

TOP TEN MUSIC ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

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1. **Sing your child to sleep with lullabies.**

Lullabies create a wonderful bonding experience for parents and babies, and become sources of comfort for children just like a blanket or pacifier. Don't worry about whether or not you sing "well" - you can't "ruin your child's ear" - so don't deprive your child of this warm, nurturing important initial musical experience.

2. **Experiment with objects at home that make interesting sounds.**

Kitchens are a wonderful source of containers that may be filled with various objects, from rice to corn flakes, for sound exploration. Buckets work well as drums, measuring cups of different sizes tapped with chop sticks turn into bells with different pitches, etc., etc., etc.

3. **Attend musical performances together.**

Young children do well at informal concerts, at the mall or park, for example, where they are not expected to sit still. As children grow older, start introducing them to more formal concerts, planning to stay for only the first selection or two as the child's attention span gradually grows longer.

4. **Make good choices of instruments for children to play.**

Take children to "try the instruments" night at school, or to a local music store, so they may choose an instrument with a sound that appeals to them, and that a music teacher believes they are well suited for. Avoid forcing your child to play the instrument you choose.

5. **Negotiate a reasonable, no-tears practice schedule.**

There is no magic in being chained to an instrument for 30 minutes at a time. Children taking music lessons will benefit musically from 10-15 minute practice sessions twice per day, while their attitudes toward music will benefit considerably. As they grow older and begin to play more complex music, most children will recognize the need to practice for longer time periods.

6. **Sing together often.**

Sing familiar songs, sing with sing-along tapes, sing on car trips, sing together at family celebrations, and make up songs to sing. For instance, take tunes that are familiar and turn them into songs to accompany daily activities ("Row, Row, Row Your Boat" may become "set, set, set the table, set the table please, when you're done then we can eat, yum, yum, yum, yum, yum" - there's no rule that a song must always rhyme!)

7. **Explore the world of music together by listening to lots of different types and styles of music.**

Play music for listening, dancing, resting, and to accompany quiet play. Expose your children to many different styles of music and different instruments and instrument combination. Check out the world music and folk music bins at the local record store or library for intriguing sounds from Java to South Africa to Bulgaria.

8. **Read picture books and stories, and watch movies and videos, where music is a prominent theme.**

There are a myriad of beautiful picture books illustrating folk songs, and storybooks about characters who make music. Watching videos such as "Beethoven Lives Upstairs" for younger children, and "Amadeus" or "Amazing Grace" for older children, helps bring music making to life.

9. **Make music for each other and for friends.**

Hold periodic informal concerts for small groups of family and friends, where everyone can sing or play for each other in a non-threatening setting (adults included). Hold a punch and cookies or ice cream sundae "reception" afterwards to reward the musicians and turn this into a special event.

10. **Make a family music video or audio cassette to use as a holiday or birthday gift for relatives and friends.**

Family members can take turns singing or playing for the tape, either alone or in various combinations from duets to the whole family. Include introductions or narration about the music or performance, and conclude with everyone singing a song appropriate to the occasion being celebrated.