



I. Why Music and Movement Are Important

From a very early age, children respond to music. Infants smile when adults sing to them. They turn their heads toward toys and mobiles that make sounds. They react to noises in their environment. As children grow, their interest in music continues, and they begin to hum, sing, and create their own rhymes and chants.

Young children respond to music with their entire bodies. As children develop coordination, they sway, dance, bounce up and down, clap hands, and stamp their feet to music. When provided with props such as pots and pans, wooden spoons, and (later on) musical instruments, they discover ways to create music and sound and to combine music with movement.



Music can also affect children's moods. Quiet, comforting music can help them relax and fall asleep, whereas a lively march can invite them to parade around the room and sing. Music gives children many opportunities for creative self-expression. Children naturally connect movement with music. Listening to music allows them to explore what their bodies can do and to become aware of how their bodies move in space. For all ages, music and movement experiences enhance language development and listening skills, physical coordination, and the ability to put feelings into words or actions.



Here are some ways in which music and movement activities support growth and development.

Children develop thinking skills by:

- Linking sounds to their source (turning toward a musical mobile while resting in crib).
- Discovering cause and effect (banging a pan with a wooden spoon and saying ‘make noise!’).
- Distinguishing sounds (making different sounds with musical instruments and recognizing differences in volume, tempo, and tone).
- Applying knowledge (replicating the sound of a drum beat on a record by beating on the bottom of a pan).
- Solving problems (learning how to shake maracas or bang a xylophone to produce musical sounds).

Children develop socially by:

- Sharing experiences with others (playing “Ring Around the Rosy”).
- Making friends (“dancing” together).

Children develop emotionally by:

- Expressing emotions (reacting in different ways to music and sound).
- Forming a sense of personal taste (beginning to recognize the types of music they like best and experimenting with movement).

Children develop physically by:

- Becoming aware of what their bodies can do (moving arms and legs when music is played).
- Coordinating eye and hand movements (imitating simple finger plays).
- Practicing large motor skills (hopping, swaying, and leaping during creative movement).
- Developing rhythm (clapping and stamping feet in time to music).

These are just a few of the many benefits you can expect when you include music and movement in your family child care program. In the next section we’ll look at how you can tailor your environment to provide positive music and movement experiences for the children in your care.