

Musical play with babies and young children

JULIE WYLIE HELPS PARENTS LAY A FOUNDATION OF MUSIC IN THE EARLY YEARS OF LIFE.

Sensitive use of musical instruments promotes listening, sensory learning, language acquisition, playful interaction and musicality. Every Educaid has a wonderful range of musical instruments designed for babies and young children.



Birth to three months

Baby Maracas, Baby Xylophone, Resonator Bell Set with Case

Hearing is fully developed at birth and babies from birth to three months are comforted by gentle humming and rocking which optimises neural development and promotes regulation and regular breathing respiration.

Tiny maracas are wonderful for using with babies and can be used with nursery rhymes eg. *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *Hickory Dickory Dock* which have short phrases and much use of repetition. Hold the maraca and gently play the beat as you sing softly and slowly facing the baby. Emphasise ends of phrases and use lots of facial expression and smiles.

Make up 'babbling songs' using the vocal sounds the baby gives you. Emphasise the use of pauses and silence to promote vocal turn taking. When you finish a short phrase, wait for the baby to respond. Whenever your baby makes a sound repeat it back with a simple song format using a predictable tune e.g. *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. Don't be shy about singing to your baby; they will love your musical interactions.

If you're not sure about singing in tune, Every Educaid has some wonderful little tuned xylophones and chime bars that are tuned to concert pitch. Play the low note C softly and start singing this note. You will tune up your voice and ensure you are singing in the baby's pitch range C-A.



Birth to six months

Sing and Play & Sing Baby Dance Baby CDs, Mini Wooden Maraca, Wood Tambourine, Cage Bell

Play all of the above and introduce a variety of maracas, bells, tambourines and drums. Follow the baby's actions and rhythmic patterns. Hang bells and maracas on a frame so that the baby has the experience of hitting the objects to reproduce the sound.

Sing echo songs following the baby's lead and incorporate the baby's name in songs and chants.

Jig, bounce and dance with your baby in time to music. Try singing, dancing and playing instruments with a CD: my CD *Sing and Play* is great for singing along.

Play music games such as "play and stop" to help the baby anticipate the stop. Play this game regularly to help the baby to learn to stop for the music cue using the track 'Walk and Stop' from my CD *Sing Baby Dance Baby*. Soon your baby will be leading you in this game without the use of the CD. Change the words of the song to: "Play and stop", "Play the drum", "Ring the bells" and so on.

Play pitch games using the track *Feet, Feet, Feet* on my CD *Sing Baby Dance Baby*. Use maracas to emphasise feet, knees, tummy, shoulders, head, as you sing up the five note scale C D E F G. You might like to play C D E F G on the chime bars as a cue.



Six - 12 months

Mini Rainmaker

Your baby is now listening, anticipating and increasingly copying actions and understanding the purpose of instruments. Give opportunities to experiment with a variety of instruments and sound objects such as pots and pans, wooden spoons and other sound-making utensils from the kitchen cupboard. Introduce action songs and echo games and imitate rhythmic patterns, loud/soft, fast/slow on drums and tambourines.



12 - 18 months

Four Keys Log Drum

The toddler is much more mobile - walking, climbing, exploring and has a vast array of babbling sounds. At this age children enjoy nursery rhymes, finger plays e.g *Insey Wincy Spider* and songs that require motor response. They learn problem-solving skills through musical play. Sing nursery rhymes as you play the beat on maraca, drum, tambourine together. This play helps the child to develop a strong sense of steady beat.

Develop sung music routines e.g "play and stop" (incorporate actions and movement), "instruments away", "time for lunch", "time for your bath", "time for bed". An instrument can be used to signal the specific routine. Use chants about eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc. Reinforce sensory understanding about body parts by softly shaking a maraca by the feet, knees, tummy, shoulders, head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc. Play this as a slow imitation game facing each other and give the child time to copy the action before moving to the next body part. Do lots of dancing together to drum or tambourine accompaniment.



18 months - 2 years

Claves

At this stage the child has increased language, realises that everything has a sound and a name and is able to remember and copy actions. The child often sings or hums while playing, enjoying vocal exploration. Children often repeat a word or words over and over. They join in with some words of familiar songs, especially at the ends of predictable phrases. They enjoy rhyme, word patterning and instrumental play. Children at this age tire easily and need the security of a routine. The musical form of a nursery rhyme or song provides a predictable beginning, middle and end.

Play lots of imitation games and follow the leader using drum, tambourine, chime bars, claves (rakau) and so on. Explore loud/soft, fast/slow, high/low. Dance with maracas playing along to familiar songs. Use chants and rhymes and accompany them with instruments. Read stories using instruments to reinforce different characters. ■

“Have fun singing, dancing and playing together. Through your interactive musical play you are laying the foundation of music for life for your child.”

Every Educaid specialises in attractive and engaging musical resources for children from birth. To discover our resources go to: www.everyeducaid.co.nz/catalogue/music.html See juliewyliemusic.com for musical play classes and professional development for teachers.



Julie Wylie founded the New Zealand Musical Parenting Association twenty two years ago. She is the founder of the music programme and senior music specialist at the Champion Centre, at Burwood Hospital, Christchurch, New Zealand. Julie has been invited to many countries to present music workshops and papers including Korea, Japan, Singapore, Australia, UK, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland. She has received awards for her music leadership and her music resources have won international awards. Julie also has her own music school for mothers and babies and children 0 – 8 years and her CDs are available online through Every Educaid.