



Here's 10 simple ideas that will help keep you and your children occupied while encouraging them to explore and learn about music.

1) Create homemade instruments with household items



Creating instruments together can be a fun activity and the instruments can then be used to explore different aspects of music.

Try creating shakers by using pasta and rice in empty bottles.

You could also try using bottles either filled with varying degrees of water or empty and scraping them with spoons or twigs to make sounds, or just upturned pans and colanders.

2) Make your own simple guitar



Using tissue boxes, shoe boxes without the lids or cardboard you can create a string-type instrument.

Use the box for the base of the instrument and take four to six rubber bands. Wrap the rubber bands around the base, the long way, and make sure there is space between the rubber bands. Experiment with ways of making sounds with the bands.

Also try using small pieces of sandpaper wound round a finger of each hand to rub together and create sounds.

3) Think about and use the sounds of daily life



Together with your child you could explore the sounds heard on different journeys.

For example:

- What does the journey to the park sound like – what may we hear on the way?
- A journey around a supermarket will involve a range of different sounds.
- A journey to school, whether by foot, by bus or in a car will also involve a range of sounds.

Listen out for sounds with your child and think about how these sounds could be

recreated at home?

You could make a piece of music together that represents different types of journeys that you make.

Are there any surprises on your journey and what may this sound like?

Invite your child to draw a journey and then play this journey by using body percussion, vocals and sound makers in the home.

4) Use drawing to think about music



Drawing to sounds and music can be a lovely listening activity, you can invite your child to ‘dance with their hands’ whilst using their crayons, pencils, felt tips, paint brushes, encouraging them to listen to the music and respond to the music through their visual art.

You can explore this with different types of music – watch your child, do the contrasting sections affect how they draw or paint?

Experiment with different types of music, does your child have a preference for pieces of music to draw/paint to?

5) Build on the anticipation in songs



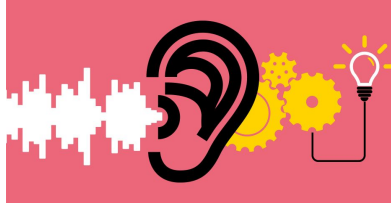
Anticipation can be a key aspect in music, for example listening to hear what is going to happen next as a piece of music builds.

You can explore anticipation by playing vocally with your child and use movement to accompany this, e.g., start with your hands together and gradually move them apart whilst accompanying this movement with a vocal sound, keep moving the vocals as you move your hands apart and end this game by bringing your hands back together to clap.

Once you have introduced this you can then wait for your child to clap and end the game so that they have the power to build up and release the tension, building excitement and anticipation.

All of this can be done through the use of sound and without the need to speak or use words.

6) Listening skills



Getting children to explore music and describe what they hear is a useful way to help them grow their listening skills.

Pick a piece of music to play and while listening to it ask children some simple questions about what they hear e.g.

- How could you describe this music?
- What sounds can you hear in this music?
- How does this music make you feel?
- What does this music make you think of?

Listening and describing in this way can really help a child's communication development.

7) Play along to music



All children love to make a noise and playing instruments along to a song is a great way of experiencing and exploring dynamics - the volume of sound of a piece of music.

Invite your child to play as quietly or loudly as they can with different sound makers or body percussion, e.g. how loudly can we clap our hands, how quietly can we tap a pan with a spoon?

Playing along is also a great way to discover the pulse of a song – essentially the heartbeat of the music, also referred to as a steady beat.

Typically the pulse is what people tap their foot to or dance along to when listening to music.

Using a sleeping puppet, invite your child to wake it up by playing loudly and when it goes to sleep to play quietly.

Using a pop-up puppet, you can gradually move the puppet up and down and ask your child to play gradually louder and gradually quieter.

This also works with an umbrella, gradually opening and closing it.

8) Explore the different instruments that make up a song



Try playing games and activities as a way of identifying how a variety of instruments combine to make a piece of music

Watch this performance by the BBC Philharmonic orchestra of I am a Robot.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/bring-the-noise/bbc-philharmonic-i-am-a-robot/zfjq92p>

Different instruments in the orchestra have different roles in the music.

Listen out for the sounds of families of instruments and the role they have in the music.

Instrument families from the orchestra are:

- Brass – *instruments such as trumpets, trombones, tuba*
- Strings – *instruments such as cello, violin, viola*
- Percussion – *instruments such as drum kit, cymbals, xylophone*
- Woodwind – *instruments such as flute, clarinet and saxophone*
- Keyboard – *instruments such as piano, keyboard, organ*

The different instrument families taking part in I am a Robot can be spotted by the different colour shirts the musicians are wearing.

You can play games to explore this with children, whilst listening you could stand up when you hear a brass sound, parents could represent the brass section whilst the children could, for example, represent the string section and stand when the strings play.

This is a great way to encourage active listening.

9) Make your own sounds



A great way of exploring music is to experiment with sounds that can be created with mouths.

Why not think about:

- What sounds can we make with our lips?
- What sounds can we make with our tongues?
- What sounds can we make with our teeth?

Try encouraging children to describe the sounds they make. By doing this you will be exploring different sounds and encouraging active listening.

Playing with mouth sounds is a physical exercise which supports children's muscles in their mouths, which in turn helps their speech development.

Explore the kitchen – pots and pans are always useful to encourage the exploration of sounds e.g. tapping a pan with a spoon creates a different sound when you tap or 'swish' a pan with your hand.

Experiment with how many different sounds can be found by playing with kitchen utensils or things you can find outside, e.g. leaves and twigs.

10) Get moving to music



Tempo refers to the speed in music and a great way for children to explore this is physically.

Invite your child to move whilst listening to music and watch how they respond, then follow and copy their ideas.

Copying their physical ideas will show them you value their ideas.

Some children may find physically expressing their response to music much more natural than talking about or playing instruments with the music.

Try experimenting with a wide range of genres of music and watch how your child responds.

Experimenting with music with a range of tempo can be really good fun.

Zorba the Greek is a great example to try out as the tempo in the music gradually increases.

Listening to music from around the world, from a range of cultures will offer children rich listening experiences.