

Creating Songs for Young Children

Songs and chants are often used in Early Childhood settings by a wide range of professions to promote skill development, to entertain, to express emotions, to establish predictable routines and structure and to ease transition times.

A simple way to create new songs or to improvise songs during play is to add new lyrics to familiar children songs. Many Early Childhood songs are created this way and anyone can do it! Some songs that work well for this are:

The Wheels On The Bus

Skip To My Lou

- To describe any everyday activity ("The leaves on the trees go side to side")
- To give two-step directions ("Pick up the toys and put them in the box")

Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

- To teach and reinforce routines, to describe play activities ("This is the way we wash our hands," "This is the way we drive the car")

Row Your Boat

- Also good for simple directions or one step tasks ("Wash, wash, wash your hands, wash them nice and clean")

Are You Sleeping?

- Also for directions or to describe the activities of a specific child while playing ("Put your shoes on, put your shoes on, Sister Anne" or "Jack is clapping, Jack is clapping, clap, clap, clap...")

If You're Happy And You Know It

- Any group action may be added to this song ("If You're Happy And You Know It, touch your head")

London Bridge

- Also may be used for simple actions ("Shake the shakers up and down, up and down, up and down")

Any popular song or familiar song that the child loves or you are familiar with.

- Change the words to a song by adding child's name and the activity they are doing to connect in a fun and playful way.

Twinkle Little Star, Clementine and any other song that you can sing easily, has a simple melody and some repetition.

Songwriting ideas for older children: *Fill-In-The-Blanks*, Use a familiar song but change key words or phrases, or rewrite the words to a song based on an academic theme.

Poetry and Songwriting by brainstorming words and phrases related to a topic and group ideas together into song or poetry lines.

Andrew Ichikawa, February 2023

www.pathwaysmusictherapy.ca

Getting the Most Out Of A Song

There's A Little Wheel A Turnin'

Source: Traditional song, Music Together Family Favorites 2, Laurie Berkner Band Favorite Kids' Songs, other recordings

Lyrics: many versions and possible substitutions

There's a little wheel a turnin' in my heart
There's a little wheel a turnin' in my heart
In my heart, in my heart
There's a little wheel a turnin' in my heart

There's a little dance a dancin' in my heart...
There's a little drum a drummin' in my heart...
There's a little song a singin' in my heart...

Adaptation ideas:

This song can be used playfully as a template to address a broad range of goal areas and concepts, making it flexible to use, adapt and develop from week to week in both planned and spontaneous ways.

- song with actions, signs – there are two hands clapping in my heart, there's a little flute a playing in my heart. I am running like Sonic in my heart
- circle reflection (imitate student actions) – Jared is jumping up and down
- daily activities and favourite activities – there's a little swimmer...
- speech sounds and vocal play, animal sounds and actions – dee dee, there's a little cat meowing...
- instruments and other props (scarves/parachute/stretchy band/balls/toys) - there's a little egg a shaking... Add quiet/loud/fast/slow
- basic concepts (location words), there's a little egg a shaking on my knee (behind my back, beside my shoe)
- vocabulary (colours, modes of transportation) – there a blue car driving on the street..
- exploring emotions – I am feeling very happy in my heart...
- names and social awareness of peers – Who is wearing yellow today, Someone's wearing sandals today..
- hello song (hello, hello to everyone), transition song (we are going to wash our hands at the sink), anything else you can think of.

Andrew Ichikawa, February 2023

www.pathwaysmusictherapy.ca

Simple Songs and Games for Instrument Play in Early Education

Shakers - Shake It High and Shake It Low (London Bridge Is Falling Down)

Shake your shaker in the air,
In the air, in the air
Shake your shaker in the air
Shake your shaker

Shake it high and shake it low...
Shake it yes, shake it no...
Shake it fast and shake it slow...
Shake it stop, shake it go...
Shake it near and shake it far...
Drive your shaker like a car...

Additional verses:
Shake it here, shake it there...

Source: Connors, Abigail. (2004). *101 Rhythm Instrument Activities for Young Children*. Gryphon House: Beltsville, MD

Sticks – Tap Tap Tap Your Sticks (Row Row Row Your Boat)

Tap tap tap your sticks
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream

Tap tap tap your feet...
Tap tap tap the floor...
Pound, pound pound your sticks...
Hammer hammer hammer your sticks...
Roll roll roll your sticks...
Stir stir stir the soup (pretend play)
Make an "X" (letters, shapes)

Additional verses:
Scrape scrape scrape your sticks...

Source: Connors, Abigail. (2004). *101 Rhythm Instrument Activities for Young Children*. Gryphon House: Beltsville, MD

Follow the leader (instruments, plastic containers, body percussion)

- Follow the child's lead in playing instruments – stop instrument playing when the child stops, play loud/soft/fast/slow along with the child, move around the room while child plays drum (freeze game).
- Children may also lead by saying "stop" and "go" or "fast" and "slow"
- Sing a familiar song as you play.

Additional activities for a range of ages

- Drum circle based activities – follow the leader (play a simple beat, echo game, imitation game, use of hand signals or body movements to lead go/stop, loud/soft, fast/slow), play rhythm patterns and create rhythm patterns using names, favourite foods, chants (say it and play it).
- Play instruments along to recording or song.
- Explore instruments and play freely or play with a theme in mind (ex. the zoo, loud and quiet, happy and sad)