

Mommy & Me

Early Childhood Music Program

Percussion Activities for Preschoolers & Their Parents

an addendum to NAMM's Sesame Street Music Works Program
produced and distributed by the Percussion Marketing Council



In 2001, NAMM, in conjunction with Sesame Workshop, created a groundbreaking partnership that resulted in Sesame Street Music Works. Shifting the emphasis from music listening to music making, this coalition also produced an unprecedented program for music retailers with the goal of drawing the “Mommy and Me” crowd (parents with children ages two to five) to local music stores. The Music Works Wonders Guide for Retailers (available from NAMM) is a comprehensive activity and marketing kit with a 22-minute-long interactive video featuring the much-loved Sesame Street characters. The Guide not only complements the expanded, music-oriented segments of the Sesame Street television shows, it takes children through the instrument families and teaches them the joy of music making.

The Percussion Marketing Council's Mommy & Me Early Music Program is designed to go hand-in-hand with the Sesame Street Music Works Program. The goal of the program is to help music retailers inspire a love of music making in children through the use of drums and percussion—perhaps the most natural and accessible of all the musical instrument families. In addition to providing an invaluable community service, another principal advantage of this program is that it also provides a powerful tool to increase the market for musical instruments by encouraging the participation of a vast new audience of young children, parents, care-givers and educators.

Mommy & Me Early Childhood Music Program

Music making is essential to the healthy development of children.

Music has the power to engage, relax and energize us... and has been proven to play an incredibly important role in the healthy development of children. For example, in scientific studies conducted by early childhood specialists, preschoolers who participated in organized music making over several months showed marked advantages over their playmates that did not. The children involved in music dramatically improved their abilities to work mazes, copy patterns of color, and draw geometric figures. These skills reflect spatial intelligence, the foundation for more complex types of reasoning (such as those used in math and science).

Music has been found to stimulate every area of the developing brain and similar studies with youngsters have linked early musical participation to superior motor skills and even social abilities. Although the ability to learn continues throughout life, hands-on participation in music between the ages of three and ten seems to train the brain for higher thinking and children who miss out on the fun of playing music may also miss some critical developmental opportunities.

Stimulating, amusing activities like playing music will capture and hold a child's interest and satisfy their craving for fun, while providing them with invaluable lessons that will endure the rest of their lives. And, by giving a child an instrument, you are providing them with a powerful voice to communicate that which doesn't come easily with words. Being a truly universal language, music creates a sense of community, links different cultures and brings people together by bridging any number of cultural, age, racial, gender, political and other differences.

Essentially, music provides a healthy, natural and invaluable opportunity for individual expression while encouraging the development of the whole child and enhancing cognitive, social, physical and emotional skills. Music's relationship to building and maintaining a strong brain is equivalent to sport's relationship to building and maintaining a strong body and equally necessary for life-long health.

For additional information on the powerful benefits of music to you and your child, including the most recent research on Music and the Brain, visit www.amc-music.org.

Before Getting Started...

Suggested Review Materials

Because this program was designed to complement the existing Sesame Street Music Works Retailer Program, it is recommended that you review those materials in their entirety, paying particular attention to the following sections of the Retailer Guide Book:

- *Staff Preparation and Training: the Store Coordinator and Facilitator / "Elmo's Helper" (Pages 5-6)*
- *Designating a Special Area of the Store: "The Sesame Street Corner" (Pages 8 and 14)*
- *Promotional Support Materials: Signage, Press Releases and Other Materials Available on the Sesame Street Music Works CD ROM (Pages 6-7)*
- *Promotional Activities: Locating and Reaching Your Target Audience (Pages 8-13)*

Recommended Time Allotment

Due to the natural attention span of the average preschool child, it is recommended that you limit your total music program to a maximum of 60 minutes, including the 22-minute Sesame Street Music Works Wonders video-tape.

Fun vs. Accuracy

The primary goal of this program is to ensure that the children participating in your music program are having FUN-- enough fun that they will want to continue to play music at home, and hopefully, for the rest of their lives. This is not a performance-based program and every effort should be made to "encourage" rather than "correct" participants. If a participant hasn't followed instructions exactly, congratulate them anyway and demonstrate the exercise again. Always keep in mind that this program was designed to be flexible, and you can (and should!) customize every activity to match the age and abilities of the participants.

Choose The Instruments Wisely

An amazing variety of children's percussion instruments are available on the market today. It is important for you to understand that these instruments are designed specifically for children and it is suggested that you select only those that meet US toy safety testing standards ASTM F963-96A. This government rating ensures that the products are safe in terms of mechanical construction, toxicity, small parts (that could pose choke hazards), sharp edges, strangulation hazards, etc. Beyond safety concerns, a child's instrument should have the proper size and weight and should be playable without the need for dexterity beyond the capabilities of a child. A comprehensive listing of available children's percussion instruments appears on the fourth page of this guidebook.

Mommy & Me Early Childhood Music Program

The Importance of Having Parents and Educators Participate in Early Music Programs

Parents are a child's first and most important role models. By including parents in your music program, you are ensuring that the positive message you teach in the program will be reinforced at home; possibly even reaching siblings and other children. When parents believe in the benefits of music making for their children, they may be inspired to purchase the instruments used in the music program for home use. In fact, parental recommendations to friends, coworkers and family members can bring additional participants to the music program at your store, and as a result, can help you to grow your business both in and beyond children's music products.

The importance of educating parents about the benefits of music making is as important to your mission as teaching the children! To assist you with this aspect of the music program, a printable Mommy & Me Take Home Activity Sheet is featured on the CD-ROM of support materials that are included with this booklet. The same logic applies to the inclusion of educators and other caregivers in your music program. The activities of the Mommy & Me Early Music Program are designed to be easily adaptable for classroom or group use and, although we refer to mom and parents throughout this guide, one can certainly exchange the words "mommy" and "parents" with daddy, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandma, grandpa, educator or any other appropriate childcare provider.

The Mommy & Me Early Childhood Music Program

The Mommy & Me Early Music Program activities can be customized to match the age and abilities of the participants. You may choose to switch instruments with each new activity or you may choose to run through all or several of the activities with a single instrument and then start over with a new instrument. Whatever you decide, you should plan your total music program to be a maximum of 60 minutes (including the 22-minute Sesame Street Music Works Wonders Video) and remember that fun is the name of the game!

Information To Share With Parents

How Playing Music Benefits A Child

Aids academic aptitudes in mathematics, science, and the arts

Promotes large and small motor development

Increases scholastic participation

Cultivates concentration and focused listening

Fosters early vocal development and enhanced social abilities

Bolsters self-image and self-confidence

Encourages parent/child bonding when music is practiced together

Overcoming "Parental Stage Fright"

You will find that many of the parents participating in your music program are not musicians and the facilitator should address these potential concerns/inhibitions as a matter of course. Simply remind parents that we are all rhythmic beings and that music is inherent in all of us, and is a life-affirming natural aspect of the human experience. Assure them that there is no reason for fear of failure, there will be no critique of playing ability, and that this music program is not performance-based. FUN is the name of the game!

Remind them that because children learn by example, they are giving their child an amazing gift by learning music with them. They are demonstrating that new and different things need not arouse fear or self-consciousness, and are teaching that life's simplest adventures can be deeply gratifying. Encourage them to keep in mind that the family that plays together, stays together.

Presentation of Program Instruments

Take a moment to present the instruments that will be used in the music program, highlighting the key features (including US toy safety standard compliance) of each. To maintain the children's interest, keep it brief and get them involved in the presentation. Ask a child to help you demonstrate each instrument as you present it. Do not underestimate the importance of this presentation -- your customers are watching! Inform the parents that all of the products that you are using in the program can be used at home with the Mommy & Me Take Home Activity Sheet that you will distribute at the beginning of the program.

Mommy & Me Early Childhood Music Program

1) Where to Start

After welcoming all participants and handing out nametags, begin by briefly discussing how important and beneficial music participation is to children. Invite the parents to sit next to their child and distribute a copy of the Take-Home Activity Sheet to each of them as you cover the parent-specific information found on page 3. Don't spend more than a few minutes on this because children have short attention spans and will lose interest very quickly!

2) Roll the Tape!

The children will love watching the Music Works Wonders video (available from NAMM) as their favorite Sesame Street characters teach them about the different families of instruments. Follow the video with them and feel free to add fun commentary and play along. Keep it lively and be prepared to take center stage when the video is over!

3) Introduction to a Percussion Instrument

As soon as the video ends, distribute one identical instrument to every parent and child that is participating in the program. In order to minimize distraction and prevent arguing, it is recommended that one instrument be featured at a time. Keeping in mind that this class may be the first time these children have ever experienced a percussion instrument in person, your first objective is to make the children feel comfortable with the instruments. For a list of available kids percussion instruments, please see the fourth page of this booklet.

The name: Name the instrument and ask participants to repeat it to you to ensure comprehension.

The history: To further emphasize the educational and cross-cultural nature of this music program, it is suggested that you provide a brief overview of the instrument's history and origin. Very often, the instrument manufacturer's catalogs or packaging will provide this information.

The physical nature of the instrument: Point to and identify all of the different parts of the instrument, while encouraging the participants to feel the different materials and textures. Some areas to consider include: the drumhead, drum shell, carry strap, mallet handle, mallet head, handle (on any hand percussion instrument), striker and even shaker fill (although they can't see or touch the fill, they can still get a mental image of it).

The instrument's particular voice/voices: Invite the group to explore with you all of the different sounds that can be created with each instrument. Be creative!

With any type of drum, experiment with the different sounds that can be obtained by striking the drumhead in its center, the edge, the rim, and the outer shell areas. Encourage the group to try playing with the hands in a variety of ways: open-handed vs. closed-handed, hard, soft, fast, slow, and slap-release vs. slap-hold. Then ask them to try the same thing using the mallet head and the mallet handle. Demonstrate the different sounds obtained when holding the mallet in the center vs. the edge, and invite them to experiment on their own.

Hand percussion instruments are available in an amazing variety of shapes and sizes: clappers, jingles, bells, tone blocks, etc. Shakers can be shaken quickly, slowly, loudly, softly, and even in a circle to obtain different sounds. Encourage the group to experiment and enjoy their discoveries!

4) Lead One Or More Of The Suggested "Rhythmic Activities, Exercises & Games"

5) Play Along with Music

It is extremely important to end the music program with a very animated, fun activity like playing along with lively music. There are numerous suitable children's music CDs to choose from, but one proven favorite is "Fruit Salad Salsa" from Laurie Berkner's Victor Vito album. Encourage the group to play along and dance around the table with shakers—get them giggling! MUSIC IS FUN!

6) Closing Comments and Questions

Congratulate the group, both children and parents, for a job well done. Was it fun for them? The smiles on their faces should dispel any doubts about the success of the program. Was it entertaining enough for them to tell their friends about it? By asking them to tell others about the program, you will ensure future participants in your music program. In order to help you to evaluate and make informed decisions on program improvements, you can distribute to each parent a Program Evaluation Form found on the Mommy & Me CD-ROM of printable support materials.

With all the deserved fanfare, present a personalized Mommy & Me Certificate of Achievement (found on the Mommy & Me CD-ROM) to each child. It is recommended that these be filled-out in advance. Now is the time to invite questions pertaining to the program and featured products. Ask the parents to take a quick look at the Take Home Activity Sheet so that you can answer any related questions they might have. Hopefully, the next step will be to help them select their own percussion instruments!

Rhythmic Activities, Exercises & Games

Rhythm-Talk

Once the group is familiar with the different "voices" that their instrument can make, encourage them to create simple rhythms. Explain that every spoken language has its own unique beat and within every sentence music can be found. Demonstrate how to clap, rattle, tap, clap or drum the rhythm of the following phrases and invite the group to do the same. If you can say it, you can play it!

All aboard!

Calling all cars! Calling all cars!

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb...

Listen to the clock: tick-tock, tick-tock.

Hey, diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle...

How much wood could a woodchuck chuck...

For variety, ask the parents to suggest short phrases from their children's favorite songs and nursery rhymes. Improvise! The options are endless!

Rhythmic Dialogs

After the group has created simple rhythms, inspire them to take things a step further to rhythmic dialogs. Start a dialog between the different sounds- try a call and response, back-and-forth, back-and-forth approach. Coach the participants to think of the rhythmic responses as "conversations" that go in a repetitive cycle. Recite the following conversation aloud and ask the group to beat, shake, clap or jingle along with you to the rhythm:

Three fast beats: How are you?

One slow beat: Fine.

Three beats: How are you?

Once they are comfortable with this simple "conversation", you can progress to something like this:

Three fast beats: How are you?

One slow beat: Fine

Two fast beats: ...and you?

Three fast beats: How are you?

One beat: Fine.

Three beats: How are you?

Etc.

One slow beat: Fine

Two fast beats: ...and you?

Three fast beats: How are you?

Etc.

Ask one of the parents to suggest a simple script for the class to follow. If they get stuck, you can take the pressure off by suggesting a conversation about the weather. With any luck, they'll end up with something like the following:

Six fast beats: Nice weather we're having.

One slow beat with two fast beats: Yes, it is!

Six fast beats: Nice weather we're having.

One slow beat with two fast beats: Yes, it is!

Etc.

Rhythmic Follow the Leader

The much-loved game of "Follow the Leader" becomes a whole new game when rhythm is thrown into the mix! To this point, the group is probably still speaking the words to the dialogs as they play along with their instruments. This activity is slightly more advanced in that it does not use accompanying vocalizations and will focus participants more on rhythm. Clap a simple rhythm with your hands and encourage them to copy you as they beat a drum, shake a shaker or strike a tone block or triangle. If you aren't feeling creative, use any of the rhythms from the previous exercises, but don't vocalize! If that doesn't inspire you, what about a rhythmic interpretation of a section of a favorite song, nursery rhyme or TV jingle?

A slightly more advanced version of this exercise is to hide your hands when clapping, training participants to rely solely on sound. This is a great way to encourage focused listening skills. Another variation puts one of the parents in charge, thereby promoting their self-confidence and teaching abilities. You can play along with the group and mimic the new "Leader's" rhythms.

Quiet-and-Loud

A great way to teach loud and quiet sounds is to play this simple game: demonstrate loud and soft rhythms and alternate between them. Ask the children to stand and listen, lifting their arms over their head when hearing loud rhythms and touching their toes when they hear quiet rhythms. Once they've understood the difference between the two, you can teach them to play loud and quiet on request. Take this activity one step further by incorporating quiet and loud rhythms into the rhythmic dialogs from above. Suggest to the group that it is a conversation between two people: one very loud and the other very quiet! For example:

Loud man: Nice weather we're having.

Quiet man: Yes, it is.

Loud man: Nice weather we're having.

Quiet man: Yes, it is. Etc.

Rhythmic Activities, Exercises & Games

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High-and-Low

To help the group learn to differentiate between high and low pitches, demonstrate the two on the featured instrument. Demonstrate how to obtain a low pitch by striking the center of a drumhead and a higher pitch when striking the edge. If you featured bongos in the music program, show the group that the larger drumhead produces a deeper tone than the smaller drumhead. A myriad of shakers are available on the market in different shapes, sizes and sounds. A tone block will produce a higher pitch when struck near the top edge, and a lower pitch when struck near the handle.

After a few moments of demonstration, ask the group to stand up and reach to the sky to identify each note you play as high or to touch their toes to identify the note as low. Once they've become comfortable with identifying high or low notes, you can teach them to play a high or low note on request.

A more advanced version of this activity incorporates high and low pitches into the rhythmic phrases and dialogs from Activity #2.

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Fast-and-Slow

This is a slightly more advanced exercise. Select any one of the rhythmic phrases from the Rhythm-Talk exercise and beat, tap, clap or shake it for the group. The next step is to demonstrate how to play it faster. Practice the two together, coaching the participants to copy your example at a faster tempo. The options are endless, but here are a few rhythms to start off with:

Hickory, dickory, dock!

Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream.

Follow the yellow brick road!

Twinkle, twinkle, little star!

Then switch! To teach slower rhythms, ask the participants to copy your rhythms with a slower rhythm. Keep the game interesting by asking the children to suggest portions of their favorite songs, nursery rhymes or theme songs from their favorite TV shows!

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Short-and-Long

To teach participants to differentiate between long and short notes, begin with a simple demonstration. Strike a triangle while suspending it by its handle or a string to produce a long note. Then strike the triangle while gripping one of its sides to produce a very short note. A large drum is another excellent instrument for this exercise. Striking the drum with one hand while muffling it with the other will produce a short note. Striking the drum without muffling it will yield a longer, sustained note.

After this demonstration, ask the group to stand up and open their arms wide to identify each note you play as long, or to close their hands together to identify the note as short. Once they've become comfortable with identifying long and short notes, you can ask the group to play them on request, once again using kid-friendly phrases to create a series of long (L) and short (s) notes. For example:

Oh, Susannah!

Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow the house down!

(L-L-s-L)

(s-s-L-s-s-L-s-s-L-s-s-s)

Developing an Ongoing Early Childhood Music Program

The Mommy & Me Early Music Program is designed to be a year-round store activity, an ongoing market-building program and powerful tool to grow your business. The Sesame Street Music Works Program offers great information on page 20 of the Retailer's Guidebook for the next steps you can take to expand your program.

Another suggestion is to organize the Early Music Program into a series of early music classes. The activities of the Mommy & Me Early Music Program can be easily adapted for this purpose as a new type of percussion instrument can be featured every week for three to four weeks.

In addition to adapting the recommended activities, trust your own creativity to invent new programs of your own. Ask participants to bring a friend (with an accompanying parent) to one of the classes as a means of generating new customers. Network with your local childcare centers. Start by developing an early music program for preschoolers that people will come from miles around to participate in and then expand your outreach programs with recreational activities for older children, seniors and adults. Your ultimate goal should be to create promotions that will enhance the value of your business in your community and draw new customers into your store every single week. Good luck!

*Thank you for participating in the Mommy & Me Early Music Program
and for sharing the gift of music with parents and their children!*

*For additional information on the powerful benefits of music to you and your child,
including the most recent research on Music and the Brain, visit www.lprhythmix.com.*