

# Encouraging your child to enjoy music: information for families

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Music can relax us, stimulate us, bring us joy or challenge our understanding of situations. Encouraging your child to enjoy all kinds of music gives them an opportunity for mindfulness, listening for pleasure and switching off from everyday stress and worry. Even if you don't see yourself as a musician or don't know much about some types of music, there's lots you can do to encourage your child to enjoy music – you might even make some new discoveries yourself or be inspired to bring music into family life. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) gives a few suggestions for encouraging enjoyment of music and how you can build time in your already busy lives.

Even 10 to 15 minutes a day is enough to spark an interest in music. Think about your daily routine and when would be a good time to listen to or play music with your child – many parents find that bath time is a good time to listen to music and have a singsong – bathrooms often have good acoustics too due to the tiles!

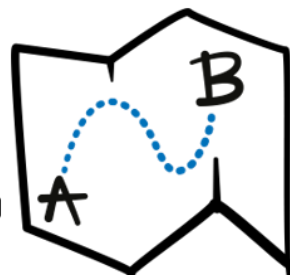
- **Match the music to the occasion** – if you're listening to music just before bedtime, you don't want anything too energetic or stimulating.
- **Share songs from your culture with your child** – If there are folk songs from your culture, why not teach them to your child, explaining the story behind them.
- **Don't worry if you think you can't sing** – even if you think you are 'tone deaf', this doesn't mean you can't appreciate music. You don't need to be able to read music to enjoy the sound and equally, you don't need to know much about instruments to appreciate the skill needed to play them.

## Be aware

While most children and young people enjoy music, some (particularly those with additional needs) may find it too much to handle. Let your child's reactions influence what music you play, at what volume and what types. You will soon work out which music your child enjoys and which they don't.

## Building music into everyday life

- **Action songs and nursery rhymes** – Some of the earliest songs we learn are action songs and nursery rhymes, like 'the wheels on the bus' or 'old Macdonald had a farm'. Why not teach your child an action song – words and movements – to see if they enjoy it. If you can't remember any songs, ask the play team as they will know!
- **Turn off the television and listen to some music instead** – Sometimes it's good to switch off and just listen to music



rather than have to look at something as well. Why not have music at mealtimes or one evening a week where you switch off for an hour and just listen.

- **Encourage time away from screens** – try to introduce regular breaks away from the television, phone or tablet. This is better for children’s developing vision as well. Remember, when you are restricting your child’s screen time, don’t spend all your time on your phone.
- **Make a family playlist** – A good exercise for older children (and adults) is to try to put together a playlist on a particular theme, for instance, colours or numbers. There are lots of different playlist apps and software you can use – once you have the playlist, you could also use it as a ‘name that tune’ game.
- **Listen to a selection of music types** – Don’t limit yourself to one type of music, try lots of different kinds, pop as well as classical, songs from other countries or instrumental (without words) tracks. Some apps and software suggests new tracks based on what you’ve listened to a lot or liked so use this as a start.
- **Look for music videos on YouTube™** - There are lots of concerts, tracks and playlists on YouTube™ so see what takes your fancy. Make sure you pay attention to any age or language warnings before you watch as a family!
- **Use music to stimulate discussion** – Music can help us identify and talk about

how we’re feeling. Some themes from song lyrics can help start a conversation with your child about what’s bothering them. Share the sort of music you listened to at their age and how it made you feel.

- **Have a sing song or karaoke session** – You don’t need to have a good voice or expensive kit to sing together. Find a song you all like then sing along with it – don’t worry about looking daft, in fact, your child will probably enjoy it more if you do!
- **Get moving** – Use music as a basis for moving. You don’t have to dance just swaying to the music is a good start. Perhaps the music is telling a story so you could act it out together.
- **Play music together** – You don’t need to own a musical instrument to make noise together. See what you have at home then use it as a musical instrument – for instance, upturned saucepans of different sizes for drums or a bottle of lentils as a shaker. Making instruments can be a good family craft activity then you can enjoy playing them!
- **See what is happening in your local area** – Lots of libraries offer music sessions at reduced cost and there are voluntary choirs and music groups in many areas too. Ask at your local public library for details of what’s available. Making Music also has details of groups at [www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources/find-a-group-list](http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources/find-a-group-list)

## Further information and support

We have a music therapist at GOSH who can advise you on encouraging your child to enjoy music, as well as using music to support their development, expression, and well-being. Our play team can also help.

Look for children’s music programmes on the BBC Sounds app – for instance, as well as programmes they also have soundscape programmes for drifting off to sleep.

