



Activities to Support the Development of Music Milestones*

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AGE	MUSIC MILESTONE	MUSIC ACTIVITY
0 - 3 MONTHS	Alerts and calms to music; prefers infant-directed singing; coos/cries	Sing lullabies; gently rock and pat to music
3 - 6 MONTHS	Musical babbling; repetitive movements in response to music; turns to the source of music; prefers higher pitched voices	Imitate baby's babbling; provide shakers, bells, and simple rhythm toys; bounce gently to music
6 - 9 MONTHS	Occasionally matches pitch; larger repetitive movements; recognizes familiar melodies; uses descending vocalizations	Imitate spontaneous songs; play pitch matching games using "la-la" or "loo-loo"; easy finger play songs; nursery rhymes with movement
9 - 12 MONTHS	"Sings" spontaneously; recognizes and attempts to sing along with familiar songs	Provide songs for different activities (like wake-up/bath time/bedtime, etc.); a variety of recorded music; drums and xylophones
12 - 18 MONTHS	Dances to music; pays attention to lyrics; sings snippets of learned songs; more pitch matching; starts to match movements to music	Dance baby on your feet; sing simple songs/chants/nursery rhymes; sing songs with repetitive chorus like E-I-E-I-O and B-I-N-G-O
18 - 24 MONTHS	Looks for dance partners; spins, marches to music; spontaneous songs have steady rhythm; able to imitate songs; lyrics more accurate than pitch	Experiment with different voices (big/little/high/low); make sounds with voice to encourage vocal range (sirens, birds, animal noises)
2 - 3 YEARS	Learns singing vs. speaking voices; sings in different keys and meters; matches pitches consistently; some instrument discrimination	Play guessing games with familiar songs and instruments; add repetitive rhythmic accompaniment to singing; sing sequential songs, like "If You're Happy and You Know It"
3 - 4 YEARS	Begins to discriminate between familiar instruments; uses rhythm instruments to accompany their songs; melodic contour is intact; makes up songs	Marching band with rhythm instruments; high/low; up/down; play/stop; fast/slow; loud/soft; nonsense songs; read books based on familiar songs
4 - 5 YEARS	Maintains steady beat while moving to music; sings melody with pitch accuracy; plays melodies on simple instruments; can remember songs in head; begins to read and write rhythmic notation	Sing rounds like "Row your boat"; practice singing; provide diverse genres and styles of music recordings/songs/games
5 - 6 YEARS	Maintains steady beat while moving to music; sings melody with pitch accuracy; plays melodies on simple instruments; can remember songs in head; begins to read and write rhythmic notation	Sing rounds like "Row your boat"; practice singing; provide diverse genres and styles of music recordings/songs/games
6 - 7 YEARS	Develops tonal center ¹ ; starts to sing harmony and rounds; vocal range focused around 5-6 notes; expands rhythmic and melodic written notation	Build a repertoire of familiar songs; provide opportunities for music improvisation, reading, and writing notation; music lessons
7 - 9 YEARS	Vocal range expands; uses more complex meters and harmonies; demonstrates music preferences	Offer individual and group music experiences; provide music games (computer, board) that focus on music terminology, notation, and discrimination

¹Tonal center is the "home key." When a child has a sense of tonal center, they can sing a song all the way through in the same key.

*Music milestones adapted from Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995), Gordon (2003), McDonald (1979), MENC (2010), Moog (1976), and Schwartz (2008).



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