

# Musical interactions

Young children love hearing and joining in with songs, rhymes, chants or music of any kind. They also enjoy moving their bodies to musical rhythms and patterns that they can hear and feel.



Children's early experiences of musical interactions support all aspects of their early development – especially in helping to develop their communication and language skills.

## Much more than just songs and rhymes

As well as children's traditional songs and rhymes, musical interactions can include lots of other ways in which sounds and words are shared in a musical way, such as:

- favourite pieces of music
- programme theme tunes or songs from movies
- musical ditties from adverts or children's programmes
- made-up songs, chants or musical phrases
- voice 'play' or 'games'
- songs or music that are a part of your background or culture



**Musical interactions are much more than just songs and rhymes**

## Musical speech

You might have noticed that adults often talk to babies and very young children using a slightly higher and more sing-song voice than they normally use. Their voices often swoop and glide as they speak and they tend to talk a little slower than normal. This way of talking is called '*motherese*' or '*parentese*' and babies and very young children love it!

This musical way of talking to your child is more expressive than normal speech. Exchanges often have a rhythmic quality to them as you and your child take it in turns to listen and respond.

These early conversations also tend to include lots of eye contact, facial expressions and gestures which help support children's understanding of words that they may not yet know.



## Mood music!

The sounds, movements, gestures and eye contact that are part of musical interactions allow for the communication of feelings and emotions which can extend far beyond the meaning of the words.

As they watch and listen, your child can pick up all sorts of positive messages about how you feel towards them – letting them know that they are loved and giving them the closeness and security that they are looking for.

With this in mind, music, songs and rhymes can be helpful in responding to how your child is feeling:

- action songs and rhymes are fun if they are in a playful mood

- cuddling or rocking to a gentle piece of music can help to soothe or quieten them – perhaps if they are tired or unwell

They can also be a useful distraction – if your child is a bit grizzly a made-up song, rhyme or chant might capture their interest and make them forget what they were grizzling about!



*“Twinkle twinkle little bat,  
how I wonder where you’re at.”*

### **Anytime, anyplace, anywhere!**

You and your child can share musical interactions anywhere – all you need are your voices! It doesn’t matter if you think you can’t sing in tune – your child certainly won’t mind and they will definitely appreciate your efforts!

It can be fun to use musical interactions as part of routines or everyday events:

- an energetic, active song at tidy up time
- a quiet, restful piece of music to snuggle up to at bedtime
- songs to sing-along to on car journeys



Your child will love listening to a collection of their favourite musical interactions – why not try recording some on your phone or tablet.

**Anytime is a good time for having a musical moment!**

### **Musical memories**

Songs, rhymes and music can create powerful memories. Think about *your* favourite musical interaction and then try to remember as much as you can about the memories that go with it.

These might include family members, people, places, smells, films, television or radio programmes, significant events etc. You might be surprised at how much you remember – possibly even the words to a song you haven't sung for years!

Musical interactions can be very engaging for young children (and adults!) and they often pay close attention as they watch and listen. This can help them to learn words more easily, particularly when they are part of a song or rhyme.

When you share songs, rhymes and music with your child you are creating musical memories together, as well as strengthening the bond between you.



**Enjoy making musical memories with your child.**

## Supporting communication and language

Listening to music, playing with words and sharing chants, songs and rhymes with your child will:

- increase their awareness of the sounds used for speaking – this also supports their early reading and writing
- offer opportunities to play with sounds and explore rhythmic patterns through movement
- encourage communication using eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and sounds
- help them to learn and understand new words and phrases by linking them with physical actions and movements.

**Musical interactions play an important part in supporting children's communication and language development.**