



# Music: A Natural Connection to Children's Growth and Development

Music is a part of life in every country and every culture. Music is used as part of our celebrations, holidays, religious or worship experiences, as well as for pure entertainment. When a baby is born, somehow we know to cradle and sing to him or simply hum a melody while rocking him to sleep. What is a natural instinct for parents to surround their new infant with music and song is also a natural way to start building the brain's connections to growth and learning. Music affects and works on all levels of development: social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth.

## Music and Social Interaction

Music is a natural connection tool. It brings people together and helps them interact with one another. The same sort of connection can happen between you and your child. Play music and you'll see children respond. Children will sway, swing, move, bang out a rhythm on a table, and bob their heads. Music is an easy way for parents to relate to their children. When an infant hears you sing to them, you are connecting with them, and they are connecting to you. It doesn't matter what the song is, just sing. It is making a difference.

## Music and Emotional Development

Music has the ability to comfort and soothe children. Children will often sing to themselves as a way to self-soothe. You can use music to help calm your baby, or get your toddler to relax for naptime. If your preschooler is sleepy in the morning or sad, you can sing a song or play music that is cheery and makes them want to jump around and get moving.



## Music and Physical Development

Music and movement naturally go together. Children most naturally respond to music by moving and being active with it. Music helps children learn about rhythm, timing, orientation, and coordination. You can use music to get children marching, jumping, and hopping, or during any kind of physical activity. In addition to being fun for children, The "Hokey Pokey" dance, line dancing, square dancing and all group dances help children learn: their body parts (put your right foot in, raise your hands), sense of direction (turning around, going left and right, moving back and forth), or rhythm patterns (tapping to the beat).

## Music and Cognitive Development

Toddlers and preschoolers love rhymes and songs. Not only do they enjoy them, but they help children learn about numbers, letters, and sounds ("ABC song", "This Old Man"). As children's brains are developing at their fastest when they are very young, with 80 percent of brain development occurring by age 3, and 90 percent by age 5, music helps with making connections in the brain.

## **Incorporate Music into Learning Activities**

Many child care programs already know that music is a great way to help children prepare for transitions from one activity to another. For example, there's the "Clean Up" song that can be sung to tell children to clean up behind themselves, put their toys away. You can have a song for brushing your teeth or taking a bath that children will associate with that activity. Children love routine and making songs or music part of routines makes activities and learning fun.

Child care programs can ask children to bring in and share their favorite instruments and let the entire group play as a 'band'. Homemade instruments can be made as well, using pots, pans, lids, maracas made out of cups and beans.

For older children, you might consider letting them learn to play a musical instrument. Playing in a band or orchestra helps children with social and emotional development. Learning an instrument like the recorder or violin helps with hand-eye coordination. Reading music helps children think differently. Most schools have programs where children can experiment with different instruments for a low cost.

Children love to hear themselves. Record your child singing and play it back for her. Or with a group of children, record each child singing a part of a song and play it back and have the children figure out who is singing which part. This will help improve their listening skills.

Music is an important part of the human experience. It is also a very creative medium. It allows for children to be able to express themselves in their own unique ways as well as contribute to their overall development. Find ways to expand how you use music with your children at home and in child care. There is no better way to learn and have fun at the same time.



For more information visit:

<http://www.ccaparentnetwork.org/members/1905/06/29/music-a-natural-connection-to-childrens-growth-and-development/>

[http://www.familytlc.net/issues/may2011/music\\_4.html](http://www.familytlc.net/issues/may2011/music_4.html)



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