

# Communicate Through Music

When adults talk to a baby, they make music – they make their voices lilt up and down in a sing-song way, and find short phrases to say in a rhythmic way.

Hello baby! Aren't you beautiful?

Just imagine how you would say this to a baby and you will hear the music in it. Newborn babies are tuned in to this 'music' in adults' communication; not just their voices, but also the way they hold and move with their baby.

Newborn babies come into this world able to hear and with a sense of rhythm. They recognise their mother's heart beat and voice from when they are in the womb, and they quickly learn to make themselves heard through their coos, babbles, laughs and cries. They recognise sounds and enjoy making their own. From day one babies communicate and they enjoy using music to express themselves.



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Singing, rhymes, musical games and playing instruments are all great ways for parents and carers to communicate with babies. Musical activities make communication fun and enjoyable, and there is growing evidence that they assist with early language development and emotional wellbeing. Babies quickly learn to recognise the rhymes and enjoy the confidence they gain from knowing what comes next and being able to take an active part.

Some research links early exposure to, and knowledge of, songs, rhymes and rhythm with ease of learning to read and write and an ability to listen and respond. Music can play a key role in distracting, soothing and entertaining, too.

Musical activities can be used in the home and in early years settings, and on a one-to-one or group level. It doesn't require musical talent or skills; anyone can use music to communicate with young children.

## Communicate through music activity pack

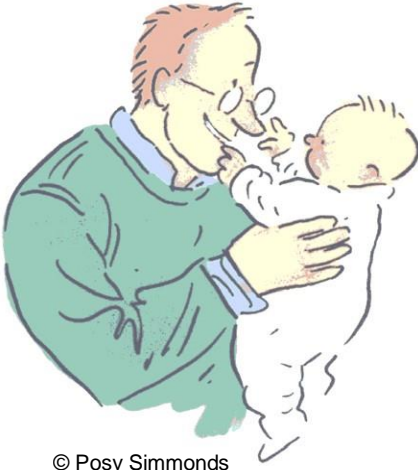
This activity pack was jointly developed by the National Literacy Trust and Music One2One as part of the Talk to Your Baby campaign. It was created to encourage musical interaction with babies and young children. It is designed for practitioners and professionals to help share the joys and the communication benefits of musical activities with parents and carers. It includes:

- The *Babies love music* A4 sheet, which promotes the benefits of music and could be printed out and used as a flyer to give to parents, or blown up to A3 size and displayed as a poster
- A fun survey to find out old and new favourite songs and rhymes, designed to get parents and carers thinking about musical activities
- One-to-one musical activities, for use in settings or to give to parents to use at home
- Group musical activities, to be carried out with children and families in settings
- An information sheet with useful contacts

The pack is designed to be a flexible resource for practitioners to integrate into their existing activities, or to introduce new musical activities to families and children. The materials can be photocopied and freely distributed.

# Babies love music

# Babies love music



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- Babies can hear before they are born – they recognise your voice and the beat of your heart
  - They love to hear a variety of music
  - Listen carefully as they try out new sounds themselves – watch, respond and join in
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- You don't need to be highly skilled – your voice is your baby's favourite music
  - Sing your favourite song, clap your baby's hands, and move together with the rhythm of the music
  - Have fun together exploring music and movement – this will help you and your baby get to know each other and enjoy communicating

## Share your favourite songs and rhymes

Do you have a favourite nursery rhyme, song or tune from your childhood? What is it?

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What do you associate the song with? A certain person, place or feeling?

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What is your baby's favourite rhyme, song or tune?

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How does she show her enjoyment of it?  
Cooing, gurgling, smiling, kicking?

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## Activities for you and your baby

- Turn off the TV and radio, sit your baby on your lap facing you and sing one of your favourite songs. It doesn't matter what song you sing; if you enjoy it, so will your baby. It could be the latest chart topper, a ballad, or a traditional nursery song. Don't worry if you don't think you sound great; your baby will love the sound of your voice.



Helps her to learn to listen and to learn about how one sound follows another – a skill that will help with reading and writing

- Include your baby's name in the song. Vary the tone of your voice. Give your baby time to respond. If he coos, wiggles or makes a face, watch and listen to him carefully to show just how interested you are by his response.



Your baby will feel valued and will learn about turn taking in conversation

- Sing the same songs over and over. Your baby will not get bored hearing them. Try to use rhyming words, and emphasise the rhymes.



She will begin to recognise words and to join in with familiar sequences

- Add movement to your words. Move with your baby to the beat and clap your hands or your baby's hands in time. Dance to the music – you can use a sling to dance together when he is very young.



He will learn about the pulse and rhythms of language

- Create sound effects. Use your hands to clap, your fingers to click and your mouth to make playful sounds and whistles. Fill plastic bottles with sand or beans and shake them.



She will be stimulated by the interesting and varied sounds

## Activities for groups

- Create a treasure basket. Get a large box or basket and fill it with different musical instruments and sound makers. Anything that rattles, bangs or shakes is good. Small babies will enjoy high pitched sounds, such as the clinking of cutlery, bells or chimes. Sitting-up babies can make their own choices from the basket. Toddlers will enjoy making their own instruments, such as plastic bottles filled with beans or rice for shakers, or pots and wooden spoons for drums.



Young babies learn that they can make their own choices and can explore the relationship between movement and sound. They develop listening skills, learn to distinguish different sounds and develop their creativity and imagination

- Play musical games. Small babies will enjoy being gently bounced, rocked or patted in time to music. Toddlers will enjoy games such as musical statues or musical chairs. They will also enjoy dancing to the beat of the music.



Children will enjoy the interaction, learn about the rhythm of language and explore their senses

Have regular song and rhyme sessions. Sing familiar songs and rhymes, include the children's names and add actions to emphasise aspects of rhyme and pulse. Give babies time to coo or babble with pleasure, and encourage toddlers to join in.



Rhymes and songs help children recognise words, build their vocabulary and confidently socialise and express themselves

Use music to relax. Make sure the children are comfortable and put on a music CD for them to listen to. Try different styles of music to suit the mood – lively music at the start of play time or relaxing tunes at the end of the day.



Listening skills will be developed and children will enjoy the calming effect of music

## Resources and information

### Music One2One

This was a music education research project based at the University of Exeter School of Education and Life-Long Learning. Its primary aim was to raise the quality of caring for under two-year-olds by encouraging developmentally appropriate one-to-one, playful musical activity between carers and their babies and toddlers.

<http://education.exeter.ac.uk/music-one2one/downloads.php>

### Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEPLE)

PEEP supports parents and carers in their role as children's first educators, and provides training and support for practitioners working with families. It publishes a range of song books and tapes for babies up to preschool.

<https://www.peeple.org.uk/>

**Sound Connections** – a music charity promoting good music making in the early years

<http://www.sound-connections.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012-06-EYFS-Framework-A-musical-overview.pdf>

**A TACTYC paper on music and early years**

<http://tactyc.org.uk/pdfs/Reflection-Fawcett.pdf>