

MUSICAL TOTS

SUZUKI EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION HANDBOOK

About the Music

The music on the recording includes traditional folk songs, lullabies and rhymes. You may be singing some at home already or your parents may have sung them to you. All tell simple stories or describe experiences that can be related to by all.

What to Do at Home

Play the recording at home at different times of the day. Dance with your child letting them feel body movement and the beat. Small children love to be bounced, walked and wheeled around the room to music. Hum or sing to them as you perform routine activities with your baby, such as changing or feeding to establish special listening times.

You can use the lullabies (tracks 40–62) for quiet time or bedtime. Mothers are encouraged to learn a new lullaby or song each week until all words are memorised.

Each family is also encouraged to use other music (for example Eine Kleine Nachtmusik by Mozart or any music played in the class) to help create a beautiful listening environment at home.

It is important that your child hears you sing the songs and the rhymes many times. They will eventually repeat them too. This experience will help lay the foundation for speaking and reading and the basis of pitch and rhythm. Repetition of the familiar is very important for the young child's emotional and cognitive development. The repetition on the recording is intended to provide many opportunities for this development.

Musical Tots Skill List

Babies and toddlers develop many of the following skills through the use of this repertoire of lullabies, nursery rhymes and action songs. As you repeat them at home, you will begin to observe your baby trying to imitate your sound. They will watch the actions and gradually begin to do them. Enjoy this process and celebrate each new development, just as you do when your baby utters those first few words.

Listening and Sequencing Skills

- Follows simple directions
- Listens carefully
- Recognises common sounds
- Repeats a sequence of sounds

Understanding Size

- Big sound, small sound
- Big movement, small movement

Pitch and Motion Skills

- High, low, up, down
- Fast, slow, left, right

Number Skills

- Counts orally 1–10
- Counts fingers
- Knows finger numbers

Motor Skills

- Walks, jumps, hops, runs, marches to music
- Claps to music
- Passes ball to music
- Finger plays (Incy, Wincy Spider)

Social–Emotional Development

- Meets teacher without shyness in weekly class
- Can move away from parent comfortably
- Maintains self–control
- Develops independence

Vocabulary Skills

- Acquires language
- Communicates
- Memorises

What is appropriate for your child’s development

In the first five years of life, children learn an incredible number of words and can accurately use these to control the world around them successfully to get what they need and want. Non–mobile infants and toddlers absorb and organise a great deal of information about the world around them. They do this every time adults talk or sing to them and bring them objects to observe and manoeuvre.

In the Musical Tots class, the babies in the mother’s arms love the sound of the triangle in Hickory Dickory Dock (played on the words “the clock struck **one**”). The teacher offers the mallet to each baby and moves the triangle close to the mallet just at the moment of striking. It is important to note that there is no pressure for the child to take the mallet. If the child hesitates, the teacher offers it to Mum. The sound produced is still close to baby and therefore a personal experience for each child. It is very important that Mum learn “to wait” for the moment when the child willingly grasps the mallet. This is the developmentally appropriate moment.

Adults play a vital socialisation role. Warm positive relationships with adults help infants develop a sense of trust in the world and feelings of confidence. These are critical for the development of self–esteem. The trusted adult becomes the secure base from which the mobile infant or toddler explores the environment. This trust is destroyed if

an adult tries to coax or force a child to do something they are not ready to do. The most appropriate teaching technique for this age group is to give ample opportunities for the children to use self-initiated repetition to practice newly acquired skills and to experience feelings of independence and success.

The Musical Tots classes are designed to give every child a “turn”, thus allowing for many repetitions of a song or rhyme. Children respond positively to repetition. Adults, however, often become impatient and wonder aloud “when will Johnny take a turn?”. The secret of developmentally appropriate activity rests within the adult who has observed the child carefully enough to know when sufficient observation by the child has produced the willingness to boldly try an activity for the first time. Cajoling, coercion, forcing and begging do not often produce good and lasting results.

The Suzuki Philosophy

If you haven’t already, please read “Nurtured by Love” by Dr Shinichi Suzuki.

Dr Suzuki (1898–1998) was a Japanese violinist and accomplished teacher whose career spanned over 50 years. He studied children and the way in which they learn. Encouraged by their ability to assimilate their “mother tongue”, he saw great opportunity to enrich children’s lives through music, but he also recognised the unique contribution music can make in the total learning process. The purpose of Suzuki training is not to produce great artists, but to help every child find the joy that comes from music-making.

In “Ability from Age Zero” (another book by Dr Suzuki and worth reading), Dr Suzuki made a plea to all parents, “please, prepare the best environment for your child. Parent and child should grow together looking forward to the future.” The CD and handbook will help you create that good environment.

How to Apply the Suzuki Philosophy to Suzuki Early Childhood Education

Suzuki Early Childhood Education seeks to build on the child’s natural delight in learning and lays the foundation for life long learning that meets Dr Suzuki’s goals for all children.

The following concepts provide the basis for a Suzuki ECE class:

- Every Child Can Learn
- Ability Develops Early
- Environment Nurtures Growth
- Children Learn from One Another
- Parental Involvement Is Critical
- Encouragement is Essential
- Success Breeds Success

How to Create a Stimulating Home Environment

Children learn more than you can guess in their first few years. The musical opportunities which you expose them to will provide a solid foundation from which to build.

Babies love to make sounds and move rhythmically. They need models which they can copy. Parents can talk, hum and sing to their babies while changing, bathing, dressing or feeding. Repetition of the rhymes and songs is very important.

Play the recording, but remember that your baby needs to hear your voice singing too. They may not be able to understand the words but they are able to absorb them. Early music interaction between parent and baby can enhance the development of their communication and perception skills.

Surround your child with a musical environment by playing other music too. Choose a piece of music by Vivaldi, Bach or Mozart (even from your last trimester). This music will provide a comforting environment for your baby like a favourite blanket or pacifier can.

It is never too early to start reading aloud. Your infant/toddler will respond eagerly to the comfort of a familiar lap, and the words and pictures of first books. Choose books that you will enjoy reading bright colours and clear, uncluttered illustrations. Hold them so they can focus on the page and if they grab the book, give them a rattle or something to hold while listening. Keep the reading short at first and lengthen when your child is ready for more. Reading aloud to your children is the single most important activity contributing to their eventual success in reading.

What to Expect at your Musical Tots Class

Infants and toddlers learn through the senses and through social interaction. A musical environment filled with songs and rhymes will train the ears and music senses of babies. Ring-A-Ring-A-Rosie and Pop Goes the Weasel are great favourites because of the catchy and simple melodies and the anticipation of the ending. The song Humpty Dumpty allows baby to experience feelings of rhythm, the surprise of the up and down motion with their whole body while enjoying the sound and rhythm of the language. A child learns their mother tongue through listening and imitation in the beginning stages. It is a joyful experience and this can be the way with all learning.

In the Musical Tots class, "taking turns" develops independence and allows the child to learn patience, confidence and sharing. The many opportunities for observation of other children "doing" reinforces skill development. Building a tower with plastic tubs we use as drums is a favourite activity. After the tower is built, we can count them, not only in English but other languages spoken in the class.

Careful observation of the child is very important. Dr Suzuki reminds parents "to enjoy the moment". Each week, parents note their child's newest accomplishment in a book. These brief anecdotal reports can be as simple as "Sarah willingly played the wood clock today with the teacher's help". It is important that the adult in "Sarah's" life celebrate this small step – a step toward independence and increased confidence. Careful observation will mean many opportunities to celebrate even the smallest steps in learning.