



Listen to the Beat: Music for Toddlers

Bouncing to a beat, marching, clapping, dancing, spinning, jumping, playing instruments, and making sounds of all kinds come naturally to your energetic and curious toddler. When your child is clapping, drumming, or moving with the beat, he's anticipating a pattern. Recognizing and understanding patterns is good for your toddler's future math skills. Sharing music will also encourage his physical development, creativity, and language and listening skills.

- Music can go anywhere. Sing together in the car, make up songs during walks outside, or play a hand-clapping game while you sit and wait for the bus.
- Use songs to make transitions throughout the day. Hum or sing as you go about your daily activities. A nighttime or naptime lullaby is a lovely tradition to begin or continue with your toddler.
- Sing to your toddler in the language you know best and feel most comfortable using.
- A finger play, such as *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*, is a little song, chant, or rhyme with hand motions. Finger plays build language skills and coordination and can also help teach your toddler counting, colors, or other concepts. Check with your librarian, childcare educator, and online to find finger plays
- Most toddlers are loud, whether they mean to be or not. Sing or play music to help your toddler understand the difference between loud and soft. Give her an instrument (or pan and spoon) of her own to practice playing loudly and playing softly.
- With toddlers almost always in motion, all it takes is to turn on some music to get them dancing. If you know traditional dances or other dance moves, show your toddler how it's done, but let him enjoy expressing himself with

his own movements. Your toddler might also enjoy dancing with a favorite stuffed toy or with other props such as a streamer he can wave to the music (tie a long scarf to a wooden spoon).

- When you listen to music with your toddler, you can ask her to use words to interpret what she hears. Does the song make her feel like stomping or spinning? Does the music make her feel full of energy or like resting quietly? Ask: *What does this song make you think of?* Offer your own descriptive opinions to her.
- Play your own music collection for your toddler (be sure the lyrics are appropriate), but try different types of music as well. Find CDs of children’s songs, classical, jazz, country, world and other types of music at your library, bookstore, or discount store.
- Encourage grandparents to sing with your toddler. They may be able to share traditional and favorite family songs.
- Dancing is a good activity to do with friends or older or younger siblings. Join hands and dance in a circle or pair off for some energetic waltzing or boogying. Or create a toddler marching band! Give everyone simple instruments to play, such as baby rattles, homemade shakers, cardboard tube “horns,” and cymbals (pot lids). Lead the way—or let a child do it—as everyone marches around the room to a tune such as *The Ants Go Marching*, or *Knick, Knack, Paddywack*, or another favorite toddler song.