

Playing with Music at Home

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Young children love to sing, make music, and move to the beat. They feel competent when they learn a new song, powerful when they pound a drum or shake a tambourine, and proud when they invent a new dance. As children explore and enjoy music, they can develop skills in math, literacy, and social studies. Teachers relate music to diverse subjects and your family can continue this learning at home.

Young children explore music through play. They make discoveries through trial and error—"If I hit the tambourine lightly, it makes a soft sound. If I hit it hard, it makes a loud one." They listen to the musical beat and dance along with it. They make up new words or add choruses to familiar songs. They ask parents and other family members to sing with them or, in some cases, ask to perform a solo.

Here are some tips on how your family can play with music and connect it to learning at home.

Play music made for children

Many musicians write and sing about topics of interest to young children. Their songs' lyrics and melodies are catchy and easy to learn. The children's room at most libraries offers CDs. You can download free songs from websites and purchase CDs at the dollar store or from remainder bins at music and bookstores.

Develop reading readiness skills through rhymes

When children listen to, repeat, and create rhymes, they learn to match the sounds of language. And what could better inspire rhyming than playful children's songs? As you listen together, repeat the rhyming words and encourage your child to do the same. Take turns making up your own rhyming verses.

Sample music from around the world

Play classical, salsa, jazz, and folk. Chat about the music you like: "I really like the jazz—it helps me relax." Ask questions: "I hear horns. What instruments do you hear?" Listen for details. Ask your child to focus on the sounds of different instruments, the rhythm of the music, and the words of new songs. This will help your child learn to be a good listener in school.

Make and play instruments

To make a simple shaker, put dried beans between two paper plates and staple the plates together. Find rhythm sticks outdoors. Use pan lids as cymbals, and march around the house. Try a slow march first, then a faster one.

Expand vocabulary

As you listen to music together, introduce and talk about new words like *rhythm* and *note*. Listen for new words in song lyrics and talk about what they mean.

Recognize and repeat patterns

Children can develop this math skill while listening to music. Take turns copying patterns in your favorite music, and then create your own. Start with five or fewer beats before moving on to longer patterns.

Source: Adapted from the Message in a Backpack for K.M. Hemple, J.J. Batey, & L.C. Hartle, 2008, "Music Play," *Teaching Young Children* 1 (2): 10–12.

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