

The Benefits of Music for Your Young Child

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Why is Music Important for Your Young Child's Development?

The way a child's brain develops is dependent on environmental stimulation. Research has shown that music stimulates the mind and the body. Therefore, music is a powerful stimulant that also increases the capacity of the brain to learn and understand.

Benefits of Music

- Good listening skills.
- Greater opportunity for active listening and learning.
- Greater capacity to detect and understand patterns.
- Increased vocabulary, improved social/emotional skills.
- Improved math skills.

Sharing one's culture or tradition through music creates personal connections to one's native country. It also creates connections with others by sharing values and beliefs with people through song. This sharing through music can be very important to instill at a young age to also teach tolerance and respect for others.

How Can You Incorporate Music in Your Child's Life?

- Sing nursery rhymes and songs with your child. Singing to them during naptime and bedtime also helps them be calm and relaxed.
- Incorporating movement and hand motions when singing can also help your child be actively engaged in process of creating music. Fingerplays and action songs are also excellent to do with your child.
- Songs can also be included during the day to help the child in transitions and with routines. For example, songs can be sung as the child picks up toys, to let the child know it's time to take a bath, or even to let the child know that a different activity will begin soon.
- Introduce percussion instruments to young children that they can shake, such as

bells, rattles, shakers, or tambourines. If their older, they can play drums, cymbals, or instruments that can be banged. Children can tap or shake to the beat of a song. They can also march around the room with you to a marching song.

- Take your child to a musical event for children. For example, the New World Symphony Orchestra always has concerts for kids. Other local orchestras also offer concerts especially for children. There are also children's shows and concerts playing year-round in the Broward Center for the Performing Arts or at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Downtown Miami.
- You can join a music class with your child. Make sure it is developmentally appropriate for your young child.
- Some children can learn to play an instrument at a very young age; formal music instruction can begin as early as when a child is three or four years old. It truly depends on the child's natural abilities as well as their curiosity and interest in the instrument. Also, supports from their music teacher, parents and family members are also crucial at this young age if they do begin playing an instrument like the violin or the piano.

Sources: Shore, R., & Strasser, J. (2006). Music for their minds. *Young Children*, 61(2), 62-67.
Wilcox, E. (2000). Music, brain research, and better behavior. *The Education Digest*, 65(6), 10-15. http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/toddler_music.html#.