

Out and About with Preschoolers: Make Some Music



It's a beautiful day to be outdoors with the children. Go ahead—take music outside! Preschoolers can have fun investigating dynamics, rhythm, and other elements of music while they participate in music activities outdoors.



Outside is a great place to play with dynamics

- Choose a place outside where children can sing with big voices, without disturbing anyone. Let them sing songs they know, as loudly as they want. Then invite them to clap hands, stamp feet, or play rhythm instruments loudly. Ask, “What did you do to make those loud sounds?”
- Ask the children to use their voices, hands, feet, or instruments to make the softest sounds they can. Invite them to talk about what they did to produce the quiet sounds.
- Encourage the children to change their dynamics gradually, moving from loud to soft, then soft back to loud.
- Try call-and-response activities. The children can stand in two lines facing each other a few yards apart. Using songs or chants such as “Did You Feed My Cow?”, one side will be the callers, and the other side will respond. Ask the children to vary the loudness: “This time, the callers whisper, and the other side can shout.”



Outdoor rhythm activities let children make music together

- Ask the children to stand in two lines, a few yards apart. Help children in each group take turns using their hands and feet to create sound patterns for the other group to copy, such as “Clap-stomp, clap-stomp.” Let them invent complex rhythms, too!
- Help children form a rhythm band. Start with two groups. One group might be the Clappers and the other group the Stompers. Stand where both groups can see you. Tell them, “When I point to the Stompers, people in that group stomp one foot one time. When I point to the Clappers, people in that group clap one time.” At first, direct slowly with very simple rhythms. Then try harder patterns such as “Clap-clap-stomp-stomp-clap.” You might add a group that slaps knees or says a word such as “beep” or “pizza.” Let children try directing the band.



Action songs bring movement and music together

- Show the children how to play active singing games such as swaying back and forth while holding hands for “London Bridge” and making a “window” with a partner’s arms for the song “Bluebird through My Window.”
- Invite children to invent expressive movements for well-known action songs such as holding and rocking back and forth for “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or holding up the correct number of fingers while singing each verse of “Alice the Camel.”
- Make action songs a regular part of your gathering time. “Hokey Pokey,” “Head Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” and “I’m a Little Tea Pot” are familiar favorites.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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