

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: Making the Most of Music

Children love music. They often want to hear their favourite songs and musical rhymes over and over again. For children having a hard time to learn language, music is an especially powerful way to connect and communicate.

The Magic of Music

Music brings language to life. By making language learning fun, music can help your child communicate. It can also help your child in many other ways such as soothing, calming and distracting them and by changing their mood. Music has a place throughout your child's day, from a happy song you sing to them every morning to the soothing lullaby your child hears as the two of you snuggle up at bedtime.



Don't worry if you are not "musical" or can't carry a tune. Your child doesn't mind how well you sing. For them, music is about fun and connecting with you. There are no rules about how to sing or which songs to sing. Sing the songs that your parents sang to you as a child. Sing songs about your child's everyday experiences. For example, 'wheels on the bus' when you are riding a bus or 'twinkle, twinkle little star' when you are looking at the stars.

You and your child can enjoy different types of music- not just children's songs, but classical and popular music of all kinds. Look for music that is sung at a slower pace as this will give your child a chance to really hear the words and even participate in the song.

Movement is a natural part of music and children love to move. Try adding movement to your daily routines and activities. Sing a song while you march into the house together or hop into the kitchen to get a drink of juice.

As your child develops, the types of songs and rhymes he enjoys will change. The way he responds to music will change too



Taking Turns with Music

Music is one of the best ways to get an interaction going and keep it going. Once your child knows a song, your child knows what is going to come next. That will help your child figure out when and how to take their turn.

Your child's ability to take turns in musical activities develops over time:

- In the beginning, when you sing to your child, they will watch you closely and move their body to show you that they like the song
- Later on, your child will begin to recognise songs and rhymes. As you are starting a song, your child will give excited, smile, move their body, or become quiet and look at you.

Making the Most of Music

This handout has been compiled using the Hanen books "It Takes Two to Talk" by Jan Pepper and Elaine Weitzman (2004), and "You Make the Difference In Helping Your Child Learn" by Ayala Manolson, Barbara Ward, and Nancy Dodington (2007).

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- In time, your child will learn to take a turn by doing one or two of the song's actions or by saying some sounds and words. As your child's communication develops, they will be able to participate more and more in the activity and by taking turns throughout the songs with actions, sounds and words.
- Eventually, your child may start an interaction by asking for a specific song or rhyme with a sound, action, word or sign.

Make the Most of Music

Allowing your child to lead means...

- Singing to your child and then observe, wait and listen
 - Your child may let you know they want more by bouncing or swaying
 - They may try to imitate your actions
 - If you pause, they may try to fill in the words or actions
 - They will sing the song all by themselves

Adapting to share music means...

- Singing face to face
- Interpreting your child's sounds and shape them into songs
- Pausing to let your child take a turn
- Slowing down so that your child can really hear the words

Adding new experiences and words in music means...

- Making important words stand out
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Using actions and gestures
- Making songs part of your daily routine



Making your Own Songs

Some of the best songs are the ones you create especially for your child. An easy way to do this is to put your child's name into a familiar song. You can also make up songs about what your child is doing or what they enjoy. All you need to do is change some of the words of a song that you know. Once you have made up a song, you can use it in many different ways. You can turn it into a music routine to help your child finish a task. You can sing it and take turns. You can stress certain words to help your child learn new words. You can even use the song to make a situation less stressful.

Ideas for songs:

- Choose a simple, familiar tune or make up your own melody. Some familiar songs are: 'If you're happy and you know it,' 'Mary had a little lamb,' 'Row, row, row your boat' and 'Pat a cake, pat a cake'
- Make up a song about things that are familiar or interesting to your child
- Make sure there are no more than 10 different words in your song
- Choose meaningful, useful words that your child understands
- Add simple actions to the song.

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