



## Musical Playtime

**M**usical games can touch every area of your child's life — physical, emotional, intellectual, social and cultural. While caring for children as either a parent or a caregiver, you automatically become a singer. No matter how shy or off-key you think you are, you have an audience. And whether you choose to sing a soft lullaby to a newborn or conduct a fun-filled action song with a group, children will respond with enthusiasm and without judgement.

But you may hear so many “new” songs introduced at children's performances and on tapes, CDs, videos, movies and television. You wonder how you will ever learn all the new lyrics and melodies. It is one thing to buy, borrow or make copies of tapes and CDs and learn new songs that way.

But don't forget the repertoire of children's songs that were part of your own childhood. Introducing these to your child is a wonderful way to pass on your culture and language, especially if it is not in the majority. Your children will enjoy singing your “old” songs just as you did. And they *are* new for young ones!

Here are a few reminders:

- Twinkle, twinkle little star
- Baa baa black sheep
- Mary had a little lamb
- I'm a little tea pot
- Frère Jacques
- Pop! goes the weasel

Many of these songs can be accompanied by simple musical instruments — your own or ones made at home with your child. Glue paper streamers at the end of a decorated paper towel roll for waving and moving to the rhythm. Paper plates glued together with macaroni inside make wonderful tambourines. For rattles, try empty film containers (or any plastic container with a tightly fastened lid) filled with rice, dry peas or beans. Glue or duct tape lids on to avoid choking hazards.



Incorporate music into everyday life by making up your own songs and actions. An infant will enjoy “head and shoulders, knees and toes as move his/her hands to point to or touch the different parts of the body. Sing new words to familiar melodies. e.g., In the bath or at the beach, sing “the water's falling down, the water's falling down” to the tune of “Farmer in the Dell.” Substitute your child's name to make songs more meaningful. Try singing a song at tidy-up time, when washing hands or brushing teeth to make the experience more fun. For example, try announcing mealtime with “If you're hungry and you know it, come and eat,” to the tune of “If you're happy and you know it clap your hands!”

When you introduce and involve children in music, they come to appreciate the world in new ways. In the future, your children may grow to love classical music or contemporary tunes. They may learn to play professionally, just harmonize in the garden with friends or sing alone in the shower. But whatever happens, when children are young, the world of music opens the door to a co-operative learning experience with parents — and to lots of FUN!