

Getting In Tune

The Magic of Music in Child Care

Eight 2-year-olds going in eight different directions burst into the classroom after the playground—laughing, overtired, out of breath. A teacher stands, clapping her hands slowly and rhythmically, beginning a familiar ritual of gathering up the group. Eight bodies soon join her, following along as she chants a tune the children know well: “Everybody do this...follow me.”

Every day, teachers and child care providers use music as part of their programs. But what is so magical about music? Why is it so powerful? Responding to music comes naturally to young children. Babies mimic our speech patterns with babbles and snuggle into our bodies when we sing to them. Toddlers enjoy music as a wonderful outlet for movement, communication, creativity, and socialization. You can use this love of music as part of your own program! Not only will you be providing an enjoyable experience, you will be promoting learning, supporting development, and laying down the foundations for strong, healthy relationships for those in your care.

Do You Hear What I Hear?

What do you think of when you hear the word *Music*? Do you hear a special song or instrument playing? Or do you see a band or choir performing? We often bring music into our programs by sharing pre-recorded music on tapes and CDs and by using instruments. It's easy to forget that music is a reflection of the world around us, and the people who are making it.



- Music is all around you. Have you ever listened to rain dropping, the hum of traffic, people talking? These everyday sounds are the heart of music, full of rhythms, beats, and melodies. Help your children use their listening skills and creativity to discover the musical sounds around them.
- Create your own music. Do you know what the best musical instrument is? YOU! You can make wonderful music by using your voice, clapping your hands, stomping your feet. Discover what sounds babies in your care enjoy. Toddlers can create their own music with their bodies or objects around them.

Music & Learning: A Duet

There is something special about music that makes learning about the world around us easier.

Music provides:

- Repetition that reinforces learning.
- A rhythmic beat that helps coordination.
- Patterns that help in anticipating what comes next.
- Melodies that capture our attention and hearts in enjoyment.
- Words that are the building blocks of language and literacy.

Music Supports Many Developing Skills

It can:

- Build relationships, communicate feelings, and provide comfort.
- Help older toddlers share, make friends, and feel comfortable in a group setting.
- Foster language development through stories, rhyming, and rhythm.
- Develop individuality by allowing children to discover their own sounds and unique styles of music.
- Launch creativity by allowing children to fill in missing words, discover new sounds, or make up songs.
- Develop fine and large muscles through finger-plays, dancing, or playing instruments.
- Build coordination by letting children follow a beat and use their minds, voices, and bodies together.

All Together Now!

There is no right or wrong way to be musical. Feel free to experiment, to discover, to make new sounds. Choose what you like—what is fun and meaningful to you. Best of all, there's something for every age and stage.

- Babies may not sing words, but their ears are well-tuned for rhythm and melody. Captivated by the pattern of your voice, they may watch you intently, try to imitate your sounds, or wave and kick with delight. Fussing, squirming, or averting eyes may mean, "I need a break, please."
- Young toddlers can participate in a song by clapping, bouncing, or swaying with your help. Certain words and sounds may be familiar and fun for them. They may try to dance or sing, or enjoy exploring the sounds of musical toys.
- Older toddlers will love musical games and songs with stories and motions. They may even want to act out songs with dances, directed movements (like the Hokey Pokey), and props.

Everyone Has a Part to Play

Just as music is a joy for children of all ages, it is enjoyed by children with all levels of ability. There is a part for everyone, from simply listening to sounds and feeling vibrations to actively participating with dancing, instruments, and props. Here are some ways all of your children can play a role:

- Assist children who need help with hand movements or dancing.
- Provide objects and instruments that are best suited for a child's strengths—a kazoo provides a range of sounds without difficult hand movements; a drum lets a child in a wheel chair keep the beat with others who are marching.
- Allow children with hearing difficulties to feel the beat and rhythm, explore instruments, and imitate the motions of others—such as clapping or stomping. Add movement and expression, or props and books, to help convey musical themes.
- For children with visual difficulties, provide verbal directions, allow them to explore and use instruments, or have the entire group close their eyes and open their ears and imaginations to a special musical story.



Stage Fright!

Afraid to sing? No need to be. Grab a tape, do a chant, use an instrument or a storybook to help you get started. Don't worry about your audience—they are focused on having fun and sharing this experience with you. This is not a performance—it's a musical conversation!



Whistle While You Work! (Making Music a Part of Your Program)

You may be wondering just where music fits into your program. Everywhere! It's easy to add a song, dance, or musical beat to everyday activities and routines...and what a difference it makes! Don't worry if your children won't sit still—they're on the go! They can listen as they move and do.

- Follow a baby's musical lead. Imitate her vocalizations and add to them in a rhythmic way.
- Keep groups together with a march or song that you make up: *Come, come, come, let's read...a book for you and me...* (to the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*).
- Personalize a chant when changing diapers: *It's time to change your diaper, Andre...here...we...go.*
- Use a special welcome song to ease the transition from home to school.
- Bridge home and center by inviting parents to share music from their family or culture.
- Signal when it is time for a transition by tapping out a drum-beat or using a particular song.
- Calm fussy and overtired little ones with a soothing melody.
- Teach and practice new skills with a song.
- Don't forget to incorporate music into planned games and other activities.
- Have fun! Let children see and catch your enjoyment.

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