

4. Talk to your child about music: Music is everywhere. **From time to time, ask your child to listen to the music** and talk to them about whether or not they like it or how it makes them feel. Listening critically to music can help children to focus on tones, pitch, melody and rhythms.

5. Look out for local music activities: While opportunities to join in musical activities vary from area to area, it is worth seeing what is available locally. Some libraries, for example, have song and rhyme sessions that are free to attend.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Q. Is my three-year-old too young to start piano lessons?

A. Most piano teachers take the view that formal lessons are better when children are older than this. This means that most children are about six or seven when they first take up the piano. The advantage of waiting is that your child will already be used to concentrating and following instructions. **If you already have a piano or keyboard at home though, there is nothing to stop you from encouraging your child to explore how to make different sounds.**



Q. I want to sing with my son, but I can't sing in tune. Does this matter?

A. Many people say that they can't sing in tune, but the reality is that this is quite rare. The good news is that as long as you are giving it a go, your child will not mind. Interestingly, the more that you sing, the more you are likely to gain confidence and improve your own skills.

Q. Is it a good idea to use musical toys with babies and toddlers?

A. In theory anything goes, but it is worth trying to choose toys that play music carefully. **Think about the quality of the sound as well as how it will help your child to play and learn.**

Some toys such as microphones and recorders can be very motivating for children because they can be used in many ways; others such as 'mock keyboards', which only have pre-recorded tunes, are probably less useful.



ACTIVITIES TO BUILD MUSIC SKILLS

You may like to try out these simple activities, which can help to develop your child's awareness of music and develop some early skills.

Echoing back: A simple activity that can help your child listen is to **make a short sound either by clapping or singing and see if your child can echo it back.** A

good way to introduce this is to make a doorbell sound - 'Ding dong!' - and then repeat it again.

Wait a few seconds and see if your child echoes it back. Once your child is able to do this, start putting together three or four sounds and see if they can repeat it back.

Marching along: Marching music can be great to help children find, and also join in with, the beat. Look out for well-known tunes that you can download. Once you have found some marching music that you like, see if you and your child can move in time to the beat. If you are keen, **you could also try putting out an upturned wastepaper basket for your child to use as a drum.**

Musical Statues: Musical Statues is a traditional game that can help children develop listening skills. Put on some favourite music and dance together. When you stop the music, your child has to stay as still as possible. You could also do this by tapping out a rhythm and seeing if your child can stay still when the rhythm changes or stops. Musical games like these work really well if your child has friends over to play, or at birthday parties.