

LITTLE SALLY WALKER

“Little Sally Walker” is a contemporary playground game. It’s likely that the song and its actions have been passed around as a cheerleading chant since the 1980s. Kids today are more likely to be familiar with this version than with Sally’s “musical ancestors.” In England and North America, children in the 1800s played a ring game:

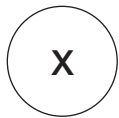
*Little Sally Water, sitting in a saucer.
Rise, Sally, rise. Wipe out your eyes.
Turn to the east; turn to the west.
Turn to the one that you love the best.*

Variations on this theme spread throughout the Caribbean, and can still be found in Trinidad, Tobago and Jamaica. Later, African-American variants, like those sung by Bessie Jones and Ella Jenkins became popular in the US:

*Put your hand on your hip and let your backbone slip.
Shake it to the east, shake it to the west.
Shake it to the one that you love the best!*

SING • MOVE

Formation: Circle of players, with one “it” in the center.



Action: All sing, stomp and clap as the center player (“Sally”) steps or skips around the circle. On the words, “she stopped in front of me,” the center player stops in front of another player in the ring.

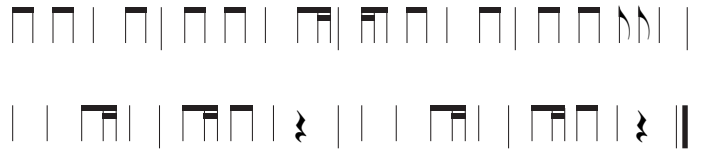
On the words, “Hey, girl, do your thing,” Center player/ Sally performs a dance move or motion in front of the chosen player. On the first lyric “switch,” the two switch places and the chosen player copies the action. Then the chosen player becomes the new it.

* Feel free to change the name “Sally” to “Sammy,” “Johnny” or whatever your students choose when both girls and boys are playing. Or they can simply act out the role of Sally when they’re “it.”

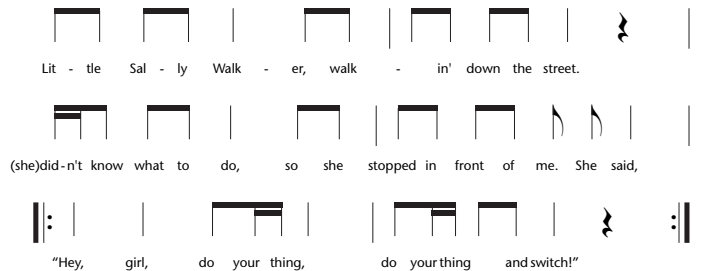
READ • WRITE

(Rhythmic Development)

This infectious song is easy to sing and fun to play, making it perfect for lower and upper grades alike. Its syncopated rhythm makes reading and notating it a challenge, but older students can discover the “hidden syncopa” figures by removing the ties, and comparing the words to the rhythms below:



Lead students to discover that the notation can easily be transformed into the rhythm of the words, using the tie.



READ • WRITE

(Melodic & Harmonic Development)

“Little Sally Walker” shares its opening motive (*s s m l s m*) with the simpler version of the game often played in lower grades. Students may recall learning the melody, with its P4 *m-l* leap, from grade 2! If not, now is a good time to explore it. The tune is also useful in upper grades for the preparation and practice of *fa*, which functions here as a descending passing tone in the *sfmrd* motive. The refrain works well for preparation and practice with *re*, since it is limited to motivic combinations of *s m r m* and *r m r d*. The melodic content is limited, but the song and game are catchy and appealing enough for older students, making this a good choice for “older beginners” with limited music literacy skills.

CULTURAL CONTEXT LISTEN • WATCH

Stomp or sidewalk cheers have been documented since the early 1970s; some of the earliest examples recorded are found on *Old Mother Hippletoe: Rural and Urban Children's Songs*. Related to the African-American inspired cheer style of “stomp and shake,” and the tradition of “stepping,” these “cheers” were usually performed by girls between the ages of 8–13 years old. In addition to various patterns of foot stomps and hand-claps, other body percussion such as slaps and slides may be included.

Encourage students to explore the rich tradition of cheers and chants, and their evolution in American culture. Folklorist Azizi Powell's blog, *Zumalayah*, is a great source for information on the history of “stepping,” and “stomp and shake” cheerleading, and videos of kids performing stomp cheers.

CREATE

Kids of all ages will enjoy making up their own ways to move and perform “Little Sally Walker.” Encourage them to combine known cheers (as we did) or create their own, adding body percussion. Or have them try composing percussion “grooves” or “loops” using apps like Garageband, Keezy or Keezy Drummer for an instrumental accompaniment.