



## 5 Tips for Music Making at Home

### 1. Get stuck in, even if you don't consider yourself 'musical'

It's easy to allow our own judgements on our abilities and feelings of self-consciousness get in the way of giving something a go, especially for the first time, but don't be apprehensive – remember you are in the safety of the home environment! If you show willing and enthusiasm, you are far more likely to see this reflected back, and you might even surprise yourself as you learn and develop skills alongside your children.

Singing is one of the simplest and most accessible ways to make music, but there are many reluctant singers out there! Why not try letting your children take the lead? They will likely have already acquired a surprisingly wide repertoire and will relish teaching you their favourites. You may also find it helpful to sing along with recordings until you feel more confident. The Song Bank contains over 400 songs with filters for age range, topic and style to guide your choices.

### 2. Create your own musical instruments

You'll be amazed at how many sound-makers you actually have in your home!

- **Drums:** Tap wooden spoons on upturned buckets or robust cardboard boxes
- **Scrapers:** Run a pencil or pen over the ridges on cardboard vegetable trays or any corrugated material or surface.
- **Flappers:** Large envelopes or children's placemats make wonderful rustling sounds that can imitate pirates' sails, autumn leaves, washing on the line... be inventive!
- **Shakers:** Plastic milk/water bottles containing a little pasta, rice or dried pulses. Or, if you enjoy crafts, try drilling holes in milk bottle tops – thread each one on to a length of string, secured with a knot, just like conkers, then gather the tops and plait the strings together for a handle.

It's also worth rummaging through your children's baby toys for rattles and squeakers!

### 3. Use games and activities that can be repeated with variations

You don't need any musical qualifications to make music – just your voices, a few sound-makers, and a starting point. Save yourself a little planning time by having a few 'stock' activities and games that you can return to, and that can be adapted to keep them interesting. Here are some very straightforward and accessible ideas to get the creative juices flowing:



### **Name game**

- Sit in a group and maintain a slow-ish steady pattern made up of two claps followed by two knee pats.
- Choose an order so that everyone knows when it's their turn. Once the pattern is established, player 1 says their name during two 2 knee taps; player 2 says theirs during the following knee taps and so on.
- The idea is to keep the momentum going so that there's a continuous pattern of spoken names interrupted only by two claps, e.g. clap, clap, Simon, clap, clap, Rajesh, clap, clap, Sarah etc.
- When the game is fluent, ask participants to adopt the name of a fictional character instead, or name things they can see in the room, or types of food, modes of transport... the possibilities are endless!

### **Soundscapes**

- Choose a story that everyone knows, such as a traditional tale. Decide on 6 to 8 key points, e.g. 1: Cinderella does the housework; 2: The knock at the door as the invitation arrives; 3: Cinders weeps because she can't go to the ball etc.
- Players decide on sound-makers, instruments or voices, or a combination of these, to illustrate their 'scene' in improvised sounds.
- To set a timeframe for each soundscape, ask one participant to hold both hands above their head and move one arm round like a minute hand of a clock: a circular sweep lasting about 10-15 seconds.
- You could tell the story between the musical interludes and once the idea is established, try other stories or better still, invent new ones!

### **Sing a song of spoons**

- Delve into the cutlery drawer and raid the cooking utensils to find as many different kinds of spoons as possible. Discuss the various characteristics then divide the spoons among all players.
- Using the echo tune of 'Frère Jacques', one person sings the 'spoon' questions, (with variations supplied to suit your collection) and the person(s) with the appropriate spoon or spoons, sings the response e.g.

Who has a *wooden* spoon?      I have a *wooden* spoon (*plastic, metal, silver, copper, rubber...*)

Whose spoon is *red*?      My spoon is *red* (*blue, old, small, big, gold...*)

Who has one *with holes in*?      I have one *with holes in*? (*for cooking, for ice-cream, for pasta...*)

Can you play a *beat*?      I can play a *beat* (*everyone taps the beat as they sing*)

- Sing more verses and move the spoons around the group. You can also use this template to sing about crayons, cuddlies, books, buttons, shoes and more!



#### **4. Recycle well-known songs to make new ones**

We are all songwriters! It's a closely-guarded secret among music practitioners, but a cunning way to write a new song is to base it on a familiar tune. See how the melody of 'Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea' has metamorphosed into a 'new' song with lyrics that follow the syllabic/rhyme pattern of the original... it just couldn't be easier!

*Clap your hands and wiggle your fingers [x3]  
Now we've made a pattern*

Or try this ditty to 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes', inventing actions for each animal:

*Moose, monkey, kangaroo, kangaroo  
Moose, monkey, kangaroo, kangaroo  
And worm and owl and butterfly and flea  
Moose, monkey, kangaroo, kangaroo*

Other useful tunes to assist your family songwriting include: One finger, one thumb; Frère Jacques; The wheels on the bus; The farmer's in his den; The animals went in two by two; My bonnie lies over the ocean; Ten green bottles; London Bridge is falling down; There's a hole in my bucket; The Hokey Cokey; If you're happy and you know it... and I'm sure you can think of many, many more!

#### **5. Set mini projects for independent music-making**

This is a great way to give older children freedom to explore their creativity and produce something of their own. The projects should have creative outcomes, for example, writing their own song to a familiar tune, composing an accompaniment with all the sound makers you've unearthed, or rehearsing for a grand home concert. Video the performances on your phone or iPad to share with other family members, friends and teachers.

A good creative springboard is to choose a suitably short cartoon film from YouTube. Press the mute button and invite children to create a new bespoke background accompaniment to reflect the storyline.