



DEVELOPMENTAL MUSIC ACTIVITIES PDF

Welcome! As board-certified music therapists, we are excited to share some ideas for using music to support your child's development from birth to 24 months. Remember, developmental milestones are approximations and can vary widely from child to child. These guidelines are also based on corrected gestational age, which means that “term” is considered 40 weeks. For example, if your child was born at 23 weeks gestation, you would subtract about 17 weeks from their current age to estimate where they might be in reaching milestones.

Every child’s journey is unique, so there’s no need to worry if they don’t meet a milestone exactly when expected. If they don’t roll over at 5 months, that’s okay! Milestones are meant to provide a general framework, not a rigid timeline. What’s most important is to enjoy this incredible time as they explore, learn, and grow at their own pace.

Let music be a joyful and meaningful part of your child’s development—and yours, too!

Sincerely,
The Harmony Garden Music Therapy Services Team



HARMONY GARDEN SPROUTS

Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
<p>Term birth (40 weeks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different types of crying (hungry, tired, hurt) • Responds to auditory, visual, and tactile stimuli • Flexes and extends arms and legs • Is able to calm him/herself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lullabies for sleep time and time to wake • Quiet music with stable, steady tempo for stimulation • Move to action songs • Use infant-directed singing (slow, high, great inflection) • Select songs that you can insert the child's name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hush Little Baby • Rock-a-bye Baby • All the Pretty Horses • When You Wish Upon a Star • Wake Up Feet
<p>1 month</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifts head momentarily • Can put hand-to-mouth and arms-to-middle • Alerts to own name • Smiles • Interacts in a quiet, alert state • Recognizes caregiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the infant's hands, palms together in front of them. Move the hands in time to the music. • With a partner, sit on either side of the infant, smile, and sing name. Take turns singing the child's name and give the infant time to alert to his/her name and move head side-to-side. Mirror child's facial expressions. • Sing and use facial expressions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If You're Happy and You Know It • S-M-I-L-E • Mary Had a Little Lamb (use child's name) • You Are My Sunshine • Patty-Cake • Twinkle Twinkle Little Star



HARMONY GARDEN SPROUTS

Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracks auditory and visual stimuli • Recognizes familiar stimuli • Turns head to caregiver voice • Makes cooing/vowel sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position an object (red or black/white) within the infant’s visual field and move it to the beat of the music. • Replace “ee-i-ee-i” with “ooh” sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands • 5 Little Ducks • Looby Loo • Shoo Fly • Old McDonald
3-4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifts head when on stomach • Reaches, grasps, and moves objects • Laughs • Vocalizes with interactions, matches sung pitches • Balances head in supported sitting • Bears some weight on legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the infant on his/her stomach and sit in front of him/her. When the child lifts their head, make eye contact and sing. When the head drops, stop singing. Repeat. • Hold the infant and dance as you sing or play recorded music. Turn, sway, and dip to the beat of the music. • Give the infant a musical toy and sing in time to his/her movement. Stop singing when he/she stops moving. Repeat. • Sing simple songs with few notes (hot cross buns) and match vocalized responses to the infant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Old Man • Three Blind Mice • Baa Baa Black Sheep • Ring Around the Rosies • It’s Raining, It’s Pouring • Hot Cross Buns • I Love You, You Love Me



Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
5-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolls over • Crosses over middle to reach and grasp • Mimics • Makes babbling sounds, initiates speech sounds, uses tone of voice • Responds to “no” or changes in voice and novel sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing songs with action words and help the child do the actions. • Use books of songs and follow along, point to pictures as you sing. • Sing chants that rhyme with names of the child and other important people (mama, dada, sister, brother, etc.) • Play musical toys/instruments to the side and encourage child to reach for and grasp along with the music. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten in the Bed • Five Little Monkeys • Itsy Bitsy Spider • Pop! Goes the Weasel • One, Two, Buckle My Shoe • Hickory Dickory Dock

Remember: Sing the songs you feel most comfortable with from the examples provided, or any favorites you already know and love. These examples aren't tied to specific ages—they're just guidelines that progress from simpler to more complex as your child grows. Babies and children thrive on repetition, so feel free to sing the same songs multiple times in a row. There's no such thing as too much music in a child's life!



Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
7-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulls to stand/stands alone • Scoots/crawls • Feeds self with pincer (pinch) grasp • Shows preference for and interest in words with 1st syllable accent/stress • Matches notes of simple melodies • Plays peek-a-boo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing children’s songs while clapping, holding hands, doing actions, etc. Encourage the child to do the actions with the words. • Sing songs with simple melodies. Sing a phrase and have the child sing back to you. Match the child’s notes and singing style. • Sing songs with 1 syllable words and emphasize those words like “Zoom Zoom” and “Ah Ah” • Play musical hide and seek: sing “I see the ___” (point to object) “where did it go?” (cover object w/ scarf) “peek-a-boo” (pull scarf off object) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheels on the Bus • If All the Raindrops • I’m a Little Teapot • Mulberry Bush • Zoom Zoom Zoom, We’re Going to the Moon • Skip to My Lou

Keep in mind: The musical activities shared here are not exclusive to a single developmental stage. They can be carried forward and adapted as your child continues to grow and progress through other stages of development. Kids love and thrive with repetition, so you can't use any one song too much!



HARMONY GARDEN SPROUTS

Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
9-10 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sits alone • Walks holding hands with someone else walking • Listens when spoken to • Plays pat-a-cake • Says “mama” “dada” “bye-bye” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage independent play: give the child several objects that make noise and let him/her play along to recorded music • Sing songs that name objects, help the child walk around and touch each object. • Sing songs with names and replace them with the child’s name. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer in the Dell • Alphabet Song • 5 Green and Speckled Frogs • Are You Sleeping? • A Tisket, A Tasket
11-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walks • Drinks from cup • Recognizes words for common objects • Moves objects in beat to music • Indicates wants by pointing and vocalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the child a safe toy (stay with them when they have the toy) that makes music when blown (kazoo, harmonica, recorder). Model rhythmic and/or humming sounds. • Use pictures and point to them for songs like Alice the Camel • Sing A Hunting We Will Go and find objects around the house. • Give the child instruments to play and sing about each one as they play, changing the words as they change the instrument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is Thumbkin • Clap, Clap, Clap Your Hands • Boom Boom Ain’t It Great to Be Crazy • A Hunting We Will Go • Alice the Camel • Mister Sun



HARMONY GARDEN SPROUTS

Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbs stairs • Feeds self with spoon • Sings songs without words • Uses 2-word phrases • Follows simple directions • Demonstrates 20-40 word vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace words of familiar songs with words for daily activities like brushing teeth, combing hair, eating, etc. • Sing songs with directions like clap hands, stomp feet • Play recorded instrumental music and give the child paper and crayons. Sing along to direct drawing. • Play recorded music or play an instrument and encourage the child to use vocal play or babble along. • Call and response singing: sing songs to your baby and allow long pauses between phrases to encourage your toddler to sing back. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Bunny Foo Foo • BINGO • London Bridge • Shake Your Sillies Out • I Love You A Bushel and a Peck • Baby Beluga • This Little Light of Mine • Row Row Row Your Boat



Age	Milestones	Developmental Activities	Examples
18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiates gross motor skills (arms, legs, trunk, whole body) • Learns to label 2-5 new objects/day • Shares • Holds hand of adult to walk across street or parking lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing songs that use actions and name body parts. Encourage the child to do the actions along • Sing songs that name objects. • Encourage pretend play by singing songs or playing songs that tell a story while the child plays with toys. • Replace words of familiar songs with words for skills like crossing the street, sharing, helping. • Free dance fun: Play recorded music or sing, and freeze when the music stops • Instrument parade: March along to songs to encourage rhythmic movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ants Go Marching • Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes • Hokey Pokey • Going on a Bear Hunt • Going to the Zoo • How Much is That Doggy in the Window • If You're Happy and You Know It • When the Saints Go Marching In

Resources:

Standley, J., Walworth, D. (2010). Music therapy with premature infants. Research and development interventions (2nd Ed.) Naperville, IL: The American Music Therapy Association

Bronson Methodist Hospital Music Therapy Department, 2016.