



Call and Response

Call and Response patterns (sometimes referred to as Question and Answer) are an integral part and a key characteristic of African Music. Listen to any African Music, particularly vocal music and you will notice that it is filled with examples of Call and Response, often with a vocal solo being answered by a response from the chorus.

Call and Response patterns are also a common part of communication in the natural world. Animal calls, football chants and even political speeches (the addresses of Martin Luther King are a good example), are all punctuated with calls and responses. African Drumming can be seen as a conversation between different drums with Call and Response patterns being a dialogue between the leader and the rest of the group.

The simplest Call and Response method is to play a direct repeat of what has been played by the Master Drummer.

Master Drummer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	H	O	H	H	O	H	O	H	H	O	L	L	L	O	O	O
Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	H	O	H	H	O	H	O	H	H	O	L	L	L	O	O	O

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

Alternatively, and a little more impressive, are the types of Call and Response where the rest of the Djembe group play a different response to that of the leader, showing that a complex set piece or interaction has been learned.



Master Drummer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	H	O	H	H	O	H	O	H	H	O	L	L	L	O	O	O
Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	O	O	O	H	H	O	O	O

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video.

To make both styles of Call and Response easier, people quite often attach words to the rhythms. Spoken word does have its own natural rhythm and if you repeat a phrase over and over you will hear patterns form.

With call and Response some simple phrases can turn into really good syncopated rhythms that can be used effectively and be easy to remember.

Master Drummer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	H	H	H	O	H	H	H	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
We want you, We want you,																
Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	H	H	HH	OH	H	H	H	O
We want you as a new re- cruit.																

[Click here](#) to watch the accompanying video

Elements taken from Andy Gleadhill's African Drumming Book 1, Pages 19-21