

Tip Sheet

Play and Creativity Using Music at Home

Play is one of the most important parts of early childhood.

When a child is engaging in play, they are building their brains to develop math, reading, and social skills. Trial and error discoveries in play are what lead to imagination and creativity. There are many ways parents can promote play and creativity through music at home.

Sing!

Children love to sing and they love to hear their parents sing. Sing while feeding, bathing, changing your child, or even running errands. While these moments can be stressful, adding song to the experience creates a sense of ease and relaxation.

Repeat favorite songs and create new ways to sing them. Repetition in songs develops self-esteem, literacy, and recognition of patterns.

- Pick out a favorite doll or stuffed animal and sing soothing bedtime songs together with your child. Pretend to put the doll down to sleep. Ask your child, "Why did you pick that doll or animal? How can we soothe them?" Repeat this same routine when you put your child to sleep.
- Find a familiar song that can become a utility song—a song with the words changed to fit your need. For example, *Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush* can become *This is the Way We Wash our Hands (or eat our carrots...)*. Adding a song to these tasks make them fun.

Explore New Music

Children love to dance and move to the beat. Create a child-appropriate playlist with a range of musical genres. Your playlist could include jazz, classical, pop, bluegrass, soul, country, or hip-hop.

- Have a family dance party. This builds social interactions and creates an opportunity for your child to think about new ways to move their body. Play a game and imitate their movements or have them teach you the moves. Ask your child, "How does this music make you feel or want to move?"
- You can hold younger children as you dance to music. They will feel the pulse in different ways based on the sounds of the music. Add props such as a colorful scarf to engage in visual stimulation.

Instruments are All Around



Children love to make their own music. Get out your pots, pans, kitchen utensils, etc. and let your child create

music. Anything can become an instrument! Have children play along to a song or create their own.

- Ask your child, "How does the small pot sound different from the bigger pan? Can you play soft and loud?" This encourages listening skills and the ability to distinguish between contrasts in music.

Save a paper towel tube and promote vocal exploration when singing or making sounds inside the tube. For additional fun, let your child decorate the tube with stickers or markers.

- Ask questions like, “What sound does a cow make?” and, “How does your voice change when you sing inside of the tube?”

Recycle a plastic water bottle to make a musical shaker. If you have two, you can fill one with salt for a soft sound and fill one with beans for a loud sound.

- You can use new vocabulary like forte (loud) and piano (soft) to describe the sounds.

Musical Games and Creative Play

Peek-a-boo

Singing during peek-a-boo is fun! This teaches infants about object permanence—something was there, it went away, and then it came back.

Make roads on your floor with tape

Get out a wide range of vehicles for your child to zoom through the tape roads with. Ask, “Does the car move fast or slow? Is the train loud or soft?” Consider adding a song like *Hurry, Hurry Drive the Firetruck* or *Wheels on the Bus* to their play.

Finger paint to different kinds of music

Ask, “How does your picture look when the music is soft or soothing?” Feeling the texture from the paint is also a great sensory discovery.

Repeat your baby’s sounds

What sounds is your baby making? Make the babbling or cooing sounds back. This is the idea of Serve and Return. Baby serves a cooing sound and the parent coos back.

Add music to imaginative play

Older children might be exploring their imaginative play. Perhaps there is a way to add a song or rhyme to their creation.

Use music to practice impulse control

Sing a song or a rhyme that teaches starting and stopping such as, “Hop little bunny, hop-hop-hop. Stop little bunny, stop-stop-stop.” You can also freeze when recorded music stops and continue moving when the music starts again.

Additional Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/playing-music-home>

Center of the Developing Child – Harvard University

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/play-in-early-childhood-the-role-of-play-in-any-setting/>



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