



Tips for sharing music with your preschooler or older child

Your preschooler or kindergartener has been around for a while, and probably has mastered some aspects of music-making already. But they're certainly not done learning! Here are some tips to help your child bring their music mastery to the next level.

- 1. Look for more challenges in the music.** Play patty-cake games, and find more and more complicated ways to clap. Or find different ways to move to the song. Incorporate movements that challenge your child cross to the midline of their body or involve alternate hands or feet. For example, a clapping pattern that brings the right hand to the left shoulder, and vice versa. Younger children are not capable of crossing the midline, so this is a developmental milestone.
- 2. Make up your own verses.** Consider the verses in the cd to be just suggestions, and add your own ideas. You can make up a first line, and see if your child can come up with a second line to match. It doesn't have to rhyme! Creating your own verses to an existing song is a first step toward creating your own original song together.
- 3. Listen to the cd, and try to name the instruments.** If you're not sure what you're listening to, check your guess against the songbook – the instrumentation for each song is listed at the bottom of each page. This is a great way to hone yours and your child's listening skills.
- 4. Use the songbook.** Use the full page illustrations as a resource for adding new verses to the songs you know. See if your child can guess which song is on the page from the sidebar pictures alone. If you point to a picture, can your child sing the song that goes with it? If your child is practicing reading, find the words that rhyme or are within your child's reading ability. Follow the music with your finger while you sing. When you play with the songbook together, you can reinforce your child's music literacy as well as reading literacy.
- 5. Let your child be the teacher.** A great way to consolidate skills is to share them with someone else. Let your child "teach" you the songs. Bring in stuffed animals to fill out the class.
- 6. Encourage your child to make up their own tonal or rhythm patterns.** Stop the cd after a song, and see if you and your child can make up a tonal pattern or rhythm pattern to go with it. There's no particular magic about doing it. If it sounds good, you did it right. If it doesn't sound good, try it a different way next time.
- 7. Incorporate pretend play.** How would we move to this song if we were elephants?

(more on back)

8. Play call and response games. You sing a line, and your child sings the next line. You can make it more complicated by varying how you sing your line. Try singing slow and low, or high and fast. Will your child follow your model, or come up with something completely different?

9. When children have achieved basic music competence, they can:

- Audiate the music (hear it in their minds without singing it out loud)
- Be able to sing a complete song in tune from a variety of starting notes
- Be able to keep the beat and find the microbeat even if the song speeds up or slows down

If you think your child is close to these milestones, find games to encourage this development. Try singing a song together and leave one part silent ("sing it in your head"). Can your child keep on track with the song? How much of the song can you and your child "sing in your head", and still end up together at the end of the song? Challenge your child to sing a favorite song from your starting note, and play with changing the starting note so it's a little higher or lower. To challenge your child's rhythm development, play with singing songs slower or faster, or alternating between the beat and microbeat. Or put on a parade together. Can your child play a drum with a steady beat while also marching with a steady beat? If your child can do this successfully, they're on the road to rhythmic competence.

10. Find more music. Expand your child's world by exploring other kinds of music together. You can find many wonderful recordings just for children, or check out new forms of music together. Go to live concerts to experience musicians performing and playing real instruments.

11. Keep singing! Even after children achieve basic music competence, they still need to practice these skills for them to become consolidated and permanent. If these new music skills are not reinforced, they will disappear over time. The window for developing the music aptitude that your child was born with closes at around age 7. If music learning is not reinforced in early childhood, this early aptitude fades away, but with sufficient exposure, it will last for a lifetime. Take the time to make this investment in your child's lifetime music learning!

12. Have fun! Your preschooler or kindergartener is now old enough for these memories to last a lifetime – both yours and theirs. Treasure this time to play together!

Want more play ideas for your older child? Consider our [Big Kids Classes](#), for children ages 5-7.

Happy singing!

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