唱 歌

coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese

Singing is a great way to improve fluency, and I can guarantee you will put a smile on any native Cantonese speaker's face with these simple tunes. Don't let your brain tell you you can't sing either. I actually had singing lessons and found that I knew very little about how to use my voice in English - no wonder I struggled in other languages!

Guess what? With practice you will improve. Some of these songs I have picked up from sending my kids to the local kindergarten. Others I have invented. While it can be difficult to learn Cantonese through songs because they artists tend to use the written form of the language, all of these use the spoken form.

Sometimes the tune works well with the tones. Other times be aware that you need to be careful to use the proper tone when you speak - trying to match tones to the tune is a challenge. It sounds great when you get it right and hilarious when you don't.

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1. **Happy Birthday to you** in Cantonese follows the same tune as the English version. 祝 zuk1 = wish, 你 nei5 = you, 生日 saang1 jat6 = birthday, 快樂 faai3 lok6 = happy. Repeat four times.

祝 你 生 日 快 樂

| zuk1 | nei5 | saang1 | jat6 | faai3 | lok6 |

祝 你 生 日 快 樂

| zuk1 | nei5 | saang1 | jat6 | faai3 | lok6 |

祝 你 生 日 快 樂

祝 你 生 日 快 樂

唱 歌
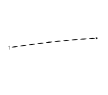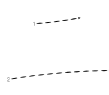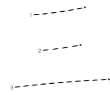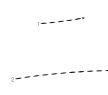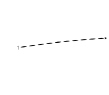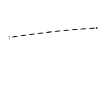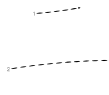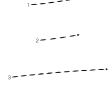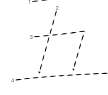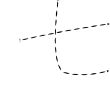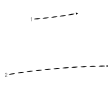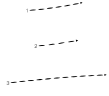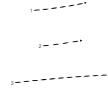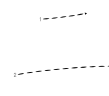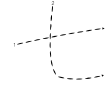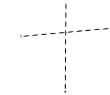
coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese

2. The Numbers Song: to the tune of 'This old man, he played one'

一	二	三	三	二	一
jat1	ji6	saam1	saam1	ji6	jat1

一	二	三	四	五	六	七
jat1	ji6	saam1	sei3	ng5	luk6	cat1

二	三	四	四	三	二
ji6	saam1	sei3	sei3	saam1	ji6

四	五	六	七	八	九	十
sei3	ng5	luk6	cat1	baat3	gau2	sap6

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Simple Songs in Cantonese

3.   Daddy Sunshine, Daddy Sunshine
Where did you go? Where did you go?
Quickly, quickly come out. Quickly, quickly come out.
Laughing, laughing.

Sing this one to the tune of Frère Jacques.

太 陽 爸 爸，太 陽 爸 爸

taai3 joeng4 baa4 baa1,   taai3 joeng4 baa4 baa1

你去咗邊？你去 咗邊？

nei5 heoi3 zo2 bin1?   nei5 heoi3 zo2 bin1?

快啲快啲出嚟，快啲快啲出嚟

faai3 di1 faai3 di1 ceot1 lei4,   faai3 di1 faai3 di1 ceot1 lei4

哈哈笑，哈哈笑

haa1 haa1 siu3,   haa1 haa1 siu3

唱 歌

coeng3 go1

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Simple Songs in Cantonese

4. Two Tigers is a traditional Chinese song.

兩 loeng5 = two, 隻 zek3 = measure word for animals, 老虎 lou5 fu2 = tiger, 跑 paau2 = run, 得 dak1 = placed between a verb and an adjective, it turns the adjective into an adverb, 快 faai3 = fast (so 跑得快 paau2 dak1 faai3 = run quickly), 一隻 jat1 zek3 = one (tiger), 沒有 mut6 jau5 = doesn't have (written form, in speaking we just say: 冇 mou5) 眼睛 ngaan5 zing1 = eyes, 嘴巴 zeoi2 baa1 = mouth, 真 zan1 = really, 奇怪 kei4 gwaai1 = strange.

Sing this one to the tune of Frère Jacques.

兩 隻 老 虎　兩 隻 老 虎

loeng5 zek3 lou5 fu2　　loeng5 zek3　lou5 fu2

跑 得 快　　跑 得 快

paau2 dak1 faai3　　paau2 dak1 faai3

一 隻 沒 有 眼 睛　　一 隻 沒有嘴 巴

jat1 zek3 mut6 jau5 ngaan5 zing1　　jat1 zek3 mut6 jau5 zeoi2 baa1

真 奇 怪　真 奇 怪

zan1 kei4 gwaai1　　zan1 kei4 gwaai1

唱 歌

coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese

5. Let It Be (Jo's version)

我唔開心 ngo5 m4 hoi1 sam1 = I'm not happy, 有好多麻煩 jau5 hou2 do1 maa4 faan4 = have so much trouble, 做乜嘢 zou6 mat1 je5 = do what, 開心 啲 hoi1 sam1 di1 = a bit happier, 飲啲嘢 jam2 di1 je5 = drink something, 講 咁樣 gong2 gam2 joeng6 = say like this: 冇事 mou5 si6 = it doesn't matter (often heard when a child falls down to encourage them not to cry and just get one with it - but note the way that the tones do not fit with the tune!)

我 唔 開 心，有 好 多 麻 煩

ngo5　m4　hoi1 sam1,　　jau5 hou2　do1　maa4 faan4

做 乜 嘢 開 心 啲？

zou6　mat1　je5　hoi1　sam1　di1

飲 啲 嘢，講 咁 樣：冇 事

jam2　di1　je5,　gong2 gam2 joeng6:　mou5 si6

冇事, 冇事, 冇事, 冇事

mou5 si6 (repeat)

咁 樣 同 朋 友 開 心 啲

gam2 joeng6 tung4 pang4 jau5　hoi1 sam1 di1

唱 歌

coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese

6. You are my sunshine…….(Jo's version)

You are my 太陽 taai3 joeng4 = sunshine, I'm 好開心 hou2 hoi1 sam1 = very happy, 見到你 gin3 dou6 nei5 = to see you,你唔知道喎 nei5 m4 zi1 dou6 wo3 = you don't know, I expect, 我有幾愛你 ngo5 jau5 gei2 oi3 nei5 = how much love I have for you, 我好掛住你 ngo5 hou2 gwaa3 zyu6 nei5 = I really miss you.

你 係 我 嘅 太 陽, 你 係 我 嘅 太 陽

 nei5 hai6 ngo5 ge3   taai3 joeng4, (repeat)

我 好 開 心 見 到 你

ngo5 hou2 hoi1 sam1 gin3 dou6 nei5

你 唔 知 道 喎

nei5 m4   zi1   dou6 wo3

我 有 幾 愛 你

ngo5 jau5 gei2   oi3 nei5

我 好 掛 住 你

ngo5 hou2 gwaa3 zyu6 nei5

唱 歌

coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese
7. If you're happy and you know it……(Jo's version)

你 好 開 心，我 知 道 啦： You're happy, I know…

nei5 hou2　hoi1 sam1,　　ngo5 zi1　dou6　laa1

You can try to fit any type of action to this song. Even if it doesn't go particularly well, it is fun to do and you will be a hit at your local Cantonese kindergarten. Here are a few suggestions based on a day in the life of someone who lives on Lamma Island Hong Kong.

1. 拍 拍 手 paak3 paak3 sau2	clap your hands	9. 坐 低 先 co5 dai1 sin1	sit down
2. 起 身 hei2 san1	stand up	10. 飲 咖 啡 jam2 gaa1 fe1	drink coffee
3. 刷 刷 牙 caat3 caat3 ngaa4	brush your teeth	11. 做 嘢 zou6 je5	do stuff/work
4. 洗 面 sai2 min6	wash your face	12. 食 晏 sik6 aan3	have lunch
5. 去 廁 所 heoi3 ci3 so2	go to the toilet	13. 飲 啤 酒 jam2 be1 zau2	drink beer
6. 食 早 餐 sik6 zou2 can1	eat breakfast	14. 錫我一啖 sek3 ngo5 jat1 daam6	give me a kiss
7. 搭 船 daap3 syun4	take a ferry	15. 講 拜 拜 gong2 baai1 baai3	say goodbye
8. 返 工 faan1 gong1	go to work	16. 瞓 覺 fan3 gaau3	go to sleep

唱 歌

coeng3 go1

(meaning "sing")

Simple Songs in Cantonese

8. New Year's Song (To the tune of Auld Lang Syne - words by Jo)

Happy New Year,
Happy New Year,
I hope everybody is well.
Have a relaxing, Happy New Year,
With friends laughing.

新 年 快 樂

san1   nin4   faai3 lok6

新 年 快 樂

san1   nin4   faai3 lok6

我 希 望 大 家 好

ngo5 hei1 mong6 daai6 gaa1 hou2

有 個 輕 鬆 開 心 嘅 新 年

jau5   go3   hing1 sung1 hoi1 sam1 ge3   san1   nin4

同 朋 友 哈 哈 笑

tung4 pang4 jau5   haa1 haa1 siu3

Keep singing, but remember: once you have the sound, you must also make sure you have the right tone. The melody of the song does not always follow the tones of Cantonese and I challenge you to try to get the tone right. What does that do to the melody? Keep practicing and make up your own songs to share with me.