



How your baby might respond to music – what to look for

Babies are totally musical, even if they're not ready to sing professional opera. Recognizing your baby's musical responses takes a little more discernment than watching an opera singer on stage. Here are some clues to tell you that your baby is rocking out in his or her own way:

1. Your baby may change his or her activity level in response to music. Some babies become more active; they might wave hands or kick their feet, or wiggle their whole bodies. Sometimes babies kick their feet like they're ready to jump, even if they're not yet developmentally ready to stand. This physical activity is the beginning of dancing! Look for your baby's characteristic gesture. This is the activity they're most likely to repeat when they're enjoying the music.
2. Not all babies get more active. Some babies will freeze and focus in response to music. Their eyes may brighten or change focus, and they might look toward the sound source and try to track it. Often a baby will freeze and focus during a song, then vocalize or respond physically after the song ends.
3. Your baby may have an oral response to music. Your baby may coo or vocalize, or even just make rhythmic tongue movements. This is the beginning of singing! Notice if your baby's cooing matches the pitches of the song you're singing. Even babies just a few months old are capable of matching pitches if the song is within their comfortable vocal range.
4. Your baby may smile or even giggle when you sing a particular song. Notice which songs make your child light up most!
5. Your baby might babble. In our culture we tend to focus on language development and we tend to hear babbling as a precursor to language. But in a musical environment, babies are equally likely to babble as a way to practice music development. If you hear increased vocal play in response to music, assume it's music play. Babble back, and don't worry about putting words to it. Listen for the tonality or rhythm in your child's babbling, and continue the conversation in musical terms.

Happy singing!

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