

# Folk Song: The Ants Go Marching

“The Ants Go Marching” is a well-known folk song often sung by children at school, during playtime, or at camp. Its repetitive, rhythmic lyrics and playful counting subject make it both fun and educational, but this cheerful tune actually has roots in American history.

The melody of “The Ants Go Marching” comes from a much older song called “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” This song was written during the American Civil War by Patrick S. Gilmore, which expressed hope for soldiers to return home safely with its familiar refrain: “When Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah! We’ll give him a hearty welcome then, hurrah, hurrah!”. Over time, the tune became widely used and adapted into other songs because of its memorable and easy-to-sing melody.

In the 1990s, this same melody was used to create the children’s version featuring ants. Robert D. Singleton is credited for this innovative adaptation, having written his edition for a show called “Barney’s Campfire Sing Along.” The lyrics were changed to focus on ants marching in groups—one by one, two by two, and so on—adding a fun action every few verses, such as “the little one stops to suck his thumb” or “the little one stops to tie his shoe.”

This adaptation quickly spread and is now considered a traditional children’s song, often used to teach numbers, rhythm, and counting. “The Ants Go Marching” is a great example of how older songs can be transformed and passed down in new ways, helping generations of children learn and enjoy music at the same time.

# The Ants Go Marching Lyrics

The ants go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching one by one, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching one by one,  
The little one stops to suck his thumb  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching two by two, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching two by two, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching two by two,  
The little one stops to tie his shoe  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching three by three, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching three by three, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching three by three,  
The little one stops to climb a tree  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching four by four, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching four by four, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching four by four,  
The little one stops to shut the door  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching five by five, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching five by five, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching five by five,  
The little one stops to take a dive  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching six by six, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching six by six, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching six by six,  
The little one stops to pick up sticks  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching seven by seven, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching seven by seven, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching seven by seven,  
The little one stops to pray to heaven  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching eight by eight, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching eight by eight, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching eight by eight,  
The little one stops to roller skate  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching nine by nine, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching nine by nine, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching nine by nine,  
The little one stops to check the time  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The ants go marching ten by ten, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching ten by ten, hurrah, hurrah  
The ants go marching ten by ten,  
The little one stops to shout "The End",  
And they all go marching down to the ground  
To get out of the rain.

# WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME.

Words and Music by LOUIS LAMBERT.

With spirit.

PIANO.

The piano introduction is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. It consists of six measures. The right hand plays a melodic line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4-B4, C5-B4, and A4. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords. Dynamics are marked *fp* (first two measures), *fp* (third and fourth measures), and *ff* (fifth and sixth measures).

*Solo.* *Chorus.*

1. When John-ny comes march - ing home a - gain, Hur -  
2. The old church bell will peal with joy, Hur -

The first system contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the first two lines of the song. The vocal line is in 6/8 time. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include accents (>) and a *ff* marking.

*Solo.* *Chorus.*

rah, Hur - rah, We'll give him a heart - y wel - come then, Hur - rah, Hur  
rah, Hur - rah, To wel - come home our dar - ling boy, Hur - rah, Hur

The second system contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the final lines of the song. The piano accompaniment includes dynamics of *ff*, *p*, and *ff*.

## WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME.

*Solo.*

rah; The men will cheer, the boys will shout, The la - dies, they will  
rah; The vil - lage lads and las - sies say, With ro - ses they will

*p*

*Chorus. Repeat ad lib.*

all turn out, And we'll all feel gay, When John-ny comes march - ing home.  
strew the way, And we'll all feel gay, When John-ny comes march - ing home.

*f*

*fp* *fp* *ff*

*Solo.*

*Chorus.*

3. Get rea - dy for the Ju - bi - lee, Hur - rah, Hur -  
 4. Let love and friend - ship on that day, Hur - rah, Hur -

*ff*

*Solo.*

*Chorus.*

*Solo.*

rah, We'll give the he - ro three times three, Hur - rah, Hur - rah, The  
 rah, Their choic - est trea - sures then dis - play, Hur - rah, Hur - rah, And

*p* *ff*

*Chorus.*

laur - el wreath is rea - dy now, To place up - on his loy - al brow, And we'll  
 let each one per - form some part, To fill with joy the war - rior's heart, And we'll

*p*

## WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME.

all feel gay, When John-ny comes march - ing home.  
all feel gay, When John-ny comes march - ing home.

*f* *fp*

This system contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the first system. The vocal line is in a single treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 2/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piano part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a first ending bracket. The second ending leads to a piano (*fp*) section.

*fp* *f*

This system contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the second system. The vocal line is mostly rests, with a final measure containing a quarter rest, a quarter note G, and a quarter rest. The piano accompaniment continues in grand staff, featuring a piano (*fp*) dynamic in the first measure and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the second measure. The piano part includes several measures with accents (>) over the notes.