



# early EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

*A pack of ideas for music-making activities  
with children aged 0-5*

## Get Playing!

The activities in this pack are laid out in three easy stages, so just move between them when the children are ready. There's no musical notation and all of the songs use familiar tunes.

The reverse of each card also gives tips on useful equipment, extension ideas and an interesting fact about music making.



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

This Early Ears pack has been developed by soundLINCS especially for use at home. It draws upon professional experiences gathered over a decade of music-making with young children.

soundLINCS' acclaimed First Notes programme and resources have enabled thousands of pre-school children to make music, contributing to their social awareness, creativity, coordination and listening skills.

Early Ears brings this expertise right into the home, opening up a whole library of ideas for music-related activities suitable for children aged 0-5. The activities are fun and accessible for all parents and carers to enjoy with their children. The activities also support the Early Learning Goals, especially in the Area of Learning and Development.

For more information about our projects and more music resources please visit [www.soundlincs.org](http://www.soundlincs.org)

Make the most of music-making - it's never too soon to get those Early Ears tuned in!



# early

## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## HELLO SONG



### TRY THIS!



### Step 1

Hello songs help you and the children to focus on making music together. Chant words which are simple and repetitive so that children can learn them easily and join in quickly, or adapt familiar rhymes and songs to incorporate the children's own names. For example use the tune of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star to sing "Sarah, Sarah, how are you? Sarah, Sarah, how are you? "

### Step 2

Conducting the song – or inviting one of the participants to be the conductor - encourages participation: either simply wave your arms in time to the tune or use scarves or wooden spoons to increase visibility. Incorporating children's names into the words creates a song which is unique to the group on the day that it is made.

### Step 3

Once a steady beat (pulse) has been established, it can be emphasised by clapping, stamping or drumming. Conducting also equips the leader with a method for varying the volume (dynamics) or speed (tempo). Try moving on from simple name games to creating a song based on a theme - transport or animals perhaps – when dynamics and tempo can help set the scene.



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## HELLO SONG



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Voices for singing, supported by lots of energetic body movements. A clear space within which to work in is also a good idea.



#### Fun for all

For children whose first language is not English, increase their sense of involvement by finding out how to say (and sing) 'Hello' in the appropriate home languages. If English is the only language spoken at home, there will be a sense of achievement by learning 'Hello' in other languages – try French, German, Italian, Polish or Gujerati, for example.



#### Did you know...?

A baby is born with very sophisticated hearing and can work out where a sound is coming from in their first day of life. Hearing is fully developed during the first month of life.





# early

## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### ROLLER COASTER



#### TRY THIS!



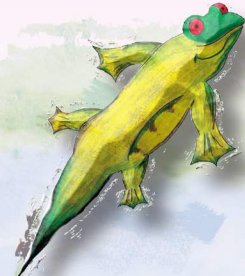
#### Step 1

Encourage babies and young children to make a wide variety of vocal sounds and share the fun by echoing back. Use pictures and real objects as visual stimuli and build up a repertoire of vocal sounds. Almost anything can be used for this, from farmyard animals (cows 'Moo' or sheep 'Baa') and toy cars ('Brrmm') to pictures of little babies or young animals 'Ahhh'). There is no right or wrong - simply enjoy exploring vocal sounds together.



#### Step 2

This is a good activity for warming up and exploring the voice. Ask children to make a humming sound. Encourage them to vary the pitch as if their voice was a carriage on a roller coaster, or link the humming sound to a lift going up and down.



#### Step 3

Draw roller coaster shapes with the children and hum to the drawing as if following a musical score. Then try varying the speed of the movement so that sound travels from its lowest point to its highest point over the period of an agreed number of counts or claps. The musical idea of dynamics can also be introduced at this point by exploring when the loudest or quietest levels are reached.





FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## ROLLER COASTER



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Voices, plus lots of visual stimuli like books, pictures, toys or objects from around the home or from the pre-school environment



#### Fun for all

A good activity to support hearing-impaired children is to feel vibrations in the throat as the sound goes up and down. You could lead this activity by encouraging the child to touch your throat while you make vocal sounds. Then help the child to touch their own throat and experimenting different with sounds. Actively involve hearing-impaired children when working with pitch by using actions, such as raising and lowering arms to show a lift going up and down. Show pictures wherever possible - like images of people getting into a lift - in order to put the activity into context. This is especially valuable for those with English as an Additional Language, and for hearing-impaired children.



#### Did you know...?

A happy baby is a busy baby. Finding enjoyment in making noise is one of the most exciting early experiences that babies and toddlers have. And one of the most important aspects of this enjoyment comes from sharing the excitement with other children and adults.



# early

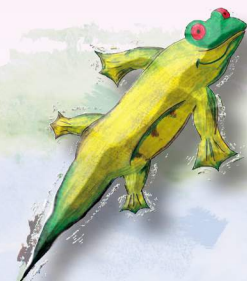
## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### COPY CAT STICKS



#### TRY THIS!



#### Step 1

Start by slowly chanting or singing familiar nursery rhymes like Humpty Dumpty or Mary, Mary Quite Contrary, and clap or tap out each syllable. With babies and very young toddlers, hold their hands and clap it with them. As the children progress, use basic instruments like shakers, rattles and even sticks on empty tins to explore the different rhythms of these rhymes.

#### Step 2

Equip each child with a pair of sticks and encourage them to tap out the syllables of a simple song – try this to the tune for ‘The Wheels on the Bus.’  
*We’re tapping a pattern with the sticks, with the sticks, with the sticks.*  
*We’re tapping a pattern with the sticks, while we sing.*  
Extend the activity to use a wider range of instruments then take the singing away to leave a percussion band.

#### Step 3

Invent a short rhythm to tap out with your sticks and ask the children copy you. Then ask each child to invent a rhythmic phrase for everyone else to copy – perhaps based on favourite foods or TV programmes. The game can be repeated using other percussion instruments and be developed to include a steady beat (pulse) to emphasise the musical context.



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## COPY CAT STICKS



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Voices and hands, plus wooden dowel sticks (make sure they are sanded smooth and have rounded ends). Around the home or pre-school, try kitchen percussion like wooden spoons, spatulas, saucepan lids or empty cartons.



#### Fun for all

The use of music/rhyme whilst holding a child's hands and clapping together can be a positive means of encouraging fun and focused engagement with those children who find interaction a challenge. For participants with limited manual dexterity, one stick tapped on the floor or a box will be easier to manipulate than a pair of sticks.



#### Did you know...?

Approximately 90% of the brain's motor control capabilities are devoted to the hands, mouth and throat. With this in mind, experts say that the fine dexterity involved with playing an instrument can exercise the entire brain and stimulate general intelligence.





# early

## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### TALKING DRUMS



#### TRY THIS!



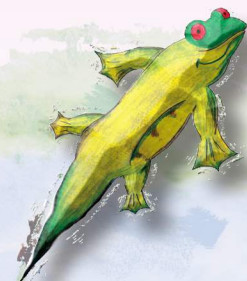
#### Step 1

For babies and very young toddlers, use basic percussion instruments like saucepans and wooden spoons, boxes and sticks, spoons on trays or even just hands on table tops, to explore what sounds can be made. Start echoing back the patterns made by the young child, or act as the leader by inviting children to be the echo.



#### Step 2

Sit two children on opposite sides of a large drum or table and invite them to take turns to play to each other, as if they are having a conversation. At this stage the emphasis is on turn-taking and the drumming can be free. The game can be developed to include defined 'copy cat' rhythms or through tapping the syllables of questions and answers – for example 'How are you?' could be followed by 'I am hungry'.



#### Step 3

Invite the observing children to comment on the drum conversation they have just heard and discuss whether it was, for example, angry or friendly, playful or secret. Another variation would be for the leader to beat a steady pulse which the participants can match during their drum conversations. This game works equally well on a 1:1 basis, in pairs or small groups.





FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## TALKING DRUMS



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Voices and hands, big drum or table top, saucepans, plastic cartons or tins



#### Fun for all

With free drumming, anything is acceptable, making it a truly flexible and inclusive activity for all abilities and ages. For children on the autistic spectrum, Talking Drums can be a great way of working towards increased awareness of others with its emphasis on sharing and turn-taking.



#### Did you know...?

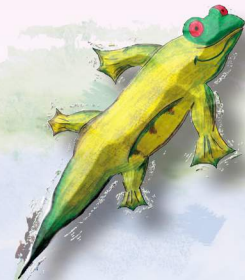
As a musician constantly adjusts decisions on tempo, tone, style, rhythm, phrasing and feeling, he/she trains the brain to become incredibly good at organizing and conducting numerous activities at once.



## SCARF WAVING



### TRY THIS!



### Step 1

Using chiffon scarves or scraps of lightweight material, this activity promotes coordination and spatial awareness and is a starting point for dance. Each child selects a scarf and is encouraged to explore its movement by throwing it into the air, watching it descend and trying to catch it before it lands. Hold the scarf in one hand and swirl it around at different speeds, then use both hands to wave it around – fast and slow, high and low, learning how much effort is needed to control the movement.

### Step 2

Replace the verbal instructions with simple drumming or clapping, relating the movement of the scarves to a beat (pulse) and a speed (tempo). This could be played by a small percussion ensemble: this extension can then develop to involve two different groups – one following a slow drum beat and the other following the faster tempo of a shaker.

### Step 3

Use recorded music as a backdrop to making the scarves 'dance', either by playing a pre-recorded compilation, or creating your own play-list with a selection of your own favourites, chosen to broaden the participants' range of musical experiences. Try finishing the session with some serene music to allow the children to 'wind down'.



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## SCARF WAVING



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Chiffon scarves or scraps of lightweight material around a meter square, plus drums, shakers or 'junk' percussion instruments and a CD featuring a range of different musical extracts. Plenty of space within which to work is also essential.



#### Fun for all

Encouraging children to listen to music provides opportunities to promote cultural diversity by featuring, for example, Indian ragas or traditional folk music from Eastern Europe. Explore the world of music using the internet or your local library.



#### Did you know...?

Positive proof that music is the best mind trainer comes from Oxford University. Only ten percent of the students there study music, yet this ten percent takes 75 percent of all the school prizes and scholarships. This is not the record for a specific year, but the average over a period of 30 successive years.





# early

## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### MUSIC & MOVEMENT



#### TRY THIS!



#### Step 1

With baby on your knee facing you, make high vocal sounds and hold baby high, then swoop your voice down and pretend baby falls through your legs. As toddlers become more communicative, increasingly engage them by asking, 'Up? Or down?' and modulate your voice accordingly. Add surprise (and excitement) by not always doing what they expect.

#### Step 2

Choose high and low sounds from the resources to hand – if a tuned instrument like a keyboard is not available, try a triangle for high sounds and a large drum or box for lower notes. Or even simply whistle! Ask the participants to reach up tall when they hear the high note and touch the floor when they hear the low one. Vary the order in which the sounds are played and encourage the children to move according to what they hear. Children can take turns to lead by playing the sounds to which the rest of the group react.

#### Step 3

Ask the children to move round the room when the sounds are being played and stand still when the noise stops, making a tall shape if the last sound was 'high' and a shape on the floor if the sound was 'low'. Explore the musical instruments at your disposal: is there a sound that could represent the middle of the range?



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## MUSIC & MOVEMENT



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Voices, high-pitched instruments like triangles or the top (right) end of a keyboard, and low-sounding instruments like large drums, boxes, or the low (left) end of a keyboard.



#### Fun for all

Hearing-impaired children can be encouraged to engage in this activity if the sounds are supported by visual clues, like holding the instrument up high or stretching to the ceiling when a high-pitched note is being played. Children with limited mobility can also join in by being encouraged to make any possible movement, up and down, or left and right, to indicate high-low sounds.



#### Did you know...?

When learning a song, a musical instrument, or a dance step, your child experiences the unique integration of body and mind that music provides. Sensory integration is a crucial factor in children's learning readiness for school subjects such as reading, writing, and math. Music improves spatial-temporal reasoning, a neurological process needed to understand mathematics.



# early

## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### WASHING LINE SCRAPER



#### TRY THIS!



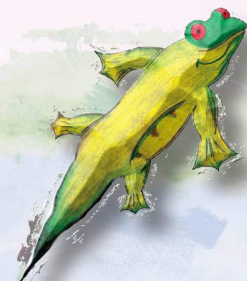
#### Step 1

There are lots of rattles and shakers available commercially which are designed specifically for use by children under three. Encourage play with these and begin to engage your children in listening to different rhythmic patterns, and in varying the beat (pulse), speed (tempo) and volume (dynamics),



#### Step 2

Encourage the supervised exploration of sound-makers found amongst household products –shake boxes of cereal for instance, or crunch empty packets. Then try making instruments from ‘junk’ materials: to turn an empty plastic bottle into a ‘guiro’ or scraper, first wash and dry the bottle and remove any labels. Wrap washing line around the outside of the bottle, glue in place and secure each end with insulation tape. Once the glue has dried, play along with your favourite song by scraping a stick up and down the washing line.



#### Step 3

Play the guiro with the bottle top on and then off, and compare the sound. Create guiros of different sizes and again explore the differences in sound. Partly fill the guiro with loose materials like dried pasta shapes or lentils so that it doubles up as a shaker.





FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## WASHING LINE SCRAPER



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

Plastic bottle with screw top, plastic washing line, glue, insulation tape, plus lollipop stick or pencil and dried pasta or lentils.



#### Fun for all

Making musical instruments crosses all boundaries of language and ability. Join together in making something fun and creative out of junk materials.



#### Did you know...?

The history of musical instruments may be traced back in Europe for some 25,000 years. As far back as the early Stone Age man learned how to cut teeth in a bone and produce a rasping noise by rubbing it against a rough surface. These ancient instruments, served for ritual purposes, driving away evil spirits and to induce fear and terror.





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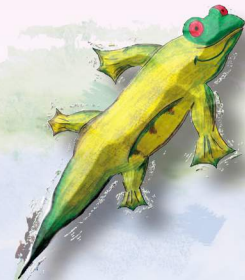
## EARS

FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

### THUNDERSTORM



#### TRY THIS!



#### Step 1

Heighten awareness of sounds around us: take time to listen to thunderstorms, hail storms, rain dripping on the roof or children splashing in puddles. Indoors, listen to water being poured from a watering can on to a hard surface or into sand, and then find or make musical instruments which make similar sounds.

#### Step 2

Recreate a thunderstorm in music! To the tune of 'The Grand Old Duke of York', sing and play.....

We are going to make a storm, that's full of different sounds

Like RAIN that beats on every roof and SPLASHES on the ground (play shakers)

The THUNDER crashing loud (bang drums and stamp feet)

The LIGHTNING zigzag rays (scrapers)

The sunshine has come out at last. Our storm has moved away (stop playing)

#### Step 3

The instruments and ideas in brackets are just starting points. Involve the children in deciding which instruments or vocal sounds they would use to recreate the thunderstorm. Make up other 'soundscapes' – perhaps with a seaside or countryside theme.



FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

## THUNDERSTORM



### TOP TIPS



#### What will you need?

The world around us, supported by pictures of rain and lightning, dark clouds and wind-swept landscapes. Indoors, play with water, a watering can, shakers, scrapers, rain stick, voices and drums.



#### Fun for all

Put these activities into context for children with English as an Additional Language and for hearing-impaired or linguistically-challenged participants by continually supporting words with pictures. Pair up elements of a storm with musical instruments which capture the sounds made – such as using shakers to reflect splashes or scrapers to represent lightning.



#### Did you know...?

The harmonica is the world's best-selling music instrument, with around 20 million units retailed every year. It is also the first instrument to be played on a space flight in December 1965 by astronaut Walter "Wally" Schirra who used it to play Jingle Bells.

## Why Music?

# early EARS

## FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

Music-making has existed for thousands of years. Evidence of primitive musical instruments has been found amongst the remains of the earliest civilisations, whilst the roots of some of our favourite nursery rhymes, carols and folk songs can be traced back over many centuries.

In recent times, the benefits of music-making have been studied, documented and applauded. For young children especially it helps with developing social, communication and coordination skills. It is known to be great fun, a value acknowledged formally in the National Plan for Music Education.

Through its Early Years Music programmes, soundLINCS provides music-making activities specifically for young children, their parents, carers and Early Year Practitioners. The ideas contained within the resource packs developed to support these programmes enable children and adults alike to enjoy making music without any need for expensive instruments or complicated equipment. None of the activities use musical notation and the inclusion of plenty of well-known tunes ensures anyone can join in.

Music-making is easy, creative, sociable and, above all, enjoyable. Have fun!



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FIRST STEPS INTO MUSIC

**soundLINCS** - is a not-for-profit community music organisation working throughout the East Midlands

- **soundLINCS** provides a quality service for Lincolnshire and the East Midlands which enhances, enables and encourages the development of music through activities, advocacy and access to information
- **soundLINCS** instigates, devises, manages and delivers a large and mixed programme of participatory music projects throughout the East Midlands
- **soundLINCS** offers help, support, advice and information in all aspects of participatory music for both communities and musicians
- **soundLINCS** works with groups of all ages, sizes, abilities, musical experiences and genres

Early Ears

First Steps Into Music

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