

## Solfege

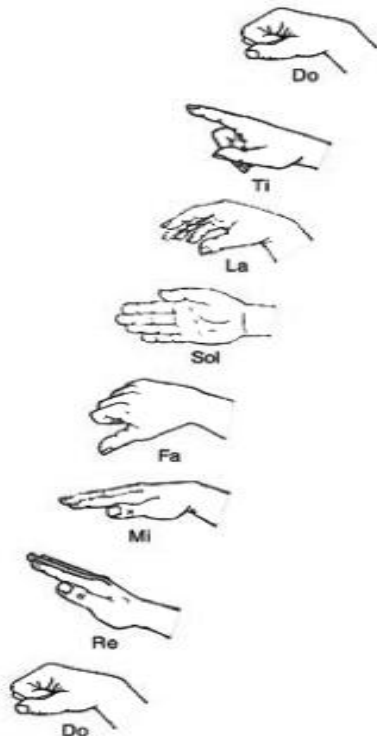
**Solfege** or **Solfa** is a set of syllables that represent pitch or relationships between pitches in music. There are two main varieties of Solfege

- Fixed DO (In Fixed DO, DO is always the pitch C.)
- Moveable DO (In Moveable DO, the syllables represent pitch relationships.)

**Moveable DO** is the system recommended when using the SongWorks approach to education.

The syllables are DO, RE, MI, FA, SO, LA, TI and then DO one octave above the original DO.

The Curwen Hand Signs are used along with the syllables for melodic study in the SongWorks approach.



### Curwen Hand Signs

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Spencer Curwen (England) developed hand signs to go with the Solfege syllables. Kodaly integrated these hand signs into his teaching methods. Therefore they are often referred to as **Kodaly Hand Signs**.

## Why Use Solfege Syllables and Hand Signs

- Solfege syllables and Curwen Hand Signs are a way of giving a physical placement for a vocal pitch. Depending on the range of a song, DO is placed at a certain level on the body. The hand signs move up when the pitch goes up and down when the pitch goes down.
- The movements of the hands when doing hand signs gives a visual outline of the melodic contour of a song or musical phrase.

## How Solfege Syllables and Hand Signs are Used in Education

- Hand signs can be performed while singing a whole or part of a song.  
[Video](#)
- Hand signs can be used to highlight various patterns or phrases for study purposes.

## Introducing Solfege and Curwen Hand Signs to Your Students

### Scenario I:

Teach the DO, RE, MI song from the well-known movie, *The Sound of Music* is one effective way to introduce Solfege Syllables.

“What is the meaning of DO, RE, ME, FA, SO, LA?” Discussion follows.

“DO, RE, MI, FA, SO, LA, TI represent steps of the major scale in music.”

“As I sing the steps of the scale once more, listen and tell us what you notice.” Teacher sings the syllables and displays the hand signs letting his/her hand and arm rise and fall as the pitch rises or falls.

What did you notice about the way I sang the syllables this time?

Why do you suppose I added the movement?

Students and teacher practice the hand signs, and re-sing the song, displaying the hand signs in the appropriate places.

### Scenario II:

Perform the hand signs of a pattern of music within a song. Example:

Sing the song, *Hot Cross Buns*.

“As I sing the song this time, I will add something new. You will want to watch to see what it is.” Sing and display the hand signs for MI, RE, DO; each time you sing the words, Hot (MI), Cross (RE) Buns (DO).

“Describe what I did with my hands.”

“What words were being sung as I moved my hands?”

“Did my hands move up or down as I sang?”

“Why do you think they moved down?”

“How many times did those words come in the song?”

This time perform the signs with me as we sing the song.

**For additional information on this subject refer to:**

Bennett P. D. & Bartholomew, D.R. (1997). SongWorks I: Singing in the education of children. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 87.

Bennett P. D. & Bartholomew, D.R. (1999). **SongWorks II**: Singing from sound to symbol. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.