

Music for Kids (Children 6 - 18 months)

Sing away! Put on your favorite music and encourage baby to sing with you. If she likes a song play it often, as children learn and love to learn through repetition.

All kinds of music can be enjoyed and learned by even very young children. You don't need any special skill or talent to enjoy music making with children.

For most children, singing is as natural as talking. Kids learn to sing just as they learn to talk - by imitating other people. You probably will not have to teach the children you care for how to sing, but you can help them learn to feel good about their method of musical expression by feeling good about your own.

Working patiently to teach your children new songs will help them learn how to take instructions and how to cooperate.

Teaching them how to make and play homemade musical instruments will help develop self-confidence. Smile when you sing, and be proud when making your music! The children will do as you do!

Musical instruments

When baby can sit up and hold objects we can introduce some simple musical instruments. This will encourage the child

- to explore sounds
- to develop awareness of dynamics - the loudness or softness of sounds
- to be aware of tempo - how the sounds vary from fast to slow
- to be aware of the tonal qualities of different sounds.

These aspects are basic musical concepts and important discoveries in the business of making music, even though the sounds may not sound very musical at this point.

Suggestions

- Organise a drum kit. Use different size tins from the kitchen cupboard with a short handled wooden spoon. And sing along with *"Oh we can play our drum kit and this is the way we play it, with a rum tum tum, and a rum tum tum and that's the way we play it."*
- Collect some small easy to hold plastic bottles and fill them with interesting sound makers (rice, sand, a paddle pop stick). Choose objects that will not be a choking hazard if they escape from the bottle. Tape or glue caps on to prevent this. Sing along with *"Everybody shaking, shaking, shaking, everybody shaking just like this"*
- Hang a row of music makers somewhere for child to tap or shake when passing. This could include teaspoons and saucepan lids. Choose objects that are not too heavy so they will not swing back and hurt the child as they play their music.

Clap with music

At this age children learn to coordinate clapping so it's a good time to introduce clapping songs. This helps a child to hear and feel the beat of the music, to practise coordination and hand control, and to join in a game with others. Clapping games can also be a fun way to fill in and ease waiting times.

Suggestions

- *"My hands are clapping, clapping, clapping, my hands are clapping just like this"* (clap loud or soft fairy claps, fast or slow)
- *"Let everyone clap hands with me xx, It's easy as easy can be xx, Let everyone join in the game xx You'll find that it's always the same xx"* (xx means clap clap)
- When baby becomes familiar with these songs the actions can be changed to stomping or jumping or whatever suits the child's skill level.
- Instruments can be used with these songs too.

Walking songs

It's so exciting to learn to walk. Enjoy those wanderings with a walking song. For example":

- *"Come along now let's go walking, all join hands and we'll go walking, come along now with your big smile on"* (or green pants or blue hat or whatever applies that day)
- *"Let's go walking, walking, walking, let's go walking far far away. Let's walk back again, back again, back again, let's walk back again, back the same way."*

Suggestions

- Sometimes when children first learn to walk they like to practice tippy toe walks or walking backwards. A fun song to try then is: *"First I walk upon my toes, then upon my heels I go, on the sides of my feet I go clump, clump, clump, then with feet together I go jump, jump, jump"*. (Infants will often bob rather than actually jump)

- Sometimes offer a little bucket to collect things. You might be able to arrange a pathway of pegs or flowers or something before hand to surprise and delight the child along the way.

Dandling Songs

During this time 6 - 18 months, children develop from babbling a string of sounds together, to saying particular words which others recognise, to joining these words together to form a simple sentence.

Just as children at this age are beginning to use words and put them together in simple sentences they will also tag along and sing a word or two with you.

However, they must see and hear you singing and also be familiar with a particular song to know what word might come next to be able to join in. It is important that we sing regularly to children and offer simple songs at this stage - particularly songs that have repetition.

If you feel you are tone deaf and can't sing in tune - don't worry, your singing will not make a child tone deaf - they will sing in their own way. Even if you sing "like a bat out of hell" keep singing, joyfully, so the child learns that we can also communicate in song, and that its FUN!

.....

Even if you sing "like a bat out of hell" keep singing, joyfully, so the child learns that we can also communicate in song, and that its FUN!

.....

Suggestions

- Sing regularly (children's songs or adult songs that you like and know) when you are working around the home, driving in the car or sing along to the radio.
- Sing those old well-known nursery rhymes to baby when they are in the bath, at nappy change time, when you are going for a walk. Usually those nursery rhymes are short and sweet, have repeated lines and have stood the test of time, and are loved and remembered by generations of children.
- Put the child's name into the song which makes them feel special and instantly connected to the song even though they may not be able to sing the whole song at this stage. Try *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, *Mary Had a little Lamb*, *Little Miss Muffet*, *Little Jack Horner Lived in a Corner*, *Old McDonald had a Farm*.

Musical boxes

Young children at this age practicing newly developed crawling and climbing skills often like to play in big cardboard boxes (e.g. TV sized boxes). We can add some musical ideas to this play to add to their enjoyment and extend their learning about sound and song as well.

If your child is sitting in a box we can move box side to side and sing: "*Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.*" Begin slowly to allow baby to feel secure in the movement then you can speed up with the "Merrily" bits if child is confident. This also helps child become aware of change in tempo in music.

Alternatively, If your child is hiding in the box you could sing "*Jack (or child's name) is lying down in his box until someone opens the lid!*" then "Boo" "Hullo" or whatever to conclude and make it exciting.

Suggestions

- With a big cardboard box you could create a special listening box, as the size of the big box tends to amplify sounds inside and this will encourage exploration. You could put in rustling paper to crawl on or play with, some blocks to clap together, blocks with sandpaper attached make an interesting sound when rubbed together, jingly things, shakers or metal lids attached to the wall to bang. Be sure that all objects are safe for children, for example, no sharp edges or choking hazards.
- Cardboard tubes such as lunch wrap tubes are also interesting sound makers because when we talk or sing through them the sound is amplified. This could become an impromptu trumpet. For hygiene reasons discard the "trumpet" when baby has finished playing with it rather than sharing it around with other children and perhaps sharing germs.

Young children love sound and movement, and are intrigued with learning about their world and particularly their own bodies. Touch That Nose, Wriggle Those Toes is a carefully chosen collection of songs and rhymes to help young children to learn about their bodies and encourage movement. Of course the classics are all included, songs such as Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes and Little Peter Rabbit. These songs have a long tradition of helping develop body coordination and awareness in children. Young can find this album at your local ABC shop.

Want more information?

Merrily, Merrily, A Book of Songs and Rhymes, and CD, 2005, compiled and published by Australian Breastfeeding Association is an excellent source of songs and poems for babies and young children. Order by mail P.O. Box 4000, Glen Iris, Vic 3146 or buy from the sales division www.mothersdirect.com.au

Check your local library for a music time with babies. Both Lismore and Goonellabah libraries have a Baby Bounce and Rhyme session each week for babies 0-2 years. A good way to meet others and enjoy music with your baby too.

Join a playgroup near you or start your own playgroup to enjoy some music sessions. Contact the Playgroup Association on 1800 171 882 or visit their website www.playgroupaustralia.com.au

GreatStart

Department for Education and Child Development website with lots of ideas and activities to do with children to make the most of everyday learning opportunities www.greatstart.edu.au

The Little Big Book Club

Provides free packs of books for babies and toddlers – available from libraries and the Child and Family Health Service. The website has free Activity Time and Learning Time sheets to complement books and e-books to read online www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au

Let's Read

Supports families to share words, rhymes, songs, books and stories with children www.letsread.com.au

Parent Helpline

Phone 1300 364 100
For advice on child health and parenting

Beyond Blue

Phone: 1300 224 636 or 03 9810 6100
Website: www.beyondblue.org.au
The Beyond Blue website has fact sheets and information on mental health, and a Web Chat service 7 days a week from 4pm to 10pm or you can call them 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 to speak to a Beyond Blue counsellor.

www.raisingchildren.net.au

For information on raising children, including information for grandparents raising grandchildren.

www.families.nsw.gov.au

Various resources to help parents at any stage in life.

www.fsn.org.au

Family Workers can offer you practical and emotional support to enhance & strengthen your parenting & family relationships.

Healthdirect: Phone 1300 022 222, 24 hours To speak to a nurse www.healthdirect.gov.au

Child and Family Health Centre: Tel 02 6625 0111 9am–4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.