

**ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS**

# Singing

Singing to your child is a great way of supporting their development – even if you don't think your voice sounds great. This is because children prefer hearing their parents' voices over recorded ones.

If you are not sure about songs to sing your child, begin with CDs so that you can learn the words, then try going solo. As children grow, you can use singing in different ways. Below are some different ways in which you could use songs to help your child's development.

## LULLABIES

### From birth

Lullabies are traditionally used to soothe babies. They work well because babies mimic an adult's heartbeat and this combined with a rocking movement makes babies feel secure.

You can make up your own lullaby or use well-known ones such as Bye Baby Bunting. Try to make eye contact with your baby as you rock.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Co-ordination and balance:** The gentle rocking movement will help your baby develop a sense of balance.

**Emotional development:** Singing a lullaby will help your baby to develop a bond with you.

**Language development:** Lullabies seem to help babies pay attention to the rhythms and sounds in words and so help early communication.

*What next?*

Use the tune of your baby's favourite lullaby and adapt it with a few of your own words.

## ACTION SONGS

### From 12 months

Songs that have accompanying actions are loved by children of all ages. They are also great

for helping children learn the meaning of new words.

While at first your child might simply enjoy watching you make movements, after a while you will see that your child will anticipate a movement and have a go at joining in. Try out Humpty Dumpty, Row Row Row Your Boat and Pat-a-Cake.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Co-ordination:** Action songs encourage children to practise co-ordinated movements. ▶



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**Language:** Songs that link words to actions are useful for teaching children the meaning of words.

**Social development:** Making movements together helps children learn to connect with others.

*What next?*

Look out for action rhymes that require more co-ordinated movements, such as Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.

### SONGS FOR REQUESTS

#### From two years

There are times when parents have to ask their children to do something such as getting dressed, tidying up or coming to eat.

Two-year-olds can be very reluctant at times and so a good strategy to lighten the mood is to sing a request or instruction rather than to say it. This can make the activity or task feel more like a game and so cut down on tantrums.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Thinking:** Following instructions helps children learn to process information and use their memories.

**Listening skills:** This type of singing will help your child's listening skills.

**Emotional development:** Your child may learn to use singing as a future strategy to cope with activities they are not interested in.

*What next?*

Develop some songs for specific tasks, such as a bedtime song or a putting-on-a-coat song

### SONGS WITH SHAKERS

#### From two-and-a-half years

A lovely activity for a rainy day is to sing some songs while using shakers or a drum. You can make shakers by putting some dried pasta or rice into a water bottle, while a simple drum

can be made by turning a waste paper basket upside down.

Making movements to a beat helps children's co-ordination, but is also an important skill needed for later reading.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Physical development:** Moving an object in time to a beat helps children's co-ordination.

**Listening skills:** Listening out for the beat helps children's ability to hear and differentiate sounds.

**Emotional development:** Making sounds helps children to express themselves and gain in confidence.

*What next?*

Introduce a wooden spoon or stick to hit the shaker or drum. This will help to further develop co-ordination.

### COUNTING SONGS

#### From three years

Songs that are based on numbers help children learn the words used in counting. As most counting songs involve subtraction, they also help children to count backwards. To get the most out of counting songs,



use your fingers as you count, for example with Five Little Ducks or Two Little Dickie Birds.

As learning to count takes time and plenty of practice, don't worry if your child makes mistakes while singing along.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Counting:** Your child can learn the names of the numbers and also the order of numbers.

**Language development:** Counting songs helps your child learn the meanings of new words.

**Confidence:** Being able to join in a counting song helps children feel grown up and confident.

*What next?*

Look out for counting songs with numbers up to ten and beyond.

### SONGS WITH DANCE

#### From four years

It takes a while before children can sing while also moving. Songs with dance moves such as The Hokey Cokey or Ring a Ring o' Roses will be enjoyed by younger children and so do try them out, but you will probably notice that they find it hard to sing as well.

Songs with dance moves are great for children's parties as well as on rainy days when children still need exercise.

*How this activity helps your child*

**Co-ordination:** Singing and dancing will help co-ordination.

**Social skills:** Being part of a group that is singing and dancing helps children to enjoy being co-operative.

**Physical development:** Singing and dancing helps keep your child active and healthy.

*What next?*

Encourage your child to experiment with their own moves.