

# Bluebird

(U.S.A.)

Bluebird is a traditional U. S. play party game—dances done to singing. Based on remembered traditions of immigrants from northern and central Europe and Great Britain, play parties were one of the main forms of community entertainment for U. S. pioneer families, especially in regions where the fiddle was considered “the devil’s instrument.” Many are still done today. The “Bluebird” song and dance has a number of variants. (for other versions, see the Handy Play Party Book, revised by Cecilia Riddell (Burnsville, N.C., World Around Songs, Inc., 1982) and the Silver Burdett Ginn music series, *The Music Connections*, 1998 edition, Grades K and 1.)

Music: Folkraft FK 1180; Sanna Longden Video “Favorite Folk Dances of Kids & Teachers  
Bluebird is done to the accompaniment of dancer’s singing. 4/4 meter

Formation: Single circle, all facing ctr. Hands are joined and raised to form a circle of arches or windows. One dancer or more (depending on size of group, age of learners, point of lesson, etc.) stands inside or outside circle, ready to be the first bluebird.

## Meas

## Pattern

## Words to song

### FIGURE I

1-16	Bluebirds weave in and out through the windows (moving to the music, not running).	Bluebird, bluebird, through my window (3x) Oh, Johnny, aren’t you tired? (or “I’m so tired,” or other lines)
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### FIGURE II

1-16	Bluebirds stop in back of someone (closest person) and pat him/her lightly on the shldr with both hands (Important: pat the beat or meter, not the words.*)	Take a friend and pat him/her on the shoulder (3x) Oh, Johnny, aren’t you tired.
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Selected dancers become new bluebirds. Junior version of this game is to let them fly off on their own (when introducing it or for least able learners). Senior version is to build “trains,” with the most recently tapped people leading each growing file (hanging on by shldr or waists) through the windows (slowly!), until all have been chosen. Rejoin windows on either side of the newest bluebirds, shrinking the circle as necessary. If one or two are left at the end, join up into one or two trains and let them be the leaders.

\* Patting the beat helps reinforce the underlying steady pulse, the all-important internal timing related to much educational achievement. Patting the rhythm of *words* to a song or nursery rhyme can confuse young children’s sense of the unifying beat (see *Teaching Folk Dance: Successful Steps* by Phyllis S. Weikart (Ypsilanti, Mich., High/Scope Press, 1997)).

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Presented by Sanna Longden.