

Relationships that Nurture

Monthly tips provided by St. David's Center in partnership with Mom Enough

How can I use music strategies to benefit my child's development?

Audio can be heard here: [Music Therapy](#)

I. Listening

- Provide a variety of listening experiences with music and sounds
 - Listen together to children's music, your favorite music, vocal and instrumental music.
 - Listen to recorded and live music. Seek out the great variety of free concerts—summer in the parks series in many communities or the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra free concert series for children are some good examples. <https://www.thespco.org/concerts-tickets/special-series/target-free-family-music/>
- **Listen to music stories**
 - John Lithgow's *I Got Two Dogs* and *Marsupial Sue*
 - Eric Litwin, James and Kimberly Dean's *Pete the Cat Series* (*I Love My White Shoes, Rocking in My School Shoes, Four Groovy Buttons*)
 - Children's songs as books (5 Monkeys, Wheels on the Bus, Itzy Bitzy Spider...)
- **Listen to sounds**
 - Point out sounds in your environment as they happen; hand to ear with "Did you hear that?"
 - Do a listening walk <http://www.medel.com/blog/5-games-can-play-help-child-detect-sounds/>

II. Singing

- Sing and vocalize with your baby while sharing eye contact and enjoyment.
- Sing with toddlers and children. Engage with those songs that have gestures—Itzy Bitzy Spider, Wheels on the Bus etc. bussongs.com has lyrics, listening options and videos.
- Sing to add structure to your routines. Use familiar nursery rhyme melodies and add your own words. i.e.: To Happy Birthday melody: "It's time to wash hands, it's time to wash hands, the tops and the bottoms, it's time to wash hands." You'll develop such a repertoire of songs and your kids will remember them when they're all grown up!
- Sing to learn and remember information. Like learning the ABCs through song, other information can be linked to songs: *School House Rock* style as a memory cue. i.e.: Animaniacs: the American Presidents, 50 Nifty United States.
- Sing to cheer the spirit.
- Sing to bridge generations and to create a sense of belonging.

III. Moving

- Hold your baby and dance to singing or recorded music.
- Explore some expressive movement together.
 - Use some scarves and twirl and float them to your favorite music. Crunch them into a ball, throw them "Up" and watch them float "Down".
 - Do your spring cleaning together with scarves; sweeping the floor/walls/furniture. Sing "Whistle While we Work" or listen to John McCutcheon's Spring Cleaning.

- Pretend to ice skate with paper/waxed paper/shoe box covers as skates on a carpeted floor.
 - Sing or use recorded music.
 - Find the Charlie Brown's skating video with the Skating Song by Vince Guaraldi on YouTube for extra fun and video modeling. End your fun by skating to your child's tea set, slowing down and stirring and enjoying pretend hot chocolate.
- Have a dance party, playing your favorite adult or child music.
 - Move with your kids, clap your hands, pretend to play drums or sing into a microphone.
 - Enjoy some up-tempo songs and be sure to end your dance party with slower, calmer songs to help bring the energy and activity level down.
 - End with lying on the floor, catching your breath, sharing comments about the fun you had, recapping with descriptions like "we were playing the drums" and "we were clapping so fast".

IV. Playing

- Have a kitchen band.
 - Play together with your pots/pans/lids/spoons/bowls. Explore and imitate. Label actions fast/slow/loud/soft.
- Make your own instruments and play with them. From simple to fancy:
 - <https://www.pinterest.com/maestroclassics/homemade-musical-instruments/>
 - <http://www.theeducatorsspinonit.com/2012/01/baby-time-lets-make-music.html>
 - <http://buggyandbuddy.com/10-homemade-musical-instruments-kids/>
- Include music instruments in your toy collection
 - Bells, shakers, tambourines, drums and imitate.
 - Label actions fast/slow/loud/soft.
 - Explore, imitate rhythms, play patterns, play with singing or recorded music, stop/go or freeze.

V. Use music as a timekeeper to structure play

- To prepare for a transition
 - Continue to play with toys for duration of familiar song (sung or recorded). When the song ends, it's time to clean up. Since the song is familiar, the child knows the beginning/middle/end and can judge when the transition will happen.
- To assist with sharing
 - Play with toy for duration of song, then trade.
- To complete a task quickly
 - "Let's clean up before the end of this song." Choose something fast and short (Minute Waltz/Flight of the Bumblebee) and race to complete the task.
- To increase duration of play with a toy
 - Play for duration of song. Choose a song length that your child can manage successfully and change songs over time increasing the song length. ("Oh, listen, (with hand to ear) I still hear our song. Let's play until our song is done.")
- To structure homework time
 - Work on assignment for duration of song. Choose quiet/background music of the appropriate length.