

Caring and Teaching

Sharing your own appreciation of music and movement will inspire children to participate joyfully. You do not need to be a great singer to delight young children with music. Focus on the fun of singing together. Sing short, simple, familiar songs. Remember that young children are likely to ask for their favorite songs repeatedly. Make up new songs about the children and about familiar things, people, and events. Children love to hear songs with their names and to laugh at the silly songs you make up about what they are doing. Listen and respond when you hear children singing their own versions of familiar tunes.

Music can be a part of many routines and experiences. Play soft music for children at nap time and sing to them during routines such as dressing, diapering, and toileting. Promote children's attention and listening skills by playing music selectively and inviting a child or two to listen with you for a few minutes. If you play music constantly, it becomes background noise that children tend to ignore after a while. Play music for short periods throughout the day, to remind children that it is time to clean up, to encourage a child's gross motor movement, and to soothe an upset child.

Help children learn concepts through simple games, songs, and fingerplays. As children circle and fall during "Ring a Round the Rosie," or feel their toes when you play "This Little Piggy," they are learning new language, concepts, social skills, and physical skills.



Chapter 14: Connecting With Music and Movement

Music is a wonderful way to help children feel connected to their families during the time they spend with you. Ask families about the songs they sing at home and the kinds of music that they like. Learn the lullabies that a family croons at bedtime. Include music from the children's home cultures and in different languages, as possible. Share equipment with family members so they can record songs for you to play while their children are in your care.

Young Infants

Young infants respond to music and other sounds by turning their heads, smiling, laughing, and moving their arms and legs. They are usually calmed by soft, rhythmic sounds, such as lullabies, and by the voices of familiar teachers. They tend to respond in more energetic ways when music is lively. Keep in mind that some infants are more sensitive than others to sounds and may be overstimulated by music that other infants enjoy.

Julio (4 months) is fussy. Linda picks him up and sings softly to him as she sits with him in the glider. He quiets and gazes at her. She smiles and asks, "Are you feeling better, now? Do you want to sing some more?" As Linda continues rocking and singing, she gives Julio a positive experience with music and movement.

- Sing short, simple songs to infants in a high, quiet voice: *Mama's little baby loves shortening, shortening. Mama's little baby loves shortening bread.*
- Comment upon the child's response: *You like it when we dance together. Here we go, back and forth, back and forth.*
- Call the child's attention to interesting sounds: *Those wind chimes are making music for us. Listen.*
- Repeat sounds an infant makes: *Da, da, da. You're singing your da-da song.*

Mobile Infants

To promote children's increasing skills, conduct music and movement experiences with one or two children at a time. These experiences include playing rhythm instruments, dancing, and singing during daily routines and play experiences. Sing while changing a child's diaper or dressing to go outdoors.

Willard (11 months) and Abby (14 months) enjoy the sounds and music that are part of their daily lives. For example, Willard waits for Grace to walk her fingers up his belly while she sings, "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider." Abby beams with pleasure when Brooks sings, "Where is Abby? Where is Abby?" to the tune of the fingerplay "Where is Thumbkin?"

As their language skills improve, some mobile infants will join you as you sing. Sometimes they repeat sounds over and over, such as "B-B-B-B" or "da-da, da-da, da-da." They may half-babble and half-talk as they sing a familiar song such as "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep." With their increasing balance and physical coordination, they also enjoy playing simple rhythm instruments and moving to the beat.

As you interact with mobile infants, you can promote both their pleasure in and learning from music and movement. Here are some ways to help children focus on their experiences:

- Encourage children to respond to music physically: *You are moving slowly to this slow music.*
- Call a child's attention to common sounds: *Do you hear the clock ticking?*
- Identify different sounds: *The drum is beating in this marching music. It goes "boom, boom, boom."*
- Teach simple fingerplays, such as "Open, Shut Them" and "The Wheels on the Bus."
- Vary the speed at which you chant rhymes. Sing "Pat-a-Cake" very slowly and then more quickly, giving the child an opportunity to tap your outstretched hands to the beat.
- Move with the child to the beat: As you gently bounce the child on your knee, sing, *One baby monkey jumping on the bed.*

Toddlers

With your encouragement, toddlers will pay attention to the sounds around them, and you might see them running to the window to listen to a chirping bird or a passing plane. They have learned to discriminate among many sounds, and they can match the sound *moo* to a picture of a cow and the sound *meow* to a picture of a cat. They are also fascinated by the nonverbal sounds that they can produce. Practically anything can become a musical instrument, so toddlers experiment with shaking, tapping, banging, hitting, and pounding a variety of objects.

Toddlers continue to sing and to enjoy music and fingerplays as social experiences. They have discovered songs that they particularly like and want to repeat them again and again. They hum and sing as they play, and they make up simple two-pitch songs.

As their fine and gross motor skills develop, toddlers have more control over their bodies. This allows them to experiment with various kinds of movement.

Here are some ways to interact with toddlers during music and movement experiences and other opportunities to listen.

- Encourage a child's enjoyment of songs: *Shall we play the animal song you like so much?*
- Nurture their interest in environmental sounds: *You hear the rain blowing against the window.*
- Encourage toddlers to sing familiar songs: *Is today your baby's birthday? Are you going to sing "Happy Birthday" to him?*
- Focus children's attention on the way they move: *Can you move quickly to the beat of this drum?*
- Help them discriminate among different sounds: *Listen carefully. Do you hear the bird on the windowsill? Now do you hear a barking dog?*
- Use music and movement experiences to build a positive relationship: *Let's hold hands and stomp through the leaves together.*

Twos

Two-year-olds love rhythm and repetition. They have become good listeners, responsive to music with complex patterns. They move their whole bodies in different ways to various kinds of music, jumping, bouncing, falling, and swaying. They love to twirl and fall like autumn leaves, spinning tops, or tired children. Dance with the children, sometimes holding hands or letting them stand on your feet as you move to the music. Help children focus on rhythm by clapping, stomping, or shaking a tambourine to the beat of songs and rhymes.

Twos begin to sing some of the lyrics of familiar songs. They can fill in words when you pause, just as they complete a sentence in a story, especially when the song includes rhyme and repetition. You may also hear them singing catchy jingles they hear on TV and the radio. Encourage twos to create original songs. Sing along when you hear them singing a made-up song while putting their dolls to sleep. Encourage them to create new verses for their favorite songs. “Daddy’s taking me to the zoo tomorrow” can soon be “Daddy’s taking me to school tomorrow” or “Momma’s taking me to the store today.”

Two-year-olds often enjoy singing or listening to music during a brief small-group time. Remember to keep group times short, and expect and allow children to come and go as they wish. Here are some ideas for encouraging 2-year-olds to have fun with music and movement.

- Stimulate their imaginations: *Let’s pretend we are pancakes. Let’s flip in the pan.*
- Use songs as part of daily routines: *Let’s sing your good-bye song to Daddy.*
- Introduce more complicated fingerplays, using hands and two fingers: *Two little ducks went out to play, over the river and far away.*
- Omit a word and let the children fill in the blank: *If you’re happy and you know it, clap your_____.*
- Encourage a child to explore ways to make music: *That tambourine made a loud sound when you hit it with your hand. Does it make another kind of sound?*

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