

How to Teach Your Baby to Read Music

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At what age should the child be to start this training? When a child starts to sing or tries to sing, they are ready and they are interested.

Guidelines for the teacher:

1. Make this a game and never play the game unless you and the child are happy and in good form (not irritable, sick, tired or hungry)
2. Make each session short, less than two minutes. The attention span of a baby or small child is about 90 seconds.
3. Play the game about three times a day, more only if the child brings you the cards.
4. Always stop before the child wants to stop.
5. Do not force the child to participate. Wait for another time if necessary.
6. Move quickly from one exercise to another.
7. Remember, if you are interested in the game, the child will be interested to that same degree.

Session guidelines:

1. Always start with the Do symbol. Show the card to the child and sound a pitch that is within the range of the child's voice. Don't use a pitch reference. The syllable used when sounding this pitch isn't important and should actually be changed often. Do not use descriptive names like cat, house, Mommy, etc. You don't want to confuse the child into thinking that the symbol stands for an object or person. If you use a musical word, like Do or La, use the name of the symbol being presented but don't stay with that word. Use other made up syllables like "ha" or "ma" or "bah" that the child can reproduce easily. At first, don't use words that end in a consonant. Encourage the child to match the sound you are making.
2. After the child can match your pitch when sounding a Do card, immediately go from Do to Re then back to Do. When sounding Re, show that card. Always show the card with the pitch you are sounding.
3. After the child can make the pitch jump to Re, add Mi and so on. Make sure the cards are close to the child and let them touch them. Show them that if they touch a

card, they should sound that pitch. Remember to start with Do to get the pitch reference and move from there. You are teaching the major diatonic scale.

4. When the child gets good at sounding some of the tones of the scale, start to present the cards out of order, but always starting with Do. Just make sure that when you present a new tone, present them in order as part of the scale. Once they produce that tone, start to mix things up.

5. Keep a short record of progress from reproducing a given pitch, reproducing two pitches, etc.

6. Work toward laying several cards down in a row on the table in front of the child and have them sing the cards as they are laid out from left to right.

Advanced sessions:

1. Start to drum the table with you finger with a count of four for each note. Don't actually count out loud.

2. Make new cards showing notes with stems (half notes). Now drum four beats with a whole note and two beats with a half note.

3. Make new cards showing quarter notes. Introduce these notes with the others. The symbols should be about 2 ½ to 3 inches high and a red color. For small children 2 ½ years or older, the symbols can be smaller.

4. For children three and older, start to point out music on the written page, but it should only show the melody that you want them to sing.

5. Make charts of a song that the child has learned and make sure they are reading the notes well. Cut the line of music vertically through the measure bars. Rearrange these measures to make new songs. You can leave the words and make it funny or leave the words off, whichever works best.

