



Put On the Music!

Music can carry emotions or set a mood. Some music can help babies and toddlers calm down and fall asleep while other music will make them perk up and start moving. Children love group musical activities such as sing-alongs and musical follow-the-leader. When your babies and toddlers sing, dance, or play instruments together they not only have fun, but they also learn how to be part of a group and to feel confident and safe in that group.

- **Expose children to many kinds of music.** Share songs and music that you enjoy, that make you smile or dance, and that help you relax. Talk about what the music means to you and how it makes you feel. See if the children respond in the same way.
- **Pay attention to the volume of the music.** Also pay attention to its tempo, tones, and complexity. Some children are sensitive to loud noises, sudden changes, and a high level of static. Other children light up when they hear a favorite or interesting tune.
- **Use music intentionally, not as constant background noise.** Background sounds can be distracting to you as well as to babies.
- **Sing to ease transitions for children.** Toddlers often find it easier to shift gears while listening to a song rather than following a verbal direction.
- **Talk with families about the role music plays in their homes.** Do they have favorite songs, artists, or genres? Does anyone play an instrument? Does their baby or toddler respond to a particular song or tune? How does he show it?
- **Use music from home to help children stay connected with their families**—especially at naptime or when a child is upset. You might want to ask families to record the songs they sing to comfort their children so you can use them to soothe their child in your setting.
- **Celebrate children’s family heritages with music from their cultures.** Include folk songs and popular music as well as baby games and lullabies. Use music to support home language and to introduce children to each other’s languages.
- **Have music makers available to shake, squeak, bat, ring, or bang.** Look for toy instruments at yard sales or discount stores or make them out of everyday materials such as plastic bottles with beans, aluminum pie plates and spoons, or jingle bells.
- **Tap family and community resources.** Invite musicians and singers to your program or take children to a sing-a-long or concert. Encourage performers to show toddlers’ how their instruments work and how they create different sounds.
- **Learn about more music ideas for children.** Read *Getting in Tune: The Powerful Influence of Music on Young Children’s Development* for more music ideas. Go to <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/music.pdf>.