



Teaching Infant and Toddler Music Classes

Presented by

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GIA Publications, Inc.

Introduction

The *First Steps in Music* program encourages the wonder and joy of childhood music making. When caregivers sing, dance, and play with their infants and toddlers, using face to face, expressive and conversational interactions, human connections are nurtured.

Dr. John M. Feierabend designed this 8-part curriculum after many years of collecting and organizing playful songs, rhymes and games that have been enjoyed by children for generations. Singing, dancing and touch are essential for human growth and development and *First Steps in Music* gives caregivers the necessary tools they need to skillfully enter their child's world of musical make believe and play.

Children are born with innate survival skills called primitive reflexes. If these reflexes are not released early in life, there can be long-lasting negative consequences. Children also have sensory processing needs which can affect their behavior. By joyfully addressing these issues in the music class through touch, movement, and play, a foundation for future learning is secured.

Purpose

To understand the developmental benefits the First Steps in Music Infant/Toddler curriculum can give to caregivers who musically play with their young ones. By applying these simple "tips and tricks" with the *First Steps in Music* 8-part lesson plan, teachers, parents, and caretakers will be better equipped to meet the milestones of a growing child.

Bounces

We know that a child's brain is dynamic. It is driven by genetics and shaped by experiences. When families participate in musical play there are many benefits from these encounters. It has been documented that moving together with interpersonal synchrony may affect social behavior at a very young age (Cirelli LK, Wan SJ, Trainer LJ, 2014). Many researchers agree when groups of people move together there is a sense of community and well-being. Families who respond to their child's inner beat by bouncing their child, reinforce this sense of belonging and allow the child to make healthy brain and body connections.

Moro Reflex: This reflex happens when a baby is startled. They will throw out their arms and legs to unexpected movements or noises. This reflex should disappear after two months.

Bounces are a way to help infants and toddlers outgrow the Moro Reflex.

1. See the Pony Galloping, pages 22–23
2. From Wibbleton to Wobbleton, page 19
3. Way up High in the Apple Tree, Finger Play

Bounces at Home

Find a teachable moment for active bounce play. Read the child's energy and emotions. Are they excited, tired, or engaged? Smile and have face to face interaction. This will aide emotional bonding as well as speech and language development. Make your voice and face expressive. As you follow the child's lead, try keeping tempo with their bodies and follow the child's lead as they push up with their legs on the floor. The synchrony of movement will help make this activity most engaging.



Wiggles

Babies and toddlers prefer infant directed speech (IDS) and even singing over speech. This means children are more engaged when there are fewer words and there is a larger expansion in the caregiver's vocal expression. Finger wiggles are the perfect way to draw a child into the imagery of little cows, chickens, or the even wind. By gently massaging each finger, while tenderly speaking these rhymes, babies learn to relax their hand and release the palmer grasp which is the primitive reflex designed for survival. It may take a few months to understand the process, but children love to have their fingers lovingly counted and rubbed and will eventually enjoy doing the same activity back to their caregivers.

Palmer or Grasp Reflex: This reflex is demonstrated when a child grabs onto your finger and holds on tight. It is also shown when you stroke the sole of a foot and the baby curls up their toes. This reflex begins to disappear after the third month.

Wiggles help children overcome the Palmer or Grasp Reflex.

1. Tis all the way to toe town, Book of Wiggles
2. Baby's thumb is Mister Gum, page 35
3. Engine on the Track, page 38

Wiggling Fingers at Home

Be expressive and use infant directed speech (IDS) to make your face and voice engaging. This is also called Parentese. As you gently message the child's fingers or toes, try changing the pitch of your voice and alternate from high to low to match the characters in the story. Use lots of sound effects that relate to the story to engage the child. For example, the revving of an engine or toot of a train will enhance the experience and the child will often mimic these utterances before they say words. Sometimes, giving the child an object to hold like an egg shaker or stuffie friend, will add enjoyment. As the child grows, offer your hand and allow them to perform the wiggle on you. These games can be played while waiting in line at the store, when the child is in their highchair or waiting on the changing table. The goal is to make these games organic and pick up on baby's cues.



Tickles

This is a game, lovingly played between an intimate couple. Children's bodies must be respected so when a child feels any distress, the intensity of this game must be taken down a few notches. Children require sensory stimulation for proper cognitive development and tickles are an organic method to nurture this sensation. Children learn to anticipate the climax of the tickle story with great delight and caregivers who master this technique give their young ones a joyful experience of touch and closeness that enhance the bonds of safety and trust.

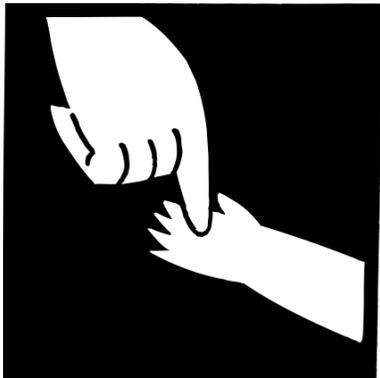
Tactile Stimulation: Tactile touch is essential for a child as she develops in physical abilities as well as social and emotional growth. Positive touch is associated with enhanced learning, language and emotional stability.

Tickles: By gently touching a child's body, they receive the tactile stimulation needed for personal growth.

1. Round and Round the Garden the Little Bunny Goes, page 43
2. A Bee Went to the Barn, Book of Tickles
3. Round and Round the Race Track, page 45

Tickles at Home

There is nothing sweeter than a baby's belly laugh and the more tickles are done the more the children will enjoy them. The key is to not overdo this intimate game. Know your child and match the touch with their sensitivity. Some children enjoy a robust game of tickles, and some are overwhelmed by sensory overload. Always talk to your child and let them know you are playing and listen to their cues. These games can be enjoyed while waiting in line, at the Dr. office or even while having snuggle time at home. The key is to know when to stop and be respectful of the child's body.



Tapping

Body recognition is essential for developing a sense of identity and relationship. When a parent identifies their own body part and then a child imitates by touching their corresponding body part, the child is sharing with the parent's humanness. This helps develop identity.

When we tap on a child's body, they are feeling the steady beat. Steady beat is essential for all group music making encounters and a strong sense of the pulse is important for many life skills including cutting with scissors, reading and coordination in sports. According to Phyllis Weikert (1982) a child will not develop steady beat proficiency without being tapped on by a reliable beat keeping adult.

Proprioception: Proprioception involves the body's awareness of position and movement. Prior to language, human's connect through touch. By tapping on a child's body, a child is discovering who they are and is discovering their own self-identity. After tapping on the child's body, active toddlers enjoy moving their bodies to these songs.

Tapping and clapping helps young brains connect with their bodies.

1. Two Little Eyes, page 54
2. The Little Mice go Creeping, page 47
3. "X" Marks the Spot, page 54
4. One, two buckle my shoe (Mother Goose)
5. Peas Porridge Hot (Mother Goose)

Tapping and Clapping at Home

Watching a child clap, unhindered by an adult's help, brings delight to both parties. So let the child lead. When a little one knows they are in charge, learning grows exponentially. Follow the child's tempo and sing a song or say a rhyme. This skill is one of the child's first independent musical activities and beat accuracy will grow as the joy continues. When the child stops, wait patiently, and continue singing when they resume movement. When tapping, reach across your midline i.e. your right hand to their left foot and visa versa. When clapping, don't always hold the child's hands. Allow them to tap on yours until they are independent clappers. As with many tasks at this age, model the behavior, don't do it for them and the children will learn.



Vocal Exploration

When babies begin to babble, they usually start with a descending coo. By imitating these vocal utterances, caretakers reinforce the sensation of head voice. The serve and return concept of vocal utterances lays the foundation for future music and language learning.

Simple Songs

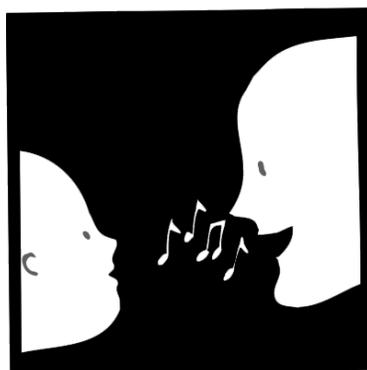
As caregivers coo, talk, and sing songs face to face, little ones are developing listening skills and synaptic connections for “tunefulness” in the brain. The more artful and expressive singing a young child hears, the more neuro fiber created and the easier it will be for this child to produce various pitches and creative melodies later in life. We know that a child who is sung to expressively early in life will learn to be an expressive singer when they grow older.

When an adult sings simple songs, in an appropriate key for a child, basically the key of F or G, the child will soon learn to imitate. The pitch must be above the child’s speaking voice, or it will be more difficult for the child to access their head voice for accurate singing. Simple songs and rhymes also help develop language and reading skills since many can be memorized and easily performed by young ones.

1. Bye Baby Bunting, page 82
2. Old McDonald, Nursery Song
3. Twinkle, Twinkle, Nursery Song
4. Pitter Patter, page 51

Singing Simple Songs at Home

Children who grow up hearing singing at home are more tuneful singers. Make it a point to sing during the day i.e. while driving, folding laundry, swinging on a swing, walking up and down the stairs, getting dressed, brushing your teeth or washing your hands. Encourage your child to hug a favorite doll and sing it to sleep. Children love to role play and when a child hears their caregiver making music, they will want to do the same. You may be surprised at how young an emerging singer may appear; 20 months is not uncommon. Allow your child to sing to you. Independence is the goal and we want our little ones to someday sing to us and not always with us.



Beat Keeping

All children are born to make musical connections. When little ones move their bodies to keep the beat to music, they are building motor-music connections. By allowing children to bang on a pot, tap spoons together, wave a scarf, or shake an egg shaker to music, we are giving them the opportunity to develop beat. A child's inner beat may be different from the music they hear but in time, this will come together. Beat competency is a skill which takes time to develop. Gross motor skills using their whole body is a healthy way for toddlers to explore the beat. Playing music while caregivers dance, bounce, sway, or tap help make these connections.

Beat Keeping at Home

Children who grow up with beat keeping opportunities grow into beatful musicians. Create an area in your home where a basket of small non-pitched percussion instruments can be kept. Encourage your child to play along with their favorite music every day. Create your own family jam session using instruments and “found sound” items around your home. Have an afternoon dance party and break out the scarves or clean dish towels. Take your child for a magic carpet ride on clean towels around the house. Follow your child's lead as they “conduct” their favorite song. Joyful, active, music making is the hook that will encourage future learning.

Moving to the Beat: Adults can hold infants on their should in burping position and tap the beat on the infant's back while swaying side to side, walking around in a circle, swinging the baby back and forth, or walking into the circle and out.

Suggested Resource: Keeping the Beat CD, published by GIA
Baby Move Its: Choreographed movement to music



Dancing with Form & Expression

Many children love to be held as their caregivers swing and dance with them in their arms. This type of movement is called vestibular stimulation. It is after the child has been twirled or lifted that their brain is making important connections. Following this type of large movement, it is important to give little one's brains time to process. This helps their brain's process the needed information. Think of it as the dizzy feeling you have after spinning, your brain needs time to regroup. Infants who are comforted by vestibular stimulation show greater visual alertness than babies quieted in other ways. During these periods of quiet alertness, they can effectively absorb information around them. This activity is important for a baby's growing brain. Dancing together builds community and infants and toddlers enjoy socializing through simple circle games.

Simple Circle Games: This locomotive activity can include children of all ages. The goal of circle games is not to keep a steady beat, but to enjoy group participation and the socialization of dance.

1. The Leaves are Green, page 97
2. No Bears out Tonight, page 100
3. Ringo, Ringo, Rango, page 101

Props can be used with active toddlers to encourage beat motion.

1. Stretchy Band - Circle Formation
2. Parachute for form and expression
3. Canopy scarf for relaxation
4. Hula hoops for coordination
5. Laundry basket for imaginary fun

Ball Rolling: Self-regulating skills are developed as children learn to wait their turn and watch others. When children learn to wait their turn, it is like having a physical conversation.

Roll the ball back and forth for each phrase. Make sure they have "pizza feet"!

1. I Roll the Ball, page 49
2. Roll Catch, Book of Simple Songs and Circles, page 44
3. On Roll On, Book of Simple Songs and Circles, page 42
4. I roll the ball to _____, I roll it down the track. I roll the ball he catches it and then he rolls it back. Stop look and listen before you cross the street. First you use your eyes and ears and then you use your feet.

Dancing with Form and Expression at Home

Simple circle games don't need a crowd to be enjoyed. Toddlers know how to have their own personal party by turning around in their own circles. Start singing and watch how little ones, who need vestibular stimulation, turn themselves around, even to the point of falling down. After a good laugh, tap on the floor and do it all over again. Toddlers love the repetition of the game and it's a sure way to tire them out before bedtime. After a little coaching, caregivers can sit this one out and watch the toddler go to town

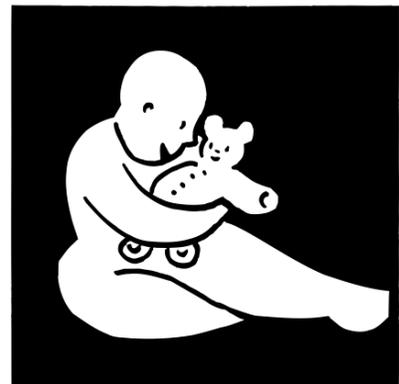
Lullabies

A lullaby is a gentle song sung to a child to help them fall asleep. A child's sense of security and well-being is nourished when a s/he is gently rocked and held close. Lullabies help regulate emotions, develop bonding, and establish a routine. When a caregiver sings a lullaby with expressive tenderness, the artful exchange builds human connection. A child may not remember the words of a song, but they will respond to the loving emotion of a lullaby.

1. Ally Bally, page 113
2. Hush my little bird, page 122-123
3. Slumber Time is Drawing Near, Book of Lullabies page 90

Lullabies at Home

Babies love their parent's voices so never fear that you are not a good enough singer. Caregivers who lovingly rock and sing lullabies to their babies are better than a recording. Keep it simple and sing a few favorite lullabies to sooth and comfort your baby at bedtime or even throughout the day. Children will grow to love what they hear most often. After singing a lullaby, gently hum or loo the melody before putting the child to bed. This will help their bodies unwind and fall asleep better.



Sing-Aloud Books for Toddlers

Even a toddler enjoys a picture book story song. Besides being calming and refocusing the listener, story songs help nurture the enjoyment of the written word and reading. Sing aloud books develop content knowledge, vocabulary, and help organize thinking concepts. This important activity enhances literary skills for decoding and listening skills for putting sounds together to make words. Expressively singing through these picture books help create an appetite for future artful music making. Story telling is another way to develop a child's wonder and imagination.

Sing-Aloud Books at Home

Babies love to hear their caregivers' voices sing a book while they tenderly snuggle together. The proximity of holding a book helps develop the bonds of attachment and security. Caregivers who sing aloud books to their babies prime them to listen, look and receive new content. The predictability and ease of this activity helps regulate emotions and helps the child relax.

Toddler Sing-Aloud Titles:

1. *Down By The Station*, by Will Hillenbrand, Voyager Books-Harcourt, Inc.
2. *Mamma Buy Me a China Doll*, Adapted by John Feierabend, Illustrated by Allyssa Norton, GIA Publications, Inc.
3. *Over in the Meadow*, Adapted by John Feierabend, GIA Publications, Inc.
4. *Five Little Ducks*, Illustrated by Penny Ives, Child's Play (International) Ltd
5. *Mary Wore Her Red Dress*, Adapted and Illustrated by Merle Peek, Clarion Books
6. *BINGO: Sing and Read Storybook*, Illustrated by Hans Wilhelm, Scholastic, Inc.
7. *Rollover! A Counting Song*, Illustrated by Merle Peek, Houghton Mifflin/Clarion Books
8. *This Old Man*, Illustrated by Pam Adams, Child's Play (International) Ltd
9. *Kitty Alone*, Adapted by John Feierabend, Illustrated by Mina Echevarria, GIA Publications, Inc.
10. *Hush, Little Baby*, A Folk Song with Pictures by Marla Frazee, Browndeer Press/Harcourt Brace & Company

The *First Steps in Music* program allows for intimate music making activities between a baby and a caregiver and helps create some of the most important bonding experiences. It develops attentiveness, attachment and promotes the emotional health that is important for children's over all development.

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