

Music-based Playgroups



Rock 'N' Roll Playgroup

I've taken one of my music playgroups, Rock 'n Roll at Seaton Central, back to the grass beginnings this term and I am thoroughly enjoying the challenge.

It means I am actually teaching music, beats, tempos, rhythms and, most importantly, listening skills, in a more structured but still fun way.

Music is a great tool to teach at any age. With under 5's it helps with language and emotions. It allows the hyperactive children to be active (I use a lot of body movement in my music playgroups e.g. jumping, swaying, dancing, all types of actions) in a safe environment and helps them to understand that there are times to be noisy and active and a time for quiet and gentleness.

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If you can imagine that in a child's world sometimes it's hard to know how you feel, music allows the expression of emotion and using different types of music can help express feelings.

Music is more than that though. It helps with language; for example, just recently we have been learning "Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes" in Pitjantjatjara, an aboriginal language and I must say that it is easier to learn a new language when it's put to music. Rhythms play a major part in music as well; different rhythms or different patterns help later when it comes to spelling and mathematics.

One of the best parts of taking my music playgroup back to grass roots is having children sitting close to parents or on their laps, with both participating and learning at the same time. Using a sound bag produces the quietness of everyone listening to find out what I have in my bag, and the joy of opening it to find the funny things I've put in it. Trying new dance moves or moving to different sounds have all been a wonderful part of the playgroup. Most of all is the satisfaction of seeing families enjoy doing things together and having fun.

I encourage everyone running playgroups to have a song time and enjoy it. Don't be scared to use your voice, children will love you how you are; have fun with it and remember that music is an important tool for children.

Music Kits

To build on music with playgroups at both Seaton Central and Woodville Uniting Musical Moments we have music kits. These kits are available for parents to borrow free for up to a fortnight. The kits contain:

- ◆ a sheet on why music is important
- ◆ how to make a musical instrument at home
- ◆ a CD, a toy and a story book all based on a theme.

For example, the *Humpty Dumpty* kit may contain a Humpty Dumpty toy, a book with the words to the song Humpty Dumpty (these are normally obtained from the cheap shops for around \$2-3) and a CD which includes the Humpty Dumpty song.



You don't need to buy expensive CDs, you can get CDs, with good popular children's songs, on special for \$2 each from places e.g. Big W or KMart).



◀ Kits are kept in a cloth bag



Having the kits at home helps parents to learn the words to songs they may not know well, encourages language and expression and at the same time if the parent sits and reads the story with the child it is the start to reading.

Themes can vary depending what you find available that fits your budget but you can also include a lot of different learning themes e.g. number and alphabet songs. Our themes include trains, farms, nature (frogs, ducks, Incy Wincy Spider...) clapping songs, nursery rhymes, Twinkle twinkle ...



I have about 20 kits at each location. We find the kit collection caters well for those who want to use the system but it doesn't take up a lot of space. Borrowing is on an honour system and I have a book where parents sign the kit in and out. I ask parents to report any missing or broken items and replace them before they are put back. This system works well for my playgroups. At the end of each term I check the kits.

The Seaton kits contain **Rhyme Time** CDs. These come with a song book which also contains information for parents on sharing stories with children, etc. They are free in SA through local libraries from the *Advertiser* newspaper's **Little Big Book Club**, published by the **Little Big Book Company**, 23 Jervis St, Erindale, SA.

Contact Kathy if you want more information about these kits. See p.7 for contact details.

Rock 'n' Roll Music: What it looks like

Welcome and sign in

There are toys placed outside and in other rooms for the children to access and inside the Rock 'n Roll room is a craft for the children and parents to do. I try not to have toys in the room where I am doing music as it is unsafe to have clutter, especially in big groups. Make sure safety comes first especially when you are moving.

Craft: making an instrument

(This allows everyone time to come in before the music begins.)

Music time (approximately 20 minutes – depending on attention span of children)

- Each child picks a percussion instrument and sits down with parent/carer
- **Beats:** (this gets the attention and focus of everyone). I start with the "crotchet" or 1 beat note (which I call Tahn) and I count as we clap and play instruments. I also use my body and stamp the beat so that the children can feel the beat through the floor. When it comes time to stop I put my hand up and my other hand to my mouth to say 'Shh!!' The children catch on very quickly to the action, even the smallest ones. Of course at this age you can't expect them all to do it at the same time or wait for the straggler so you keep the flow going. Other names I use for notes are Tee-Tee, Tick-a-Tock-a – these came from the music teacher who started Musical Moments at Woodville.
- **Welcome song** – I include the children's names in the song: e.g.
Oh what do you think my name is,
I wonder if you know?
My name is Kathy hello, hello, hello,
hello, hello, hello, hello.
Oh what do you think his/her name is,
I wonder if you know?
His/her name is hello, hello,
hello, hello, hello, hello.

The **Hello Song** from *The Fairies* is also a good one.

I try and keep the same songs at the start and finish as it becomes a signal to the children what's happening.

- **Songs:** I use songs with actions as well as quiet songs throughout the session. Common songs are the best as the parents know them but sometimes I teach the parents new songs and give them the words to help them. Using your own words to

common tunes can also be an advantage at times.

- ♦ **Actions** e.g. 'we're going up', help children to know that music isn't the same all the time, it rises and falls; and by doing this with out bodies we help them make the connection.
- ♦ The 'Sound Bag' is something I use during the session. I have different sounds e.g. bells, squeaky toys or crunched up cellophane paper. The children have to listen to find out what I have in the bag and when they have a guess I give them the chance to look in my bag to see what it is. This only lasts as long as the attention of the children; if they aren't listening drop it and go back to songs, try again later.
- ♦ I continue the music with action and quiet songs again and then finish with a song to pack away the musical instruments. (It's great to teach children to put away and tidy up as well.) Our pack up song is:

Let's put the instruments away in their box, put the instruments away, Let's put the instruments away in the box, we'll use them on another day.

This normally lasts 15-20 minutes.

- We then go off to wash our hands (with another song) and have fruit time.

This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands, This is the way we wash our hands here at Rock 'n Roll Playgroup.

This is the way we dry our hands, dry our hands, dry our hands, This is the way we dry our hands here at Rock 'n Roll Playgroup.

or

Wash your dirty hands,
wash your dirty hands,
Rub and scrub and rub and scrub
and wash your dirty hands.

At **Musical Moments** at Woodville I use a **grace** before we eat:

Thank you God for the grub **boom boom boom**,
Thank you God for providing for us,
I hope we're not greedy,
I hope we're not speedy,
Just want to thank you for the grub.
One, Two, Three: THANKS.

We beat the rhythm on the tables as we sing and the children look forward to it. Leanne from Henley Fulham uses a softer, spoken grace and that works for her, so it's a matter of finding what's right for you.

- **Dance:** I use CD's for dance – High 5, Fairies, Rock 'n Roll for Kids or even classical music, to give children different musical experiences.
- ♦ Sometimes I use scarves or dancing ribbons to help out.
- ♦ Parents can copy your dance or you can teach them an easy step. (I never worry about the proper dance steps at this age.)
- ♦ The steps I use are: holding hands with the child, gently pull them into you and out again – this is done twice and you count as you go; on the 3rd time you twirl them under your arm. Children get to know that on the count of 3 they twirl.
- ♦ Other dances can be *High 5* and the actions that go with the song you are using e.g. hide your eyes (cover eyes with hands) and count to 10 (holding up 10 fingers), ready or not (move hands in front of you in a running motion) I'm going to find you again (hand above your eyes looking out)
- ♦ **Group dance:** We always end our dance time with old favourites e.g. *Ring a ring a rosie* (but I use names instead of 'a- tishoo') and the *Hokey Pokey*.
- ♦ Sometimes I use a parachute to keep the circle. (However, children get very excited when the parachute comes out.)

- **Goodbye song** (sometimes using a parachute to hide the children)

Where are the children, where are the children?

Here they are, here they are.

We've had fun at playgroup, we've had fun at playgroup,

Bye for now, bye for now.

Sung to Frère Jacques

(This is a common playgroup one)

As long as you are enthusiastic about what you do and you do it your way the children will love it. It doesn't matter if you can't sing or dance properly, or get out of time every now and then, as long as you are enjoying it. The children sense when you're not comfortable and you won't get the same response.

Resources:

The New Useful Book from ABC Play School is very helpful with music and ideas, things to make and hints. It's normally available at the ABC shop and some other big book stores. The other book I find useful, although harder to obtain, is the **Merrily, Merrily** book of songs and rhymes from the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia.

Playgroup: Musical Instruments

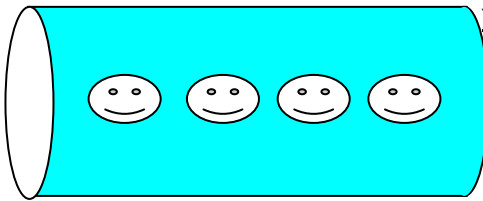
Making Musical Instruments

Some of the best musical instruments are home made. I have included a couple of favourites:

SHAKERS

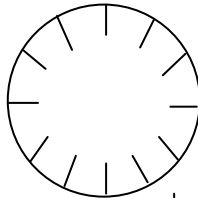
You will need:

- ◆ cardboard tubes
- ◆ cardboard circles slightly bigger than the ends of the tubes
- ◆ paper to cover the cardboard tubes
- ◆ sticky tape
- ◆ textas, pencils or stickers
- ◆ rice, pasta, beads, bells



What to do:

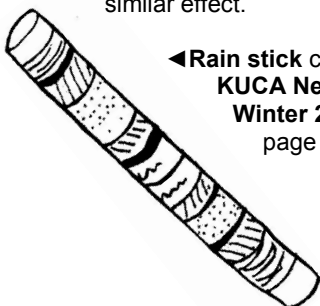
- ◆ Snip around the cardboard circles just enough to be able to fit around the outside of the tube.
- ◆ Sticky tape one circle in place.
- ◆ Fill the tube with a couple of tablespoons of rice, pasta etc. until you have the sound you are looking for. (Different items will give softer or louder sounds).
- ◆ Sticky tape the other circle in place.
- ◆ A child can draw on the paper and decorate it prior to covering the tube or you can cover the tube with the paper and decorate with stickers etc.



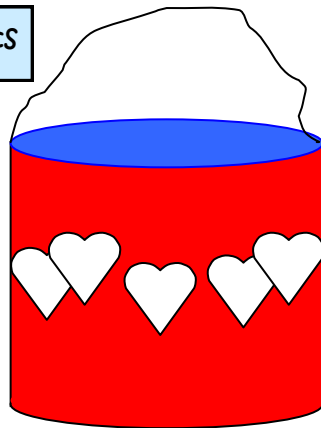
RAINMAKERS (shakers that sound like rain falling)

Make it as you would make a shaker, except that you fill the inside of the tube with bubble wrap prior to adding rice (allow room for the rice to be able to fall gently through the bubble wrap when you turn it up and down).

You can also fill the tube with twisted aluminium foil for a similar effect.



◀ Rain stick craft from
KUCA News
Winter 2005
page 26



DRUMS

You will need:

- ◆ a can e.g. milo or baby formula (please make sure it's clean and has no sharp edges)
- ◆ thick plastic
- ◆ sticky tape
- ◆ paper to cover the outside of the can
- ◆ textas, pencils or stickers
- ◆ string: enough to fit over child's head so that the drum sits in front of their tummy
- ◆ pencils not sharpened, chop sticks or wooden spoon

N.B. If the cans have a plastic lid already these can be used instead of the thick plastic.

What to do:

- ◆ Knot each end of the string and place underneath plastic lid (or between plastic cuts.) If you like instead you can punch holes in the side of the can carefully and insert the string and tie off. **N.B.** Children should be supervised if using string around the neck.
- ◆ If using thick plastic, snip edges so that plastic will fit over can, pull tight as possible as this make the drum's skin sound better.
- ◆ A child can draw on the paper and decorate it prior to covering the can, or you can cover the can with the paper and decorate with stickers etc.

Chop sticks, spoons etc. make great drum sticks

If the child turns the drum over and hits on the tin side a different sound will be heard (beware this is a lot louder).

Of course you can always use upside down saucepans and wooden spoons for drums.



by **Kathy Blazewicz**

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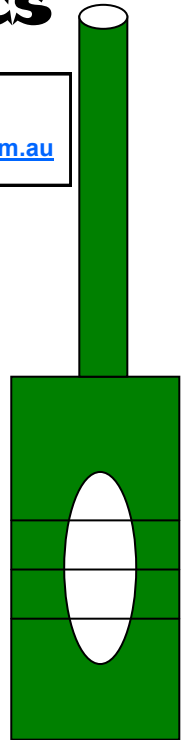
GUITARS

You will need:

- ◆ tissue box
- ◆ rubber bands
- ◆ sticky tape
- ◆ tube

What to do:

- ◆ Snip cardboard tube at one end, feather out and stick on end of tissue box with sticky tape.
- ◆ Place rubber bands over tissue box.
- ◆ **N.B. IMPORTANT:** Sticky tape rubber bands at side of box; if they break they will not fling off and hurt anyone.



XYLOPHONE

Hang metal objects of various sizes on a line and hit with a wooden spoon.

Try using saucepans, colanders, metal spoons of various sizes, large washers etc.

“Heads, shoulders, knees, toes” in Pitjantjatjara

kata, alipiri,
muti, tjina
(heads, shoulders
knees, toes)

muti, tjina
muti, tjina
kata, alipiri,
muti, tjina



we all clap hands together

pina, kuru, winpinpi, mulya
(ears, eyes, mouth, nose)

pina, kuru,
pina, kuru,
pina, kuru, winpinpi, mulya
we all clap hands together.

One of the activities that we did with this song was to draw around the bodies of each of the children on butcher's paper and add the words and pictures to their bodies.

This was not only a way that parents could remember the words at home, but also have a reminder of how small their child was at this age.