

BACK TO BASICS

Music and creative movement

Music and movement experiences—both spontaneous and planned—have a positive impact on all areas of children’s development. A focused music program teaches children the basics of beat, tone, musicality, and lyrics. Additionally, it offers a forum for social interactions, creativity, language development, and emotional expression. Music is also an important gateway to physical fitness: coordination, balance, body awareness, stamina, dexterity, and muscle skills.

Guidelines for music and movement activities

- Music and movement activities can be noisy. Locate the center in a large, open area where song and dance won’t interrupt quiet play. Make sure an electrical outlet is nearby for record and cassette players.
- Buy sturdy, high-quality equipment and teach children how to use it. Make a rebus chart that shows the proper sequence for turning on, playing, and turning off a machine. Model and teach disk and tape handling techniques. Repair or dispose of broken equipment. Consider investing in (or soliciting donations for) an MP3 player and wireless speakers. You’ll not only save the space taken up by tapes, disks, and equipment, you’ll make taking music outside to the playground much easier.
- Don’t insist that every child participate. But do make the activities attractive enough that all children will want to join the fun.
- If you are singing without an instrument or recording, make sure your pitch is within the children’s voice range. Use a pitch pipe, tone bell, or piano to find a pitch between middle C and the octave above middle C—the easiest range for most non-professional adult singers and for children.
- Join in! Movement is good for you as well as the children. Use the activities to energize or relax.

Music and movement center equipment basics

- Recordings and playing devices
- Rhythm instruments including sand blocks, rhythm sticks, cymbals, triangles, wrist bells, maracas, tambourines, and drums
- Props such as chiffon scarves, crepe paper streamers, and large feathers
- Noisemakers like cans, aluminum pie pans, steel bowls and wooden spoons
- Examples of written music
- Resource books or cards with words and music to traditional children’s songs and movement games

Resources and recordings

- *Kids Make Music—Clapping and Tapping from Bach to Rock* by Avery Hart
- *The Big Book of Children’s Songs* from Hal Leonard Publishing
- *Singable Songs for the Very Young* by Raffi
- *You’ll Sing a Song* by Ella Jenkins and *cELLABration! A Tribute to Ella Jenkins*
- *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*, book and recording narrated by Ben Kingsley
- *Eye Winker, Tom Tinker, Chin Chopper: Fifty Musical Finger-plays* by Tom Glazer
- *Great Big World* by Joe McDermott
- *Young Dancer* by Monika Tuszny
- *World Playground* produced by Putumayo
- Classical music recordings of Mozart, Chopin, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky
- *Moving and Learning Across the Curriculum: More Than 300 Activities and Games to Make Learning Fun* by Rae Pica



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10 Guidelines for Preschool Music Programs

Music in many preschool classrooms is unplanned, and children's experience is limited by the haphazard manner in which experiences are presented. Sometimes caregivers use the records or tapes they find in the cabinet when hired, or they use the skimpy knowledge they acquired at a weekend conference. Occasionally, teachers rely on music they learned as children, but their choices may or may not be appropriate for the children they teach.

Music offers much to young children, and taking time to organize for musical instruction is an important and satisfying responsibility for adults. Certainly, the social-emotional value of one's musical heritage is undeniable - almost all adults have favorite music they remember from childhood. Music provides for cognitive, creative, and physical learning as well, but preschool teachers need to match their presentation methods and strategies to their children's specific needs as learners.

What musical information, then, can you introduce to young children that will engender a love of music? What concepts can you present when you have few resources and feel uncertain about teaching music? The following guidelines can assist all teachers in developing music activities that will satisfy young children's creative needs and define a basic music program that will serve as a foundation for later musical learning.

Guideline 1: Set aside a specific time of day for musical activity. Certainly, using music at any time of the day is appropriate. Having a 15- or 20-minute time slot scheduled each day, however, demonstrates to children that music is valued in the classroom and that music is important to the normal functioning of the classroom experience.

Guideline 2: Use singing as a basis for the music program. Though listening and movement experiences are important to the overall quality of the music program, using children's natural vocal instruments will serve as a springboard for all other music you introduce to them. Songs like *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, *Hush, Little Baby*, *Ring a Ring o' Roses*, and *The Wheels on the Bus* are great and very familiar to most children.



Guideline 3: Begin with music that children know. Choose songs familiar to the culture. *Hickory, Dickory, Doc* and *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* are two examples of music that children have likely heard in their homes. Learning what is familiar is easier for children than learning what is unfamiliar. This principle can guide you in selecting appropriate songs for youngsters.

Guideline 4: Select easy-to-sing music at first. The melodies mentioned earlier are examples of music that is easy to sing. The preschooler's voice is limited in range (five or six notes). Songs that fit the "do, re, mi, fa, so, la" range are suitable choices. Other songs that fit this category are *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, *Muffin Man*, *London Bridge*, *Down by the Bay*, *Skip to My Lou*, and *She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain*.

Guideline 5: Recognize how music supports creativity. Music sets the spirit free! Think of the ways you use music. Do you use it as a "feel good" expression of happiness in a morning shower? Do you use it to feel contented while doing a monotonous job? Do you use it to help you calm down in stressful situations? If you enjoy the creativity that music provides, you will convey that feeling to children. They will capture the excitement of singing, moving, and responding to music wherever they find it.

Guideline 6: Introduce movement experiences slowly. Over time, familiar music takes on more value with the addition

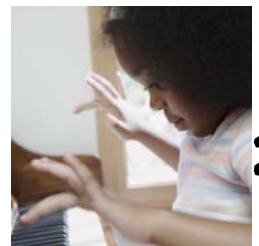
of movements or rhythmic experiences. *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* will serve as an example here. When children first hear this song, they often respond by listening carefully to its tune and words. Repetition helps them learn the lyrics and melody. After some time, though, adding a triangle and rhythm sticks to the musical package helps children to move to another level of participation.

Guideline 7: Add depth to the music program with musical games. Games like *If You're Happy and You Know It*, *Head and Shoulders*, and *London Bridge* are mainstays in the preschool classroom. Using them occasionally adds spice to the music repertoire. Overusing them may lessen children's participation. Caregivers need to limit the use of the old standards and find new ones children will enjoy.

Guideline 8: Use musical activity to teach basic concepts about music. Discover and talk about these musical qualities in everyday music activities:

- Melodies can move up or down the scale.
- Pitches can be high or low.
- Sounds can be loud or soft.
- Tempo can be fast, slow or in-between.
- The beat, or rhythm, is steady, which means you can tap or clap it while singing.
- Rhythm helps set the mood of a melody.

Guideline 9: Help children discover the music in their environment. Music qualities are obvious in the rhythms, pitches, and beats of the everyday culture. Ask children to identify the sounds they hear throughout the day. "What kind of sound is that? Is it high or low? Is it loud or soft?" These kinds of questions will help them become more attuned to the noises and music they hear daily.



Guideline 10: Allow children to choose whether to participate in musical activity. Almost all children genuinely enjoy music, and they participate freely and spontaneously. On occasion though, children will choose not to participate for a variety of valid reasons. Children will enjoy music less when they are forced to sing or march or hop at a time when they just don't feel like doing any of those things.