



MUSIC NOTES

Music Learning Outcomes by Age

Developmental stages and observable responses to music.



At The Music Class, our passion is to work with parents and caregivers to enable each child to achieve his or her full musical potential. Musical development from birth to age 5 is a wonderful process to watch unfold if you know what to look for. The following pages detail what to expect at each age level and developmental stage.

Each child will move through the developmental stages at his or her own pace. However, you can enhance your child's musical development by singing and dancing with him or her during the first few years of life. The earlier you start enriching your child's musical environment, the greater the impact

will be. Research has shown that enrichment during infancy is particularly powerful (see birth to 12 months, below). Children raised in an enriched musical environment find it easier and more pleasurable to learn to play an instrument. They also have a greater understanding of music and can derive more pleasure from music for the rest of their lives.

While our chart stops after age 5, keep in mind that the benefits of attending The Music Class continue!

Rob Sayer
Founder and Director, The Music Class Inc.

“The brain undergoes a period of rapid neural development after birth, continuing for the first years of life. During this time, new neural connections are forming more rapidly than at any other time in our lives, and during our mid-childhood years, the brain starts to prune these connections, retaining only the most important and most often used ones. This becomes the basis for our understanding of music and ultimately the basis for what we like in music, what music moves us, and how it moves us.”

Daniel Levitin Ph.D., This Is Your Brain on Music, p.107. Dutton Press, 2006.



Infants (Birth To 12 Months)

During the first months of life an infant's brain is absorbing the sounds around him or her. By end of that first year, the brain starts to prioritize, building greater sensitivity to familiar sounds and less ability to distinguish unfamiliar sounds. Based on phonetic perception and brain development research, we believe that regular exposure to a variety of musical sounds is critical during the first year of life.



“...By one year of age infants lose this keenness for perceiving sound difference across languages.” Pat Kuhl at the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle compared six-month-old Japanese and American infants. She found that the Japanese infants respond to the r-l distinction as accurately as their American counterparts. By 12 months, Japanese infants had lost this ability, while the American infants at that same age had become more efficient at discriminating between the two sounds.

Richard Restak, M.D., The Secret Life of The Brain, p 38-39. The Dana Press and the Joseph Henry Press, 2001.



At The Music Class, you may observe infants:

- Making eye contact when they hear music played or when being sung to
- Moving arms and legs or rocking their body in response to rhythmic sounds.
- Smiling in response to music
- Engaging with shaker type instruments for short amounts of time.
- Babbling in response to music in short bursts and at whatever pitch is easiest for the infant to create.
- Listening and paying attention to tonal and rhythm patterns even through they are not singing them back.

1 Year-Olds



With emerging language skills, walking, and the ability to stay on task for longer periods of time, 1 year-olds are physically much more engaged with music than infants. The pitch of their vocalizations now start to reflect the melodic contour of songs they are singing. We don't expect 1 year-olds to sing in tune, but their vocalizations will change from being monotone to include high and low notes. Rhythmically, 1 year-olds will often dance and play instruments with a strong sense of beat, but that beat will usually be unrelated to the beat of music they are listening to.

“...the source for all musical rhythm may be found in the natural rhythms of the human body.”

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze as reported by Robert Abramson.

Chosky, Abramson, Gillespie, Woods, Teaching Music in the Twentieth Century, p27. Prentice-Hall Inc., 1986.

At The Music Class, you may observe 1 year-olds:

- Making eye contact when they hear music played or when being sung to
- Smiling in response to music
- Echoing tonal and rhythm patterns with limited accuracy
- While singing, adjusts pitch up and down to the melodic contour of the song, but doesn't match the actual notes.
- Changing movement in response to tempo of music – fast to slow
- Moving the body in response to rhythmic sounds. Movement will often be steady, but not in sync to the music around them.
- While listening to music the child will play for an extended time with bells, egg shakers, rhythm sticks, and other props. As with body movements, the child may play with a steady beat, but that beat is usually not in sync with the music unless it is by chance.
- Vocalizing with anything from short babbles to entire phrases with lyrics.
- With growing language skills, the children will be suggesting activities and lyrics for songs when the teacher asks for substitution ideas. Children will also indicate substitution ideas non-verbally.

2 and 3 Year-Olds

Audiation is the ability to hear and to understand music when the sound is not physically present. Audiation is to music what thinking is to language.

The term audiation appears for the first time in GORDON E. E., Learning Sequence and Patterns in Music, GIA, 1976.

This is an exciting age developmentally. Before this age, children are absorbing the musical sounds in their environment and responding physically or vocally without accuracy in response to music. Starting at approximately two years of age, children will begin to create music with some accuracy without live or recorded music present. We call this stage “Creating Music Independently”. Children exhibiting this behavior are beginning to audiate.

In music development, 3 year-olds are similar to 2-year olds in that we can expect the same types of responses, but we can expect increased accuracy. At 3, more children will sing simple tonal and rhythm patterns accurately. Children will be able to sing a greater percentage of songs in tune and will be able to stay on beat for longer durations. A very small percent of 3 year-olds may advance to Independent Music Accuracy, which will be more common among 4 year-olds. (See definition of Independent Music Accuracy on next page)

At The Music Class, you may observe 2 and 3 year-olds:

- Making eye contact when they hear music played or when being sung to
- Smiling in response to music
- Echoing tonal and rhythm patterns with increasing accuracy
- Singing short phrases of a song in tune, with the remaining notes not in tune
- Distinguishing between different voices and instruments
- Demonstrating rhythm with body movements that will sometimes be in tempo to music in the environment.
- Suggesting activities and lyrics for songs when the teacher asks for substitution ideas.
- Enjoying marching, walking, dancing, jumping, running, twirling, skipping, tip toeing, finger plays, and other physical activity while listening to and creating music.
- Enjoying playing a wide range of rhythm instruments. As with body movements, their instrument play will sometimes be in tempo.
- Singing lyrics with increasing ease and enjoyment, singing short phrases up to entire songs with correct lyrics.



4 and 5 Year-Olds



Ages 4 and 5 are when we expect children to progress to Independent Music Accuracy. To compare this stage to language development, it's when listening, babbling, and then short phrases transition into meaningful conversation with others.

When Tonal Independent Music Accuracy is achieved, children are able to sing familiar songs in tune and to match keys when singing with others. When Rhythmic Independent Music Accuracy is achieved, children are able to sing songs with rhythmic accuracy, match beat when playing or singing with others, and able to march and move their body in time to music they are listening to. It's important to note that tonal and rhythmic accuracy are not tied together. Children typically achieve tonal and rhythm Independent Music Accuracy at different times, sometimes years apart.

At The Music Class, you may observe 4 and 5 year-olds:

- Singing phrases within a song, or an entire song, with accurate pitch
- Demonstrating rhythmic accuracy that ranges from occasionally matching the beat they are listening to, to consistently matching the beat.
- Enjoying playing a wide range of rhythm instruments. As with body movements, their rhythmic accuracy will range from occasionally matching the beat to music they are listening to, to consistently matching the beat.
- Memorizing lengthy and complex lyrics.
- Being eager to suggest activities and lyrics for songs when the teacher asks for substitution ideas. (The teacher may have to set a limit of one idea per child per song in order to control the length of substitution songs.)
- Echoing tonal and rhythm patterns with accuracy ranging from rarely accurate to always accurate.
- Identifying by sight or sound common instruments such as violin, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, and drums.
- When comparing two pitches, indicating which is high and which is low by showing high or low with hand movements.
- Indicating when notes performed are correct or incorrect when listening to familiar songs or phrases.



Stages Of Musical Development

STAGE	PITCH CHARACTERISTICS	RHYTHMIC CHARACTERISTICS	AGE
Absorption*	Hear and aurally collect the sounds of melodic music in the environment.	Hear and aurally collect the sounds of rhythmic music in the environment.	
Responding To Music In The Environment Stage 1	Babbles in response to music in the environment, but without relationship to the pitch of the music. Usually these babbles are on one note only, and that note is the pitch that is easiest for the child to produce.	Short bursts of movement in response to music in the environment, but not in sync with the music in the environment.	
Responding To Music In The Environment Stage 2	Babbles or sings with melodic contour that relates to music in the environment. Attempts to sing high and low pitches are not accurate, but the contour of the melody is taking shape.	Steady movement in response to music in the environment. That movement reflects the child's own pace and is not in sync with music being heard (except by chance).	
Responding To Music In The Environment Stage 3 May coincide simultaneously with First Independent Stage	Singing with partial accuracy in response to music in the environment.	Moving in tempo with partial accuracy in response to music in the environment.	
Creating Music Independently May coincide simultaneously with Stage 3 above.	Singing with partial accuracy a cappella.	Moving in tempo with partial accuracy a cappella. (Movement includes activities like marching, dancing, and playing a rhythm instrument)	
Independent Music Accuracy	Singing familiar songs with accuracy and confidence a cappella. Able to match key when singing familiar songs with others.	Moving in tempo to familiar songs with accuracy and confidence when singing songs a cappella. Able to consistently move to the beat matching music in the environment, even when the tempo or meter changes.	

*Absorption continues to be an important part of music development throughout the stages.