
De Cero a Cien: A Beginner's Guide to Starting a Mariachi Program

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Learning Objectives

- Identify resources to ensure teaching is **authentic**.
 - Identify **traditional instruments** needed and where to purchase them.
 - Identify **method books** and **sheet music** appropriate for Mariachi classes.
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What is Mariachi?

Mariachi is a term that can refer to the music, the ensemble, or a person.

Core Instrumentation

The modern Mariachi sound solidified in the 1950s. A standard ensemble includes:

- **Melodía (Melody/Lead):**
 - Trumpet
 - Violin
- **Armonía (Rhythm/Harmony):**
 - Guitarrón (large bass guitar)
 - Vihuela (small, 5-stringed guitar with a rounded back)
 - Guitar
 - Harp (optional, but traditional)

Origin of the Music

Mariachi culture originated from a mix of musical traditions, including:

- Professional musicians from Spain who arrived with Cortez in 1519.
- The influence of slaves from Africa.
- The cultures of hundreds of indigenous groups
- This fusion created new musical traditions, with each region developing its own style (e.g., Son Jarocho, Son Jalisciense).

Teaching Mariachi Respectfully

Best Practices for Cultural Respect

- **Do your research!**
- If unsure, **ask!**
- Have **students share their experiences.**
- Bring in **community members** to support the program.

Supplemental Reading for Teachers

- *Mariachi Music in America* by Daniel Sheehy
- *Foundations of Mariachi Education Volume I*
- *The Art of Mariachi: A Curriculum Guide* by Rachel Yvonne Cruz

Three Steps Towards Starting a Program

1. Gauging Interest/Recruitment

- I found that most students who join Mariachi are those **outside of the current music program.**
- A new Mariachi course is effective because it attracts students who felt like the existing ensembles didn't reflect their identity or interests.
- Think about your school demographics!
- Find and perform music written for your current ensembles: John Nieto, Jorge Vargas, Tito Talamante

2. Materials: Instruments & Accessories

Instrument Type	Suggested Accessories/Notes
Vihuela	Classical guitar neck strap, plastic finger picks. Instruments can be purchased from Mariachi Clothing Company, La Tradition Music, Southwest Strings. Quality Vihuelas have nylon frets
Guitarrón	Bass Guitar/Guitar Strap. Instruments can be purchased from Mariachi Clothing Company, La Tradition Music, Southwest Strings.

Guitar	Nylon String classical guitars, Classical Guitar neck strap, Medium Guitar Picks.
Uniform	A simple and effective uniform is White Shirt, Black Pants, Black Shoes + Moño (a traditional bow tie worn with <i>trajes de charro</i>). The Moño can be pre-tied and customized. (Can be ordered from Mariachi Clothing Company, The Mariachi Connection)

3. Curriculum: Recommended Resources

- **Method Books:**
 - *Habits of a Successful Beginner Mariachi Musico*
 - *¡Simplemente Mariachi!*
 - *Mariachi Mastery*
 - *Mariachi Mastery Songbook*

Mariachi Song Styles/Repertoire

Scope and Sequence Overview

Level	Focus	Key Skills/Repertoire
Beginning	Learning fundamental instrumental skill through Mariachi.	Whole, half, quarter, 8th note rhythms in 4/4; Unison choral singing; Beginner Son; Ranchera Valseada, Bolero.
Intermediate	Building on musical skill and starting to explore Mariachi style .	Explore <i>all</i> Mariachi Song styles (polca, vals, etc.); Solo, Duet, and Ensemble Choral Singing.
Advanced	Performing with stylistic accuracy and nuance .	Working toward mastery; exploring learning repertoire by ear and transposing Rancheras; aspects of improvisation; 3-part choral singing; Public performances expected.

Key Song Styles:

Style	Meter/Tempo	Armonia (Rhythm) Pattern	Notes
Vals / Ranchera Valseada	3/4 time	Guitarrón on beat 1; armonía plays on beats 2 & 3.	Vals is a common song style in 3/4 time.
Ranchera Lenta	4/4 meter	Guitarrón plays on beats 1 & 3; armonía plays on beats 2 & 4.	A slow Ranchera song in common time.
Bolero	4/4 meter	Guitarrón plays on beats 1, 3 & 4; armonía plays 8th notes.	A romantic 4/4 song style.
Son	Alternates 3/4 and 6/8	Redoble, alternating 8th note pattern (dududu, dduddu) D = Down U = Up	The most traditional mariachi song style.
Son Huasteco o Huapango	3/4 and 6/8	Features extra ornamentation: the abanico and the apagón .	Originated in the Huasteca region of North Eastern Mexico.