

Tuning into Music

Listen • Make • Move

Children seem to have a natural ability to engage with music. It draws their attention and invites their participation. Musical activities are a form of play that encourages learning. Informal musical experiences are accessible to most families and have numerous benefits.



How do children benefit from engaging with music?

1 Language

- Through music, children can learn the sounds and rhythm of language.
- Music provides an opportunity to practice listening and speaking skills.
- Singing supports oral language development, which is important for later reading success.
- Music experience strengthens processing of small units of sound. It helps children develop sound discrimination and helps them pay attention to sounds within words. Phonological awareness is a strong predictor of how easily a child will learn to read.
- Music can build vocabulary, introducing children to new words.
- Songs can be a way for children who speak English as an additional language to practice their home language as well as learn English.

2 Thinking skills

- Through music, children can gain an understanding of the concepts of fast/slow, high/low, loud/quiet, and up/down.
- Children are enthusiastic about repetition. Repeating songs and tunes helps develop memory.
- Through rhythm and rhyme, children develop an understanding of patterns and sequences, which helps develop problem solving skills.

- Brain regions involved in movement, attention, planning and memory are activated when you listen to music. There is more going on than auditory processing. Research is ongoing.
- The Mozart effect, the idea that listening to classical music makes children more intelligent, was popular but not accurate. It doesn't hurt, but it doesn't live up to the claims.

3 Physical coordination

- Moving to music allows children to experience music with their whole bodies. Music can be a kinesthetic as well as an auditory experience.
- Moving to music helps develop large and small muscle control and coordination.
- Moving to music helps develop body awareness.
- Moving to music is an opportunity for children to express themselves in a way that doesn't require words.

4 Social-emotional skills

- Singing about feelings helps children understand emotions.
- Soothing with lullabies supports development of self-regulation.
- Music can assist with transitions, e.g. the clean up song.
- Sharing music strengthens family bonds and creates memories.

For more playful family fun ideas, visit www.decoda.ca

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Why do this as a family?

Music is a fun and accessible way for parents to support early learning. It doesn't require special equipment, materials or even singing or language skills. It's easy for parents to have success and for everyone to enjoy the activities.

Where can parents find songs and music for children?

Many parents start with the songs and music they remember from when they were children. It's a natural choice and a wonderful way to share memories. For parents whose home language is not English, sharing songs in their home language is a way to reinforce cultural heritage.

Family literacy programs, early childhood care centres and family drop-in programs often include a singing component which can introduce parents to new songs or help them remember old favourites.

To find more songs, the public library is a great place to go. Most public libraries have a selection of books and audio discs of children's songs. And, many public libraries have story times where parents can learn songs with their children.

Children's songs can be found online, too. Here are a few links to begin exploring:

1-2-3 Rhyme with Me: Rhyme & Song Booklet (www.nwtliteracy.ca/resources/famlit/1-2-3_Rhyme_Song_Booklet.pdf)

Embracing Diversity: Sharing Our Songs and Rhymes (<http://bpl.bc.ca/kids/embracingdiversity>)

Toddler Storytime: Songs to Get the Wiggles Out (<https://jbrary.com/toddler-storytime-songs-get-wiggles/>)

For recommendations for music CDs for children, visit Common Sense Media's Best Music: Our Recommendations for Families. (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/music-lists>)

To learn more

Here are a few links to explore with more information on young children and music:

Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle: Using Music with Infants and Toddlers (<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201003/ParlakianWeb0310.pdf>)

Placing Music at the Centre of Literacy Instruction (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Placing_Music_en.pdf)

Songs and Rhymes as a Springboard to Literacy (http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_home.aspx?ArticleID=478)

The Importance of Music Making in Child Development (www.cgu.edu/PDFFiles/ses/Teacher%20Education/Morehouse.pdf)

The Patterns of Music: Young Children Learning Mathematics through Beat, Rhythm, and Melody (https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/201201/Geist_Patterns_of_Music_Jan012.pdf)

A note about copyright

Music is copyright protected, unless it has a Creative Commons Licence or is in the public domain. You don't require a license or permission to listen to music at home or in the car for personal enjoyment. If you plan to play recorded music in a public venue, then permission is required.

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