

Making Music with Your Preschooler

Music is more than fun and games for children; it helps them to develop physically and mentally. Many studies show that music learning is related to performance on math tests. Proportions, ratios and sequences might be the “something” in music which underlies mathematical reasoning.



Making Music:

- ☺ “exercises” the whole brain and mind
- ☺ can strengthen synapses in all brain systems
- ☺ increases the brain's capacity and resources by increasing the strength of connections among its neurons

You don't need a wonderful voice to sing with your preschooler. What they will remember is the fun and warmth of singing together.

Play music for your child. Expose your child to many different musical selections. If you play an instrument, practice when your child is nearby. Keep the volume moderate to avoid damaging your child's hearing.

Sing to your child. Children don't care if we sing off key. What's important to children is the process of trying different kinds of music.

Sing with your child. Children enjoy singing and setting words to music actually helps the brain learn them more quickly and retain them longer. That's why we remember the lyrics of songs we sang as children.

Teach the “beat” of music. One of the things children have to learn is the pacing of music. It doesn't come naturally, you have to learn it. Clapping or marching helps teach the “beat.”

Start music lessons early. If you want your child to learn an instrument, you don't need to wait until elementary school to begin lessons. Young children's developing brains are equipped to learn music. Most four and five year olds enjoy making music and can learn the basics of some instruments. And starting lessons early helps children build a lifelong love of music.

Tips for Singing with Your Preschooler

Repetition. It takes about 12 repetitions of a two line rhyme for a three year old to “get it.” For your preschooler to learn a song, think REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT.

Vary your voice. Add interest to your songs by varying your voice-higher, lower, softer. Changing your voice keeps your child interested in the song.

Pitch up your voice. Young children's note range is not very wide-about a three to four note range. And, their pitch is higher. “Pitch up” your voice when you sing with your child.

Slow down. Children will follow the song more easily if you slow down-keep it no faster than that of a heart beat.

Rap it. If you don't want to sing a song, rap it (saying the words in rhythm). Your child won't even notice that you didn't “sing.”

Make up songs. Use your musical creativity.

- One parent has a clean up song she made up about bubbles that she uses when it's time to wash hands. After singing the song and washing their hands, the children sing good-bye to the bubbles.
- A child care provider uses music as a form of "distraction." When a child was laying on top of the table, rather than scolding she started a stomping march for everyone. Soon the child was off the table and stomping with everyone else.

Encourage your child to make up songs. Children need to make songs their own. Let children add to a song, make up their own verses, and create their own songs. Good songs don't need to rhyme or even make sense. The process of creating is more important than the product.

Post a list of songs you know. Make a list of songs you know by heart. Use it to remind you of songs to share with your child. To get started, consider these options:

- ? B-I-N-G-O
- ? Row, Row, Row Your Boat
- ? Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
- ? Pop Goes the Weasel
- ? ABC Song
- ? Baa Baa Black Sheep

If you want to be "reminded" of the songs you know, go to this Children's Music web page www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Glade/7438/index.html. You'll find the words for all of your favorite kids songs.

Encourage Your Preschooler to Dance with the Music. Make ribbon sticks (punch a hole in one end of a tongue depressor and run a few ribbons through the hole). Have your child use the ribbon stick (or scarves) to move with the music. Go fast, slow, or freeze. Help your child learn not to bump into things or others by explaining that fish swim together, but don't bump into each other or things.



Kitchen Instruments

Why not make an instrument from things you find around the house? Gather family and friends together and take your band on a parade around the house or next door.

Drum - Use an empty oatmeal box or coffee can with plastic lid. Have your child color or decorate the sides of the box or can. Use wooden spoons for drumsticks.

Jinglers - Metal measuring spoons on a ring make a terrific jingling sound.

Tambourine - Frozen juice lids (the kind you don't have to open with a can opener) in a plastic whipped topping container make a wonderful sound.

Tube kazooos - Collect cardboard toilet paper or paper towel tubes (cut paper towel tubes in half to make two). Cover one end of the tube with wax paper. The kazoo is "played" by humming into the open end of the tube.

Cymbals - Make cymbals by using two lids from pots and pans.

Guitars - Stretch a variety of rubber bands around an empty shoe box.

Shakers - Fill empty (and cleaned out) plastic salad dressing bottles with Cheerios.

Sources:

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<http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Glade/7438/index.html>

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