



Singing & Music: How to Promote Language in Young Children



Children began to communicate the moment they are born.

From coos to cries, right away parents learn their child's communication without the use of words. One fun way parents can interact and play with their child is through music. Music can serve many communicative purposes. Singing a soft lullaby to a tired child can drift the child to sleep. Participating in finger play songs can add excitement and dance during play time. Reciting a familiar tune may help a child complete a different difficult task during a daily routine. When singing with the child, there are certain strategies to keep in mind in order to promote language and social development.

Position yourself to sit face to face with your child:

This helps build eye contact and allows for the child to watch face facial expressions and physical movements to build imitation and social experiences.

Sing familiar songs that are of high interest to the child

If it catches the child interest, keep on singing! Songs may include:

- Nursery rhymes such as "Old MacDonald," "Twinkle twinkle little star," "5 little monkeys," "If you're happy and you know it"
- Made-up lyrics to a familiar tune that is special to the parent and child
- Lyrics to their favorite song on the radio or movie

Sing at a slower rate

The rate at which you sing will help the child learn the songs words and actions. This provides time for the child to hear each word and attempt imitation of the word or gesture

- Once a song becomes familiar, playing with the rates (fast or slow) will further develop a child awareness of rhythm
- Clapping, hitting a bowl like a drum, or shaking a noisemaker allows the child to participate and feel the rhythm of the song.



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Establish purposeful opportunities for imitation

-Pause, wait, and look expectantly

-Integrate this strategy right before there is a highly familiar word or at a child's favorite part of the song. Often these words are emphasized, repeated and R at the end of a phrase in the song examples include:

" Twinkle twinkle little... STAR!"

"Row row row your... BOAT"

"Itsy bitsy spider went.... UP!"

-If the child does not immediately imitate, emphasize the word and continues singing. If the word is paired with an action such as up, assist the child in raising both hands up in the air

Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Children learn through repetition, therefore the child may request the parent to sing the same song over and over again. This will assist the child in learning and understanding the lyrics of the song, eventually allowing the child to sing along with their parents.

What if my child does not show interest in participating after using the above strategies?

A parent can observe their child play by watching which toys they take more interest in.. Join in their play and add rhythm and words to describe the actions and objects. For example, if the child is stacking blocks, sing " stack, stack, stack, the block" or "or knock it down, knock it down, boom boom boom!"

Another way to engage the child is to incorporate more movement. Turn on the radio or the favorite CD. March or dance around the room. Encourage the child to join in and participate by imitating the marching or silly dance moves. Finally, having other siblings or peers join in song and play can encourage the child to participate. Singing "ring around the Rosie" or "the hokey pokey" with other young children can increase the child's interest in joining in musical play.