conductor walks out on stage and this means it is time for you to clap to show that you are excited for the concert to begin. When he turns around to face the orchestra, it's time to be quiet.



When he raises his arms, the whole orchestra sits up in their chairs, ready to begin.

- 4. Listen!** The music starts. It's time to show off your good audience skills! You'll know that it's time to clap when the music stops and the conductor lowers his arms. If you're not sure, wait for the rest of the audience to start clapping.

Audience quiz

1. You should enter the concert space
 - a. As loudly as possible.
 - b. Quietly.
 - c. Walking backwards.
2. When the conductor enters, you should
 - a. Wave and try to get his or her attention.
 - b. Scream his or her name as loudly as you can.
 - c. Clap to show you're excited for the concert to begin.
3. During the concert, it is a good idea to
 - a. Discuss the performance with the person sitting next to you.
 - b. Sit quietly and listen.
 - c. Have a crunchy snack.
4. When your phone rings during a concert, it is best to
 - a. Answer it and whisper to the person who called that you're busy listening to a concert.
 - b. Stand up and leave the room to answer it.
 - c. Wait!! You should have turned off your phone before the concert started!
5. You should applaud
 - a. After each piece of music, when the conductor lowers his or her arms.
 - b. Whenever you want.
 - c. Only at the very end of the concert.
6. You should use the restroom
 - a. Frequently throughout the concert.
 - b. Every time the percussionist crashes the cymbals together.
 - c. Before the concert begins.
7. While listening to the orchestra you should
 - a. Think about how the music makes you feel.
 - b. Text your friends to tell them how good the music is.
 - c. Tap your feet on the back of the chair in front of you.

