

Getting the most from Focus on Sound

James Manwaring

KS3/4/5

Introduction

Focus on Sound Pro is a piece of cloud-based software from Music First. This resource looks at features of the software, and explores how you can use it in your teaching across Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.

Focus on Sound Pro provides many resources useful for classroom music teaching or for homework, with a dictionary of sound, a hub for information, a testing portal, and insights on instruments, theory, set works and more. It also has custom options, so you can create your own lessons and tests, and it integrates with services including Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams.

Getting Started

To get started with the software, first approach Music First (www.musicfirst.co.uk) for a demo version, so that you can check out the features of the software and how it might be useful to you.

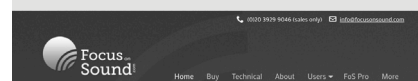
There are then two options in terms of setting up your school: manual set-up, or set-up using your online learning platform.

Manual set-up

If you don't have a learning platform such as Microsoft Teams available, you can still set up your classes and school quickly and easily using the online portal. Once you have your order complete, you can begin to put your school information together.

- 1 First log on to your Music First area.
- 2 Once logged on, click on School Tools at the top of the page. You will then see a page displaying your classes, teachers, administrators and students.

James Manwaring is Director of Music for Windsor Learning Partnership and has been teaching music for 17 years. He is a member of the Music Teachers Association and ISM, and he writes his own music blog.



Focus on Sound
Music education software in the Cloud



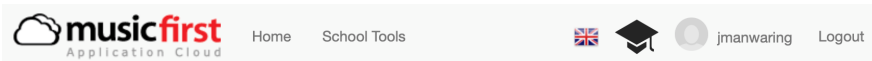
This really is an amazing resource that is easy to navigate. My students love it and it's much needed in our current climate. Not to mention amazing value for money. A must for any busy music teacher at the moment. - Trish Parsons Smith, King Edward VI Aston School UK

NEW - Integration with Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams. More info.



Develop listening skills, theory, composing and musical knowledge with online resources for PCs, tablets and smartphones.

Study in school or use as the perfect distance learning option.



Home / Tools

The windsor boys' school

Administrators: 1 / 4 | Classes: 2 | Teachers: 1 / 7 | Students 50 / unlimited

Your Classes

Create and manage Classes

List + Add

Your Administrators

Create and manage Administrators

List + Add

Your Teachers

Create and manage Teachers

List + Add

Your Students

Create and manage Students

List + Add

Batch Import

Batch Import Students and Classes

Batch Import

Bulk Delete School Data

Use for End of Year Management

Delete All Students | Delete All Class Details

- 3 Add some teachers to your system: you need to do this before you can assign classes to them.
- 4 Once you've created your teachers, you can create classes. You can give them a class name and also the relevant year group.
- 5 Once teachers and classes are created, you can begin to import students. A batch import is by far the quickest way to do this. Click on Batch Import and then select the CSV option from the drop-down menu. Then select from three spreadsheet templates, depending on the amount of information you want to include.
- 6 Download the template and populate it with information – usernames and passwords. Make sure that you then save the spreadsheet as a .csv file.
- 7 You're now ready to import this file to Music First, and you can still edit the names and classes within the School Tools area.

Linking with a learning platform

Linking Focus on Sound with your school learning platform is a quick and easy process, and it's GDPR safe. All the information you need for this process is on the website (www.focusonsound.com), including links to get Focus on Sound Pro set up with Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom.

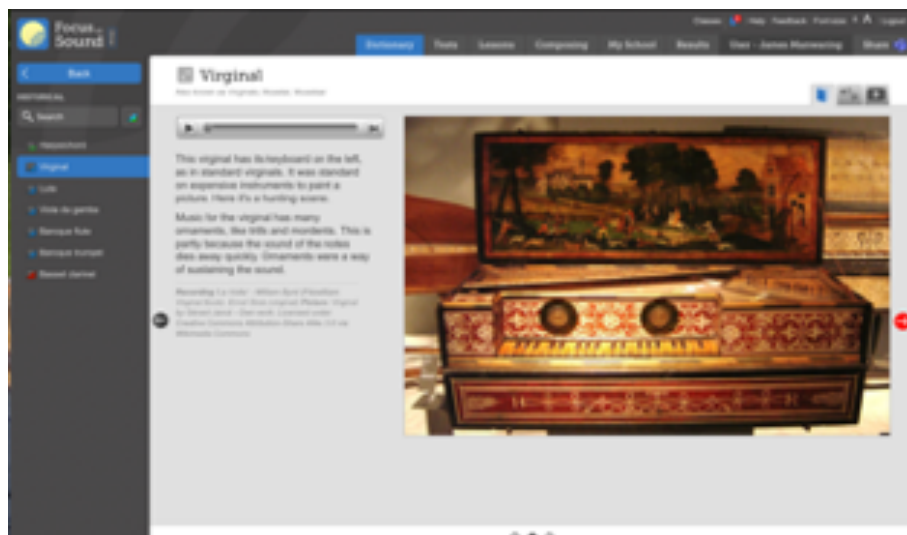
Teams and Google integration

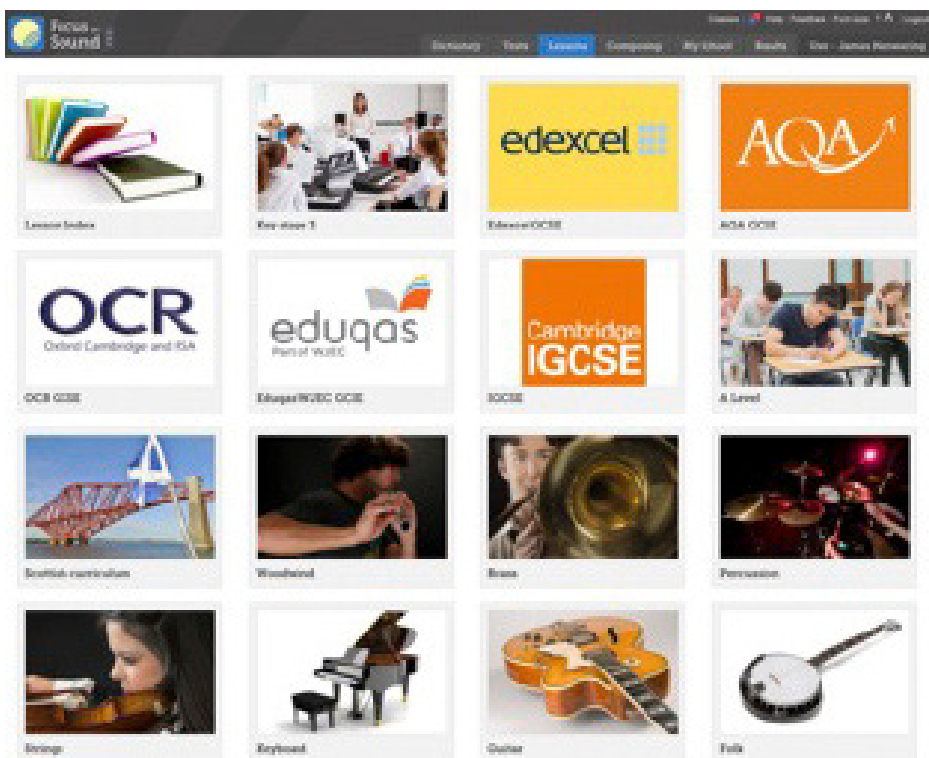
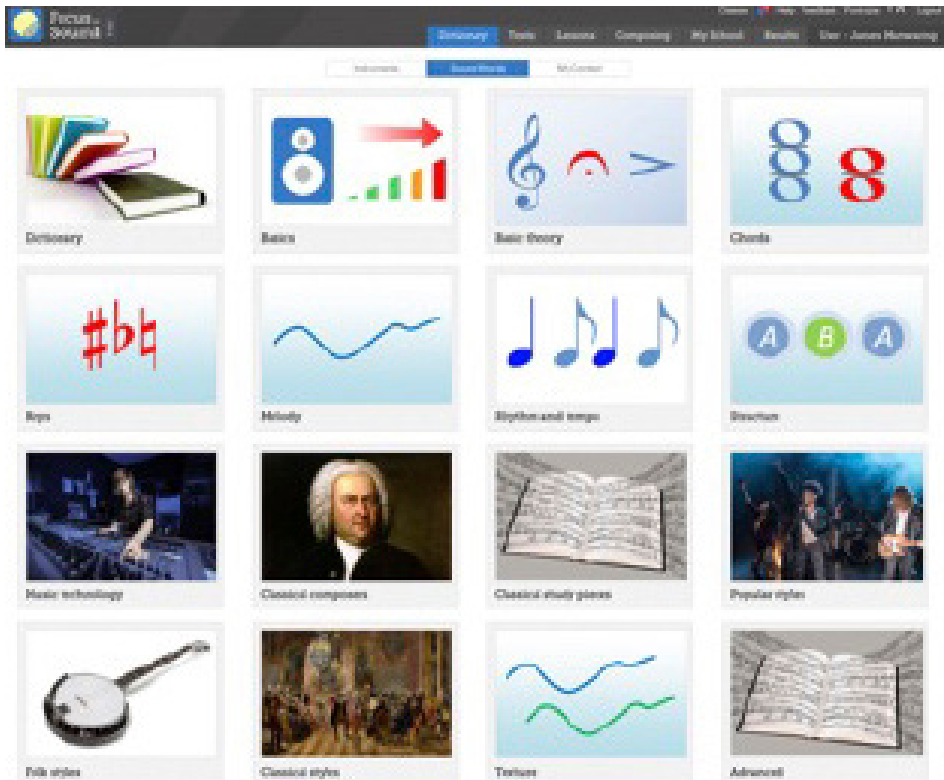
Integrating Focus on Sound with your learning platform has several advantages:

- ▶ Integration means that your classes are instantly created, and students can quickly log in using their school login.
- ▶ As a teacher, you can instantly share a lesson with students, who will then see it within their Teams or Google classroom.
- ▶ When you want to assign a lesson, you can do it automatically and students will then receive an assignment to complete.
- ▶ Results of tests can be quickly shared between Focus on Sound and the learning platform you use, allowing you to keep track of student data easily.
- ▶ It's an easy process to set up, and it doesn't involve much work from the school end, just a network administrator to allow the connection.

Dictionary: instruments and sound words

One of Focus on Sound's most useful features is its dictionary. It's broken down into two sections – Instruments and Sound Words. In a lesson you may want to have students logged on so that they can quickly look up key terms that they don't know or understand. This kind of active learning and listening can make for a great lesson. The instruments section is helpful for you as a teacher particularly when you don't have the instrument available to you in real life. I like to have Focus on Sound Pro open during every lesson so that I have it ready to use at any moment.



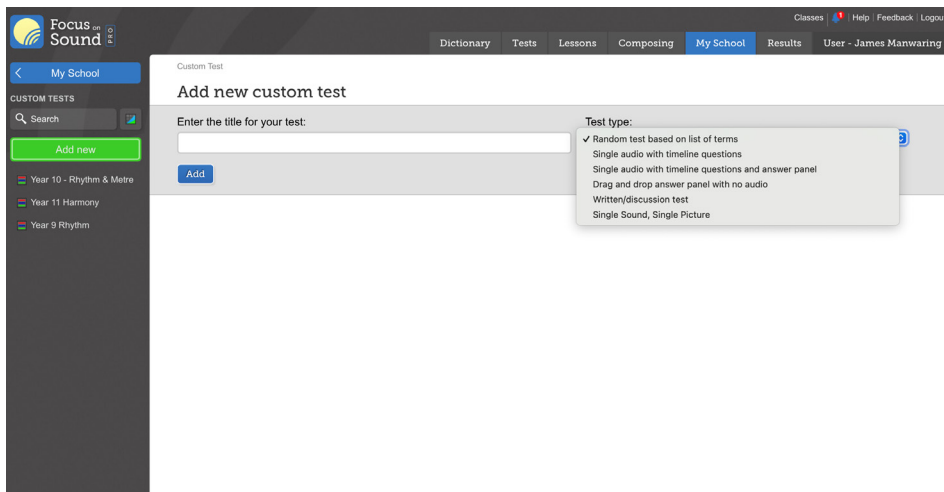


Tests and lessons

Focus on Sound Pro comes with a library of lessons and tests that can be used in your teaching, all of which can be found in the menu. You can assign tests to students and set them specific lessons to follow. Lessons will often then include a test. If you're linked to your learning platform, it's a quick and easy process to set work for students. There are many possibilities available, but here, I'll focus on how you can make your own content. There are three main ways to do this: Custom Tests, Custom Lessons and Custom Content.

Creating tests

When you choose to add a new custom test, you'll see a drop-down menu of options:



- ▶ **Random test based on list of terms:** this test allows you to create a list of key terms that Focus on Sound Pro then turns into a test. This is a quick and easy test where you control the content.
- ▶ **Single audio with timeline questions:** a single timeline question allows you to upload audio and then create questions that are specific to the audio.
- ▶ **Single audio with timeline questions and answer panel:** this is similar to the above, but you're creating panels that students can drag and drop.
- ▶ **Drag and drop answer panel with no audio:** this style of test is similar to the above, but without using any audio.
- ▶ **Written/discussion test:** if you're looking to set a piece of more extended writing for GCSE or A level, this is a useful style of test to use.
- ▶ **Single sound, single picture:** matching audio with a picture allows you to add images to questions, which can help to guide students.

Tips before creating your first test

- 1 Decide what type of test you want to create. If you're not sure, look at some of the existing tests to see what best suits the material you're testing.
- 2 If you choose a test that requires audio or images, those audio or picture files will need to be ready to upload. The file size limit is 3MB, so you may need to use some audio editing software to prepare the file. Audio files must also be in MP3 format. Free software such as Audacity (www.audacityteam.org) will allow you to edit and choose a format for your audio file.
- 3 Work out exactly what questions you want to ask, or in the case of a random test (see below), which key terms you want to base the test around.
- 4 Once you've created the test, make sure that you publish it. You can still edit it after this process, or you can use it in a custom lesson. If you want to assign a test to a student or class, click on the 'Use in new lesson' button at the top.
- 5 Using a test in a lesson means that students can receive a link to the lesson and therefore complete the test. At this stage, you can also add additional pages of Focus on Sound Pro content before students complete the test. If you've given students a test on chords, for example, you might like to include some pages to read on chords before they complete the test.
- 6 If Focus on Sound Pro is linked to your learning environment, you can automatically assign a test to a class. This is a useful way to set work for your class, and get them completing the tests you have created. Alternatively, provide them with a link, or set the test within Focus on Sound in your class groups.

Now let's consider the different tests and how they can be created and used in your classroom. Don't forget that you can use your own tests as part of a custom lesson that you create.

Random test based on list of terms

When you're teaching a lesson on a set work or topic, you'll almost certainly cover a range of key terms. Sometimes students will bring additional words that they want you to explain. One possible approach to this situation is to have the random test generator open during the lesson, and to add key terms to it as they're mentioned. You can then create a test at the end of the lesson including everything that's been discussed.

- 1 Click on My School, then Custom tests.

Custom Test Delete Draft Test

Add new custom test

Enter the title for your test:

Difficulty:
 1

Generic term for testing: 'Identify the ____'

Build your list of terms by selecting from the menu and clicking 'add'. **You need a minimum of four terms.**

Search:

- Polyphony
- Monophony
- Imitation
- Fugato

You can use the test immediately for whole class teaching. Students won't see the test on their own devices until you add it to a lesson. You can edit the test again after publishing.

- 2 Click on Add new and then give your test a title. The test type is in the drop-down list, and you should leave it on Random test based on list of terms.
- 3 You can now decide on the level of difficulty, between one and three, and also add additional introductory text to the first page of the test in the white boxed area.
- 4 You can now begin to build the test by searching for key terms in the search box. If you have this open during a lesson, you can search for a word every time it pops up. You will need a minimum of four terms, and you can also select terms from a drop-down list.
- 5 Once you have a minimum of four words, you can publish the test and send it to your students.

The process is relatively quick and easy, and it's possible to make a test in this way during a lesson. But of course you can also make them in advance by thinking about the terms that will be used in a lesson.

Single audio with timeline questions

- 1 Click on My School, then Custom tests.
- 2 Click on Add new and then give your test a title. The test type is in the drop-down list: select Single audio with timeline questions.
- 3 Decide on the level of difficulty, from one to three, and provide an introduction for the test.
- 4 Now upload your audio, which should be less than 3MB.
- 5 Once you've uploaded the audio, you can begin to create your questions. There are two types of question – Type answer and Multiple choice. Multiple choice questions require an answer and then at least one 'distractor' or wrong answer. You can also choose to show or not show the multiple-choice answers if you choose to use the test in class mode (if you're displaying the test to a class for group discussion).

Audio file:
[Upload new audio](#) Remove

00:11 / 03:00

The size limit is 3 Mb. You may need to use Audio editing programs to reduce the size of the file. Most files should be much smaller than that. Files must be in mp3 format.

1

Question type:
 Quiz text with multiple choice texts ⊕ Remove

Question text:

Answer text:

Position in audio (in seconds):

 Non-timed question

Show multiple choice answers in class mode:
 No ⊕

Distractor 1:

You need at least 1 distractor (3 is standard). A distractor is an incorrect answer

Distractor 2:

Distractor 3:

[Add another question](#)

- 6 If you use the Type answer style of question, you will need to provide a question, the answer, and also any alternative spellings or options that might arise.

2 Move up ↑

Question type:
 Type answer ⊕ Remove

Question text:

Answer text:

Position in audio (in seconds):

 Non-timed question

Alternative answer:

[Add another alternative answer](#)

Wrong spelling:

[Add another wrong spelling](#)

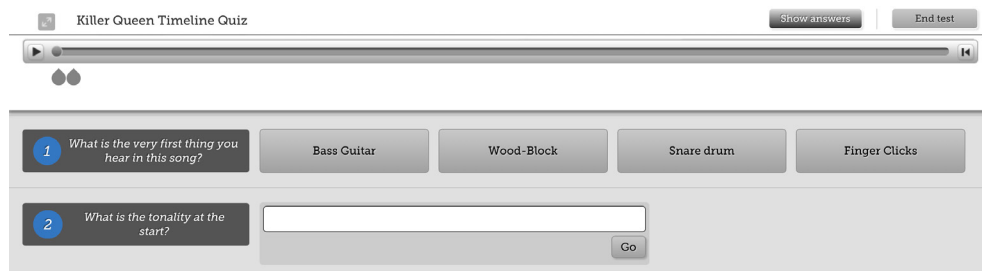
[Add another question](#)

[Publish Test](#)

You can use the test immediately for whole class teaching. Students won't see the test on their own devices until you add it to a lesson. You can edit the test again after publishing.

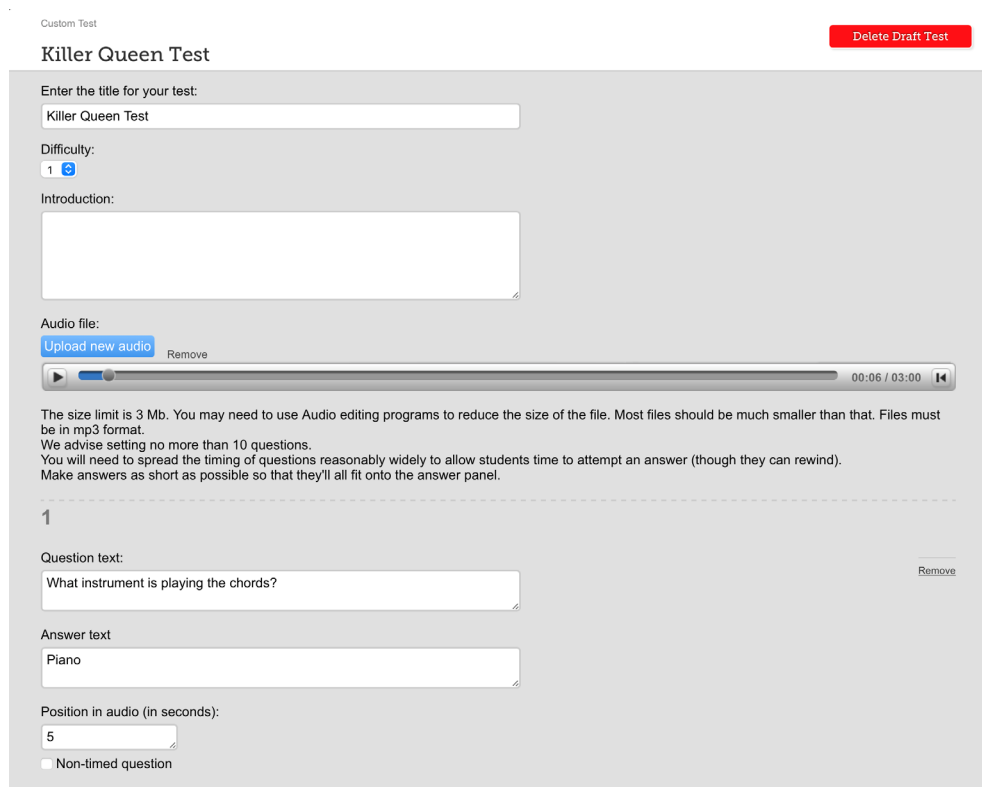
- 7 You will also need to indicate which part of the audio the question relates to, in seconds.
- 8 Once you've created all the questions and answers, you can publish the test and set it for your students. You can include the test in your own Custom lesson, or simply set it as a stand-alone test.

The image below shows you how the test looks with the two questions above once students are taking it:



Single audio with timeline questions and answer

- 1 Click on My School, then Custom tests. This test follows a similar creation method to that of the Single audio with timeline above, but the outcome is slightly different.
- 2 This test requires questions with specific answers, which appear on the right of the screen for students to drag across to answer the question. They will hear the audio and read the question, and the must select the answer from a list.
- 3 First import the audio, and then begin to add questions: one correct answer for each question, plus as many distractors or wrong answers as you want to include.



2 Move up 1

Question text:
 Remove

Answer text:

Position in audio (in seconds):

Non-timed question

[Add another question](#)

In this section you can add extra distractors (wrong answers). We advise a maximum of three.

Additional distractor (optional):

Additional distractor (optional):

[Add another distractor](#)

[Publish Test](#)

You can use the test immediately for whole class teaching. Students won't see the test on their own devices until you add it to a lesson. You can edit the test again after publishing.

The simple example below focuses on instruments used in Queen's 'Killer Queen'. By adding several distractors, you will give your students more choice, encouraging them to think harder about the correct answer:

Killer Queen Test Show answers End test

1 *What instrument is playing the chords?* Drop answer here

2 *What is the best instrument to enter the track?* Drop answer here

Accordion

Bass Guitar

Guitar Piano

Drag and drop answer panel with no audio

- 1 This type of test doesn't include audio, which can sometimes be quite time-consuming to create. Follow the same steps to create the test as previously: click on My School, then Custom tests, then choose Drag and drop answer panel with no audio from the drop-down list.
- 2 Now create questions and answers and add distractors in the same way as with the Single audio tests above.

Custom Test Delete Draft Test

Mozart Symphony Quiz

Enter the title for your test:

Difficulty:
 1 ⊕

Introduction:

1 Remove

Question text:

Answer text:

2 Move up ↑

Question text:

Answer text:

[Add another question](#)

- 3 Publish the test and share it with students.

This type of test is a particularly quick and easy one to make, and it's something you could even consider creating live during a lesson, so that you can test the students on the lesson content at the end, and even include any wrong answers that have cropped up during the lesson.

Written/discussion test

A Written/discussion test is very useful for GCSE and A level students who are required to write longer answer responses in an exam.

- 1 Create the new test, give it a title in the same way as previously, and chose Written/discussion test from the drop-down menu.
- 2 There are four types of question that you can include in this test, making it a particularly powerful way of creating a test. You can add a single audio track, or two audio tracks to be compared and contrasted, and you can do the same with YouTube videos, adding either a single one or two for comparing and contrasting.
- 3 Provide some question text, and if you want to, give a suggested answer. A suggested answer isn't vital, but it might be useful for students to see at the end.

Custom Test

[Delete Draft Test](#)

Classical Music Discussion

Enter the title for your test:

Difficulty:

Introduction:

1

Question type:
 Single sound, write answer
 Compare two sounds, write answer
 YouTube video, write answer
 Compare two YouTube videos, write answer

[Remove](#)

Question text:

Suggested answer (optional):

[Add another question](#)


[Publish Test](#)

You can use the test immediately for whole class teaching. Students won't see the test on their own devices until you add it to a lesson. You can edit the test again after publishing.

4 Add as many other written/discussion questions as you want, then publish the test.

And as previously, here's how the question above will look once students come to answer it:

Killer Queen Discussion [Next](#) [End test](#) Q. 1/1



What makes this song a great example of Glam Rock?

[Show suggested answer](#)

Single Sound, Single Picture

- 1 Create the new test, and give it a title in the same way as the other tests above. Choose Single Sound, Single Picture from the drop-down menu.
- 2 This type of test can include both audio and images, and can therefore requires additional preparation.
- 3 Single Sound, Single Picture tests follow a similar process to those of the previous tests, but you should now think in terms of what you want students to see and use. Distractors can now be in the form of images
- 4 You can add multiple questions in different formats to this form of test, and you can choose to use multiple choice or a typed answer.

Here's how an example Single Sound, Single Picture test would appear to students:

Creating Custom Lessons and Custom Content

If you can't find exactly what you're looking for in Focus on Sound Pro, you can create your own Custom Content. There are two approaches you can take. The first is to put together a lesson that uses existing Focus on Sound content. The second is to create everything you want from scratch, making your own Custom Content: in other words, you're effectively adding your own dictionary entries to the Focus on Sound library.

Here's a step-by-step guide to both of these approaches.

Creating a Custom Lesson

If you can see content that you'd like to use in a lesson of your own, you can put together your own Custom Lesson.

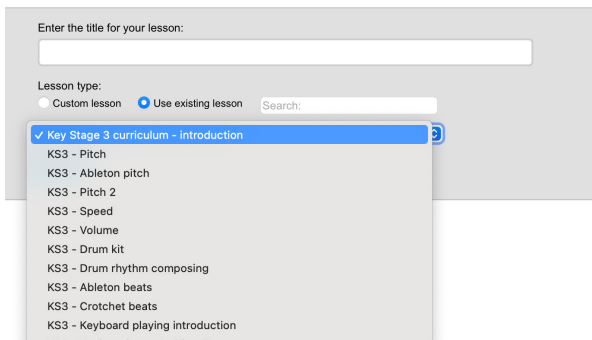
- 1 Click on My School at the top followed by Custom Lessons.



Custom lessons

- 2 On the left-hand side, click Add New. You can select classes to add to the lesson on the right. You can decide on classes later, but it's often easier to start with that box ticked.
- 3 You can now decide on a title for your lesson, and also whether you want it to be a Custom Lesson or a lesson that already exists in Focus on Sound. Using an existing lesson just means you'll be reusing something already created, but aiming it more towards your own students.

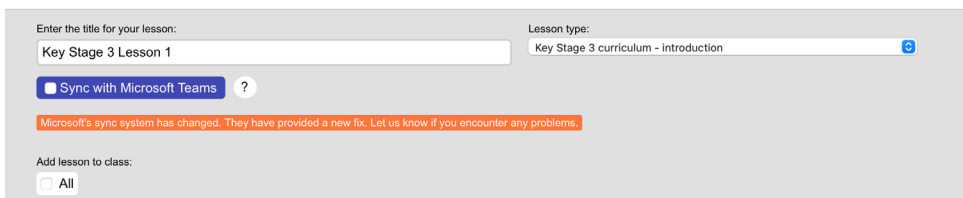
Add new custom lesson



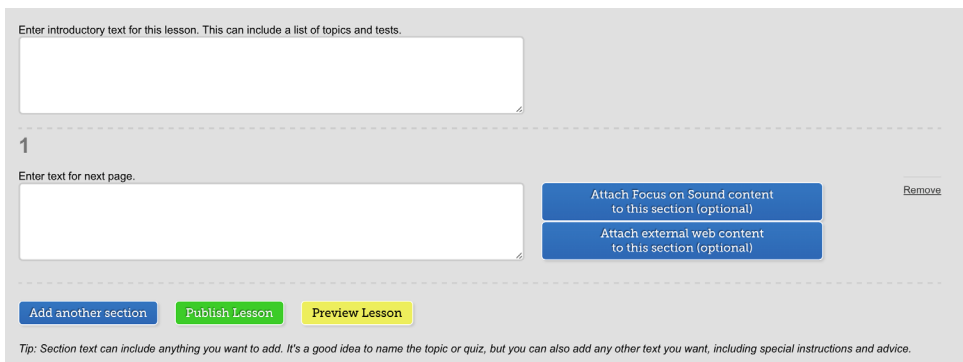
- If you select an existing lesson, you simply assign it to a class or a group of classes. You can also sync this with your learning platform, using the 'Sync with Microsoft Teams' tab.

Add new custom lesson

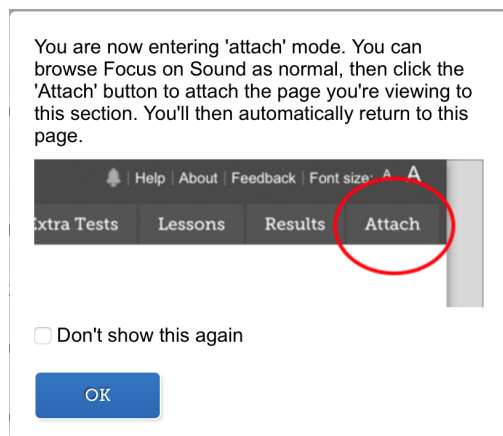
Delete Draft Lesson



- When you create a Custom Lesson, you'll be taken to a screen where you can select the classes to assign the lesson to. You start to build your Custom Lesson underneath this section. First input some introductory text, and then start to create the content for each page.



- At this stage, you can attach any Focus on Sound content by clicking on the Attach tab. This takes you into Attach mode, which a pop-up box will guide you through. You can then go to Sound Words or the Instruments section and attach content to your lesson, building up your own sequence of pages. Note the Attach tab at the top right: simply click on it to add content.



7 You can also choose to add external content, for example a video or a link to another website.

8 If you want to add a test to your lesson, follow the same process of attaching the page you want to use. However, in order to add a test, you will need to click Start Test before clicking on Attach. A pop-up window will remind you of this.

9 Once you've added all the sections you need, preview the lesson before publishing it for your class to use.

10 If you're happy with the preview, go ahead and publish the lesson for your classes. You can also export your lesson to the library by clicking on Export to Library. This makes the lesson available for other schools to use. Lessons that have been shared by other schools can be found in the shared lesson library, in the My School section.



Shared lesson library

Custom Content

A lesson can bring together content from Focus on Sound or more widely on the internet. A test provides questions in a variety of formats. But you can also make your own content. You may, for example, want to create your own dictionary entry, or add your own lesson plans. Custom Content is how you make your own Focus on Sound pages.

- 1 Find the Custom Content box under My School. Click on it to start creating.



Custom content

- 2 Add a title and check the Live box. The ID is the same as the title, so the display name will be the same as the ID.

- 3 Select a difficulty level for the content – between one and three – and then begin adding your definition. You can choose to make the custom content work in the same way as dictionary terms, or you can be more creative with how you use it.

- 4 At this stage, you can add a picture and audio to the Custom Content. Each definition you add can have its own photo and audio, and it will appear as an additional page.
- 5 Your custom content can be located in the dictionary section and then under My Content. It is stored under My Content Index, along with all the content you have created. You can then share the new content with your classes and use it in the same way as any other content. You could add it to a lesson, for example, or combine it with a custom test you've made.

