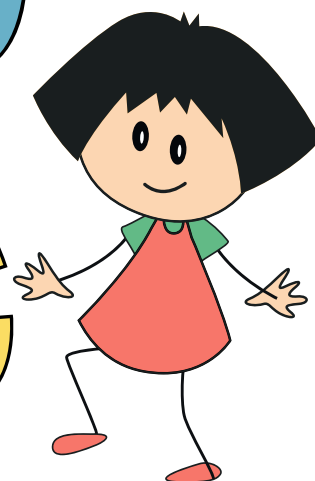


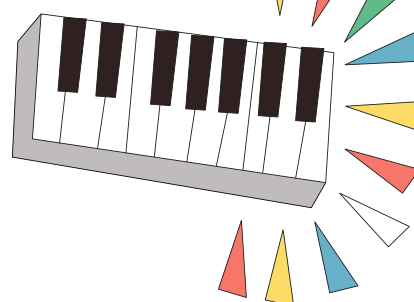


MUSIC time



Prepare for practice cards

Supporter's Guide



By Helen Pia

Music Time Prepare for Practice Cards Supporter's Guide

"Music is the language of emotion.
Don't teach me how to play, teach me a reason to play."

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To my sons,
Tate and
Ryan,
my inspiration

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musictimecards.com

Music Time

Prepare for Practice Cards

Supporter's Guide

How To Use This Book and Welcome Message



How To Use This Book

This book has been written as a guide for everyone who facilitates a young musician's practice time.

It can be difficult to encourage an active and fun loving child to practise their musical instrument. The ideas in this book are about bringing fun, a sense of discovery and play into their music experience.

This book is a companion guide for the Music Time cards which are available as a physical card deck or through the Music Time app.

On days when your young musician needs some encouragement to practice, they will choose a Music Time card. Each card features a specifically designed transitional activity for them to complete either before or during their music practice session. The goal is for them to enjoy learning music.

This book has three sections.

This first section is 'How to use this book' and also a 'Welcome Message' to your young musician.

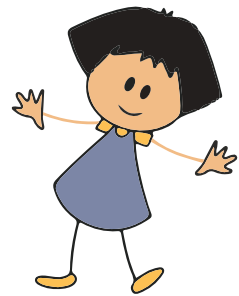
The middle and main section of the book is designed to provide you with an explanation of the card chosen for that day. The ideas on the cards are wide and varied. Some may not be suitable at the time they are selected, and in this case, please select another card.

'Some Final Ideas' is the third section of the book. It offers some more complex plans and ideas that take longer to organize or may apply for a longer periods of time.

This book was written to inspire. It is not instrument specific. The book is here to take the stress out of encouraging your child to practise. Without the stress, both you and your young musician will enjoy the practice sessions more. You'll find it easier to be patient and happy and that's the best way to encourage your young musician to do their best.



Welcome Message



Dear young musician,

Welcome to Music Time.

We declare that music practice time is the best fun!

We have many ideas in this book for you to use. Each one is about finding something new and exciting about your playing and your music.

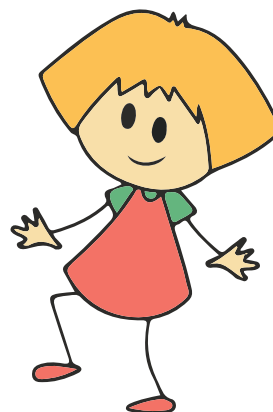
There are many ways to use this book.

You may have a deck of cards or the Music Time app to select the activity and then refer to this book for a more detailed explanation of the activity. You may like to go through the ideas in this book in order, one after another. Or, you may like to shut your eyes and open the book at any page and do what is suggested.

Each idea in Music Time is about approaching your practice session with an attitude of exploration. You are going to investigate many aspects of the music you play.

Music is about enjoyment and that's what this book is about too.

Have lots of fun!



Cards list

1	.....	The Whole Person
2	.....	Music is a Language
3	.....	Body Works
4	.....	New Day
5	.....	Composer Day
6	.....	How Would They Do It?
7	.....	Picture Day
8	.....	10 Minutes Notice
9	.....	Hide and Seek
10	.....	Posture Practice
11	.....	Aim of the day
12	.....	Dress-up Day
13	.....	Mix it Up Day
14	.....	Target Day
15	.....	Lovely Smell Day
16	.....	Feeling with the Body
17	.....	I'm Glad Day
18	.....	Showbiz
19	.....	Focus Day
20	.....	Back to Basics Day
21	.....	Field Trip
22	.....	Getting The Beat
23	.....	Be Ready
24	.....	My Instrument
25	.....	Teach a Toy Day
26	.....	Music Newsletter
27	.....	Singing Day
28	.....	Duet Day
29	.....	Dance
30	.....	Interpretations
31	.....	Audience
32	.....	Colour Code
33	.....	Make A change
34	.....	Guess That Scale
35	.....	Textures
36	.....	Countdown
37	.....	Make a Movie
38	.....	Calendar
39	.....	Poetry
40	.....	Meditate
41	.....	Draw The Music

Music Time Cards



1

The whole person

Theme: Variety

Useful items: Access to the internet or sheet music

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

For young people, concentrating for some time can be a challenge.

To help your young musician stay engaged with their music, let's weave some other music-related activities into their practice session today.

Here are some suggestions - or you may like to think of your own!

- Read a short story about a composer
- Give your young musician a picture of their instrument to colour in. You will find some in the Picture Download library in the link above.
- Have your young musician write some music of their own. They might like to play the tune they wrote.
- Listen to music which features the instrument your young musician is learning. Whenever possible, listen together and talk about what you hear.
- Find a recording of one of their pieces of music and ask your young musician to sing or dance along to it.
- Or something else?



Music is a language

Theme: Family

Useful items: Access to the internet



The Activity

Young people learn to speak by watching mouths move and listening to sounds. In the same way, when learning an instrument, they benefit by watching and hearing others play.

For three to five minutes, sit with your young musician and together watch a video of people playing the instrument they are learning.

After watching the video, invite your young musician to share with you what they have observed and heard. They may like to talk about:

- Musical interpretation - How did the music make them feel?
- What they enjoyed most – What was the best part?
- Dynamics - Were there loud and soft passages in the music?
- Tempo - Was the music fast or slow?
- Technical details - Did they notice anything interesting about how the musicians played?
- Posture – Did the performers sit or stand in a way that helped their playing?

Discussions like these help your young musician become more aware of the skills needed to play their instrument. They also learn to express their thoughts. Be sure to encourage them to use musical terms.



Body Works

Theme: Body Awareness
Useful items: Backyard or play area



The Activity

Playing music involves the whole body. An effective and enjoyable way to energise the body is by having time for playful exercise.

Today, let's start your young musician's practice outdoors with a quick game of tag, basketball, handball or skipping - or they can choose another physically energetic activity they would like to do.

Allow 5 -10 minutes to play outside. This will give their body time to burn off excess energy or alternatively generate some desired energy they can utilise when playing their instrument.

Then it is time to practise. Ask them to remember the smiling face they had when playing outside and to bring that happy face back inside with them to make their practice session fun too.



New Day

Theme: Thinking

Useful items: Optional - Access to the internet

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

Practising is all about discovering!

It's important that practice isn't just about repeating things over and over, rather it's about learning new skills and growth.

Today, let's focus on achieving something new by bringing more awareness to a section of music.

The steps:

1. Select a section of music. This could be selected by you, your young musician or their teacher (from the previous lesson). Make sure the goal is achievable and one they will feel proud to accomplish.
2. Ensure your young musician knows what they are aiming for and that they have an understanding of any technical skills they need that will help them reach their goal.
3. Choose just one area to focus on. This way, the practice will feel like a fun and rewarding journey of discovery!

Here are a few examples (choose one which best suits):

- The notes in the section played in tune
- Smooth phrasing
- Staying in time
- Correct fingering
- Better tone

If you would like to use the New Day Wheel to decide what to focus on, click the link above.

Composer Day

Theme: Research

Useful items: Access to the internet



The Activity

Encourage your young musician to discover more about the composer of one of the pieces they are playing. The goal is to find out what inspired the composer to write the music and then reflect this knowledge in the playing of the piece.

Here are some questions you might like to research:

- When did they live?
- Where did they live?
- What was life like then?
- What kind of clothes did the people wear during that time?
- Did the composer study music at an early age?
- Which instruments were popular at this time?
- What styles of dance were popular then?
- What were the composer's other interests outside of music?

With your young musician, look to identify aspects of the composer's life that might be expressed in the piece.

For example, if the chosen piece is a gigue, did the composer write it because they are from England and because they liked to dance to this lively style of music? If so, when your young musician plays the gigue, they could play the music as if they were the composer imagining they are dancing to the music.

They may like to create a poster for their room as a reminder of their discoveries.

How Would They Do It?

Theme: Acting
Useful items: None required

HOW WOULD THEY DO IT? 6

Usually dogs bark and cats meow. Ballet dancers dance and acrobats walk on their hands.

Today, pretend to be a character doing an activity they don't usually do.

For example, dance like a firefighter or run like an acrobat.



Are there actions in your music that could be played with the same energy?

The Activity

Today's focus is a character based exploration of different ways to interpret music using physical activities.

We are looking at how different people or characters may interpret the same piece of music. For example, if a ballerina was asked to walk, they may walk on their toes; however, if a dog was asked to walk, their walk is on all fours.

Steps:

1. Ask your young musician to choose a Character (some suggestions are below)
2. Then choose an activity - one from the Activity List or decide on one of your own
3. Now, ask them the question, "How would [your character] [the activity]?" For example, "How would a racing car skip." If a prompt is needed, you could ask, "Would they be loud or soft?"; "Would they be fast or slow?"
4. Allow your musician to do the movement as the character
5. Relate this back to their music by asking them, "What type of music would be played like that?" Are they reminded of a piece, a scale or exercise they are playing? For example: If your young musician is to run like a dog, does that remind them of playing scales or something else?

Character suggestions

Ballet Dancer
Firefighter
Racing car
Dog
Cat
Acrobat

Activity Suggestions

Run
Walk
Jump
Stand
Sit
Skip

Picture Day

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Access to the internet, printer, paper, possibly glue and colour pencils



The Activity

Encourage your young musician to express their interpretation of one of their music pieces with pictures that reflect how the music feels to them. They may choose to draw pictures, find images on the internet or take photos.

For example,

- If the piece is called 'Country Garden', they may choose to draw or take photos of flowers.
- For a piece that has many fast notes, they may find pictures of galloping horses or people running.
- A piece with soft and gentle music may be represented by pictures of clouds.

Once your young musician has a collection of pictures, perhaps, with your help, they may like to make a display by gluing the pictures onto a large sheet of paper.

For inspiration, hang their display near where they play their music. Before playing the piece, they could look at the collage to remind them of their thoughts about the music.



10 Minutes Notice

Theme: Variety
Useful items: Phone or a timer



The Activity

Your young musician may be engaged in an activity before it's time to practise their instrument. Having a few minutes to complete or wind down from one activity and to prepare for another can set young people up for success.

Today, your young musician will be given ten minutes notice before their practice session start time.

The aim of this activity to give your young musician time to prepare for their session so they will enjoy it more. It also allows skills such as punctuality and time management to develop.

Your young musician may use the time as they wish with the agreement that they will be ready to practise when the ten (10) minutes is over. Or you may prefer to agree on some tasks they are to complete during the 10 minutes, such as washing their hands, having a drink, finish playing a game and so on.

Steps:

1. Ask them to set a timer to sound when 10 minutes is up.
2. Your young musician then uses the time to prepare for a successful and enjoyable music practice session.
3. When the alarm sounds, they know it's time to practise, and will start their practice session.



Hide and Seek

Theme: Family
Useful items: None required

HIDE AND SEEK

9

Start your practice with a quick game of hide and seek.

Ask an older person to hide something you need for your practice in your music practice room.

It might be the music, the violin or something else.

Perhaps the person who hid it may give you clues to help you locate it.



Now you've found it, it's time to play!

The Activity

Before the practice, let's have fun with a music-themed game of hide and seek.

Your task is to hide something(s) your young musician needs for their practice session. You may choose to hide the instrument in its case (if suitable), hide the music, a notebook, or something else. Take care not to damage the instrument or the music.

Once hidden, ask your young musician to look for it.

When they find what was hidden, they can begin their practice!

Variation: Give your young musician 'hot' and 'cold' clues as they search. Say "cold" when they are going away from the hidden items. Give them "warm" and "hot" clues as they get closer to what was hidden. This variation gives your young musician an extra spark of motivation to find the missing instrument or music. The joy of finding what was hidden can transfer into the music practice.



Posture Practice

Theme: Body Awareness
Useful items: Small hardcover book



The Activity

When first learning to play an instrument, young people are often taught how to stand or sit to play their instrument well. When the body position is new, the muscles have to be trained to support the position.

Let's have a posture practice day today!

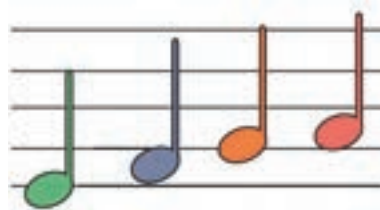
You may like to start this activity by finding a small, hardcover book - one which you won't mind if it falls on the floor - or something similar that they can balance on their head.

Do not hold an instrument for any of these activities.

Ask your young musician to balance the book on their head while standing still. Slowly count to ten (10) encouraging your young musician to keep the book on their head. Catch it if it starts to fall! If the book falls before you reach the count of ten, try again. Maybe they can hold it longer than ten counts.

If they can hold the book on their head standing still, they might like to walk with the book on their head. Take slow steps around the room without touching the book. Don't let it fall!

Next, with your young musician standing or sitting as if they were to play their instrument (but not be near it), put the book on their head. Ask them to imagine playing their instrument while balancing the book. They can focus on their posture making sure the book doesn't fall.



Aim of the day

Theme: Thinking

Useful items: Paper and pencil

AIM OF THE DAY

11

Before you start your practise, decide on something you would like to achieve today.

3 scales
piece C EXERCISE 2 TWICE
section A from memory
EXERCISE 1 4 arpeggios
MY FAVOURITE PIECE
IN TIME exercise 3 three times
correct fingering

Enjoy your practise session working towards achieving your aim.

The Activity

Ask your young musician, "What is the aim of your practice today?" What would they like to be better at and how would they know they've done well?

Some examples of what you and your young musician may plan for today's practice:

1. "I will be pleased if I can play 3 scales 5 times each." (focus on quantity)
2. "I will be happy if I can play these 4 bars at least twice without a mistake." (technical skills).
3. "I will play this arpeggio with the correct fingering without looking at the music". (work on memory).
4. "I will enjoy this piece while I play it." (musicality).

The goals listed above are only suggestions. You may find it helpful to look through the teacher's notes from the last lesson to choose something to work on. If you aren't sure, ask the teacher.

Perhaps write the aim out on a piece of paper before the practice session begins, just for reference.

"Aim of the Day" is about working toward a goal, not about being perfect. It is the progress that counts. Help your young musician choose goals that are achievable. If they don't reach it this time, let them know that they are one step closer because of their effort today.

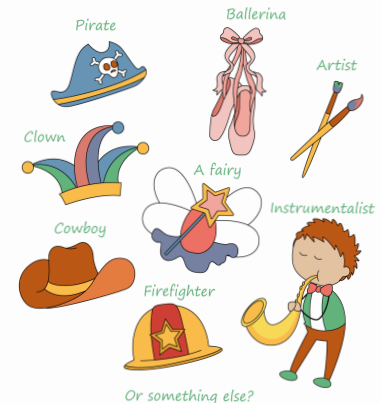
Dress-up Day

Theme: Acting
Useful items: Costume or clothing

DRESS-UP DAY

12

Put on some fun clothes to practise in today.
Do you want to be a...



Now that you are dressed up, play the music
as if you are that person.

The Activity

Today, we are doing something special to help your young musician enjoy their music. Invite them to dress up in a different outfit to their usual music practice clothes. They may choose to wear a full costume or simply put on an unusual clothing item. Ask them to wear whatever makes them feel happy.

Once they are dressed up, ask them to let their outfit inspire the way they play their music.

Here are some fun ideas:

- They may like to dress as a pirate, a fairy or perhaps a farmer. Encourage your son or daughter to play their pieces, exercises, and scales as the character would!
- Put on clothes that look similar to the times the composer lived in and pretend to be the composer.
- Maybe they would like to wear a smart shirt and bow tie, or a dressy blouse and formal pants and perform their pieces as if they were the soloist for a grand symphony orchestra concert. Remind them to take a bow at the end.
- If costumes aren't readily available, borrow clothes from family members or simply change shoes—it all counts!

This experience might inspire a whole new way of expressing their music.

Mix it Up Day

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Optional - Paper, pencil, bowl or hat



The Activity

Typically, music practice follows a regime. For example:

1. Warm-up: Simple stretches, breathing or finger exercises
2. Technical exercises: Finger drills, scales, ear and sight-reading
3. Review of current pieces
4. Introduce new material
5. Wrap-up

Today, it's "Mix It Up Day" meaning your young musician will do things in a different order.

They might like to choose the new order themselves or leave it to chance with a quick game - the "Mix It Up Game".

How to play the "Mix It Up Game":

1. Count how many steps there are for this practice session. For example, if the steps are 1 warm-up exercise, 3 technical exercises, 4 scales, 3 music pieces and 1 new item, that's 12 steps.
2. On a piece of paper, write out all the steps leaving space around each one for cutting.
3. Cut up the paper so that each step is on it's own piece.
4. Put all the pieces of paper into a container such as a hat or a bowl.
5. Ask your young musician to pick one of the pieces of paper.
6. Your young musician will complete the task selected.
7. Keep repeating steps 5 and 6 until all the pieces of paper are gone.

Sometimes, trying things in a different order helps young musicians understand how their usual practice routine supports their progress.

Target Day

Theme: Variety
Useful items: Optional - Dice



The Activity

Today's focus is precision. To achieve this, your young musician will aim to play a selection of their music as accurately as possible.

Your young musician will repeat the section a few times, aiming to play the chosen bars correctly and confidently each time.

Steps:

1. Select a section of music that isn't "quite right". Your young musician, or you, or the teacher will choose this. Ensure improving this section is achievable in the one session.
2. Have your young musician decide how many times they will play this section. They can do this verbally by saying a number or by rolling a die (or dice). Your young musician rolls the di(c)e to find out how many times they will play the chosen section.

Remember to encourage your young musician to relax and have fun repeating the selected section of music. It needn't be perfect today. The practice will benefit them the next time they play that section.

After their practice, you may like to ask, "Did that section get easier?"

For more experienced musicians, you may like to record the section the first time they play it and then after the repetitions are completed to hear if there is any difference.



15

Lovely Smell Day

Theme: Family

Useful items: Your choice of perfume, air freshener, flowers



The Activity

Let's make the space where your young musician practices smell pleasant today.

How would they like the room to smell?

Offer them a variety of different "smells" to choose from using what you have available in the home; smells that would be suitable to put in the room they practice in. Here are some suggestions: air freshener, perfume, essential oils, flowers.

Before they begin their music practice session today, you may like to

- have your young musician spray the room with a scent, or
- ask them to help you find some fragrant plants from your garden and bring them into the music practice space, or
- open a window for fresh air.



Feeling with the Body

Theme: Body Awareness
Useful items: None required



The Activity

Music expresses emotions. Some of the ways this is done is by varying speed and dynamics. For example, sad music may be played slowly and softly while happy music might be faster and played lightly with louder sections.

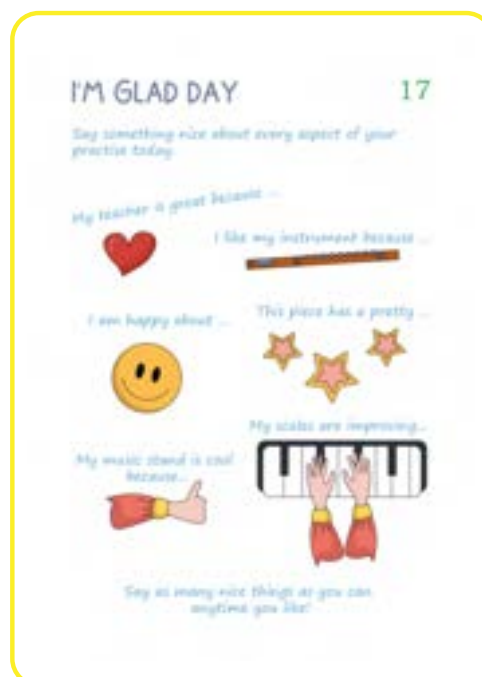
Today, we are exploring ways to express emotions using the body.

Try out these physical movements and, after each activity, ask your young musician how the speed and the sound they made could be applied to their music. Some suggestions are given in the brackets.

- Stamp your feet (music played loudly and fast)
- Stretch up high and feel light on your feet (music played lightly, gently, softly)
- Run on the spot (music played fast)
- Jump with small tiny bounces (music played softly)
- Jump large leaps (music played loudly, slowly, stretched)
- Sway gently like a tree in the breeze (music played smoothly, softly)
- Stroke a teddy bear or a pet gently (music played softly, quietly)
- add your own.

I'm Glad Day

Theme: Thinking
Useful items: None required



The Activity

"I'm Glad Day" is a positive-thinking day. Your young musician will be looking to find something good about aspects of their practice.

They may like to start by saying as many complimentary things as they can about practising their instrument before their practice session.

Then, they may like to say something positive before or after each section of their practice. This fun activity will help them enjoy and appreciate their practice session.

Some examples of how their statements may start are:

- My music teacher is a good teacher because ...
- I like my instrument because ...
- The composer has written an interesting piece because ...
- Scales are useful because ...
- I like this exercise because...
- I enjoy playing music because ...

What other aspects of your practice can you complement?

Remind your young musician to say something appreciative about their own playing too!

Showbiz

Theme: Acting

Useful items: Phone or video camera

SHOWBIZ

18

You are the GUEST ARTIST on a TV show!
LET the audience know your name, the instrument
you play and why you like playing it.



Are you going to give a performance?

The Activity

Your young musician is the “star” today and you (their supporter) are the reporter for tonight's news. Grab your video camera if you like so you can record the interview.

Your role is to interview your young musician as if they were a famous musician. You might like to ask them questions about their instrument, their pieces, what they like playing and why.

Here are some sample questions you may like ask your star:

- What is your favourite song to play?
- Can you show me how you hold your instrument?
- Which do you like more - fast songs or slow songs?
- If your instrument could talk, what would it say?
- What's your favourite time of day to practise?
- What advice would you give to someone who's just starting to learn music?
- What will you be playing today?

At the end of the interview, your star will hopefully treat you to a performance. They may choose to play their favourite piece or perhaps you would like to hear a scale.

Note: The purpose of the video is to build confidence and to have fun.



Focus Day

Theme: Thinking

Useful items: Optional - hat



The Activity

There may be times your young musician's mind wanders and they play their music automatically. This happens when they are playing something very familiar. They may reach the end of a scale or piece without remembering what they played.

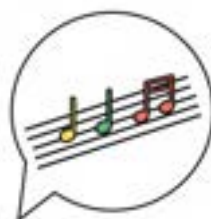
Clues that this may be happening are that as soon as they have finished playing they talk about something other than their music such as a spider walking up the wall or a game they want to play.

Today is about 'staying focused' – concentrating on every note played.

To have more fun with staying focused, your young musician may like to wear a hat while practising. Let's call this the "focus hat".

They could use a hat they already own or you could make one together before they start their practice session.

They could wear the focus hat for the whole practice session or put it on for the sections of music where extra focus and concentration is needed.



20

Back to Basics Day

Theme: Variety
Useful items: None required



The Activity

Today, it's back to basics.

Your young musician is to pretend they are a beginner again. Ask them to think of the skills required to handle and hold their instrument. You may say, "Think back to how it was when you started - what were you asked to do to play your instrument?"

Ask your young musician to play pieces and scales from earlier in their music learning journey. Perhaps they may like to play from a music book they used a few months or even a year or two ago.

Today, they will concentrate on technique and body position. Ask them, "How does it feel to hold your instrument now you are more experienced?" "How does your music sound to you?"

Perhaps they will notice a difference in their abilities.

This is about having fun with basic skills. Ask them to notice the sensations, feelings and sounds they experience while playing music they have played before.



Field Trip

Theme: Family
Useful items: Optional - Phone

FIELD TRIP

21

Can you think of someone you could visit who may like to hear you play?

Perhaps a grandparent or a friend.

Make a list of the music you would play.

Perhaps you can organize a date and time to visit them.



Play today as if they were listening to you.

The Activity

The theme today is to discuss how to share their music by playing in a different location.

Ask your young musician to think of someone they would like to visit who would enjoy hearing them play. This person could be a neighbour, grandparent or a friend from school.

Ideas for today. Your young musician could:

- Make a short list of fun things to play when they visit someone.
- Perhaps create a programme sheet that can be given to the listeners before the performance.
- Organise the visit, allowing a few days for your young musician to prepare for the visit.
- Encourage your young musician to practice today as if they were playing for the people they chose to visit.

Before the visit, ensure your young musician is comfortable with their material. They could also practise announcing the pieces they plan to play.

When you arrive at the location, encourage your young musician to enjoy their playing so the listener(s) will enjoy it too.

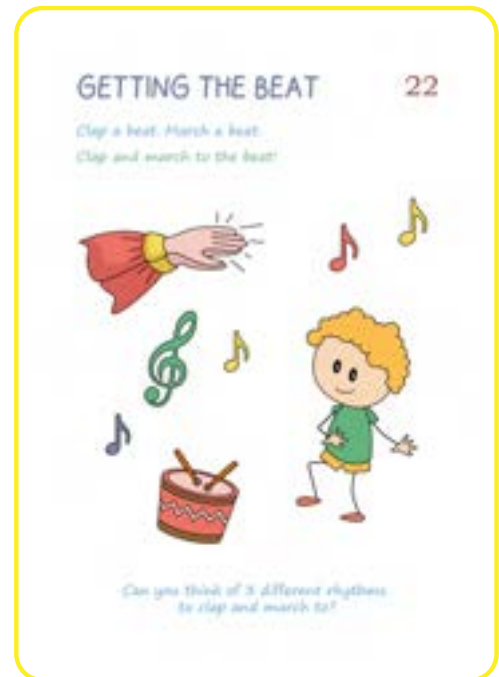


Getting the beat

Theme: Body Awareness

Useful items: Optional - Access to the internet

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

Let's feel the beat! Keeping time is an important skill when playing music. Today we will use the body to develop this skill.

With your young musician, walk together around the room to a steady beat, or encourage them to do it by themselves. To set the steady beat you may like to clap your hands, use a metronome or the sound of your feet on the floor. Choose a beat that is at a similar tempo to one of the pieces your young musician is studying. Some tunes are available at the link above.

March: Ask them to march to the steady beat, lifting their knees, swinging their arms and holding their head up as you clap the beat.

March and clap: Once they are confident marching to your clapping, ask them to clap and march at the same time, keeping the beat steady.

Beat a drum: Your young musician claps their hands or beats a drum while you march around the room to their steady beat.

Various tempos: The music pieces they play would usually have different tempos. Ask them to identify the slow ones and the faster ones.

Vary the beat: It might be fun to use another sound like a bell or a triangle for this one. One person claps a steady beat, the other has the bell or triangle. On the sound of the bell, the beat changes to faster or slower. The holder of the bell decides this. The 'clapper' must change to the new speed immediately and hold the new beat speed steady (just like a metronome).

Be Ready

Theme: Thinking

Useful items: None required



The Activity

Today your young musician will practise noticing when certain notes, sequences of notes or a section of music appears more difficult to play than the rest of their music. This could be in scales, exercises or pieces. The teacher or your young musician could decide on which sections are 'tricky'.

To add some fun to the practice session, when they know they are coming up to the 'tricky bit', just before they play that section of music where more precision is required, they will indicate that they are 'ready' to concentrate with an action of their choice.

Here are some examples of 'ready' actions they may take:

- Touch their nose
- Lift one foot
- Bend their knees
- Tap the floor with their toe
- Smile
- Say "Now"
- Make a sound of their choice.

Choose just one action. For example, the tricky bit is in bar 4 and their action is to bend the knees. During the last note of bar 3 bend the knees, then play bar 4 with focus and concentration. It is up to them when they want to straighten their legs again.

The action they choose may cause a break in the music. It is up to you whether this is a good thing to do. If this is of concern, choose an action that won't stop the music.

My Instrument

Theme: Research

Useful items: Access to the internet



The Activity

Learning about which materials are used to make their instrument will help young people appreciate how it makes music.

For example, violins and guitars are made from wood. Simply put, they are "shaped wooden boxes" with holes to help the sound come out.

Today's activity is to learn what the different parts of their instrument are made of and how that part assists in producing the sound the instrument makes.

This activity could include researching:

- What are the parts of the instrument named?
- What materials are the parts made from?
- How is the instrument put together?

Your young musician may like to:

- do detailed research, or
- explain to you the various parts of the instrument and how they help make the sound
- create a poster on how it's made, or
- write a leaflet of their discoveries
- their own choice.



Teach a Toy Day

Theme: Acting
Useful items: a toy



The Activity

It's time for your young musician's favourite toy to have a music lesson. Your young musician will be the teacher.

Ask them to choose the toy which would like to learn to play their instrument. As the teacher, they will need to explain to the toy the stance or posture required for the instrument, how to hold the instrument, how to position the fingers (though most toys don't have fingers, it still can be explained) and so on.

The toy plays the instrument with their help.

The young musician could then explain the meaning of the notes and how to play the music, the feel of the music and so on.

Your young musician also needs to encourage the toy with plenty of kind words.

As the teacher, they would give feedback to the toy on how to improve its performance. They would demonstrate the correct way to play the section that the toy may not have been played well and allow the toy to have another go.

Variation: Teach an Adult Day

Instead of teaching a toy, your young musician may like to teach you or another adult in your household how to play the instrument. Pretend you have never played the instrument before. They will be the teacher and you will be their willing student.

Music Newsletter

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Paper and pencils or computer



The Activity

Share the fun of learning an instrument today by writing a newsletter for the family or a video blog.

Your young musician is to prepare a newsletter. The newsletter could have articles about the new pieces they are learning, give tips for better practice sessions and may include a special events calendar which could list practice sessions and performances.

If there is more than one musician in the household, they may also like to contribute articles to the newsletter.

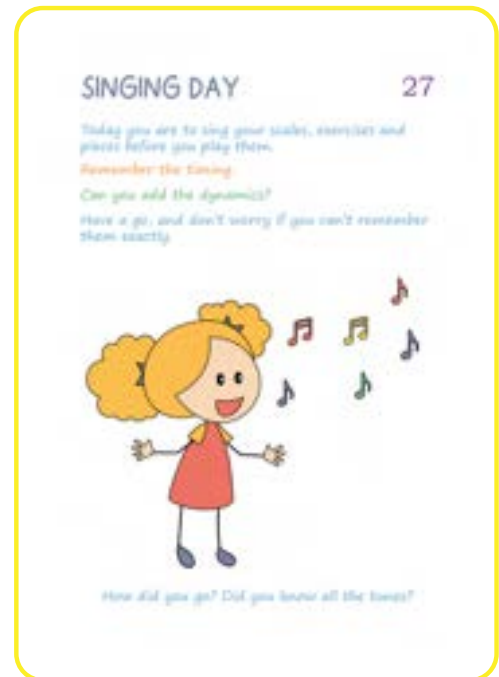
Ideas for the newsletter:

- Name the newsletter
- Decide how often the newsletter will be produced – weekly, monthly?
- Keep it small, so it stays fun - Two or three articles will probably be enough
- It could be handwritten or produced on the computer
- Are there any pictures that can be included with the articles?



Singing Day

Theme: Variety
Useful items: None required



The Activity

Today, ask your young musician to sing their scales, exercises and pieces before they play them.

When learning an instrument, the musician must practise the mechanical skills of how to physically move parts of instrument to make a sound. For example, when playing the piano they must push the piano keys; when playing the violin, one hand is moving the bow across the strings and the other is to press the strings to make the notes, all while holding the instrument at the chin.

Sometimes, as they develop these mechanical skills, the musicality of their playing takes time to emerge.

Singing day is about putting the mechanics of making the music aside and, rather than using the instrument to play all the exercises, scales and songs, your young musician will have a go at singing them (if they know the tune). This isn't as easy as it sounds.

Being able to sing what they are playing is valuable. If your young musician can hear the note in their head before they play it, they'll be able to hear whether the note they actually played was the correct one. Remember, tempo is also part of tune.

Don't worry if they can't remember the tunes, simply encourage them to have a go. Your young musician will get better with practise.

Duet Day

Theme: Family

Useful items: Household items like pots



The Activity

Play along with your young musician today.

Take your instrument and play along with your young musician. If you don't have an instrument, you may like to make "a drum" by using a pot from the kitchen and tapping its base with a wooden spoon.

This is an informal play-along session, not a teaching session; time for both of you to enjoy making music together and have some fun!

You may like to invite other members of the household to join in.

You can also experiment with other items around the home that can be used to make music.

Here are some ideas:

1. Pot lids – Cymbals
 - o Clash them together for a bright, crashing sound.
2. Plastic container filled with rice – Shaker or maraca
 - o Shake gently for rhythmic textures.
3. Rubber bands stretched over a tissue box – Guitar or harp
 - o Pluck the bands for different pitched twangs.
4. Drinking glasses with water – percussion
 - o Tap or rub the rims to create musical notes.
5. Paper towel tubes – Trumpet or horn
 - o Blow through them as if they are wind instruments.
6. Plastic container with a tight lid – Hand drum or conga
 - o Tap different spots for various tones.
7. Keys jingled together – Tambourine or sleigh bells
 - o Shake or jingle for light, bright sounds.

Dance

Theme: Body Awareness

Useful items: Access to the internet

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

Some of the pieces your young musician may be learning may be an old-style dance, such as a waltz, minuet, march, polka, gavotte or gigue.

A fresh and engaging way for your young musician to understand the musicality of a waltz or a minuet is to dance one.

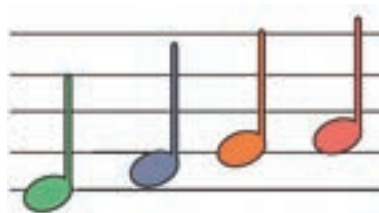
Choose a suitable piece of music that is similar to the piece of music they are playing. You may need to look on the internet for suitable music or the link above has some examples.

With your young musician:

- dance a waltz or
- improvise a minuet or
- do a gig or a polka, or
- simply dance in your own style to the music.

It's lots of fun and a great way for your young musician to feel the rhythm, beat, flow and energy of the music.

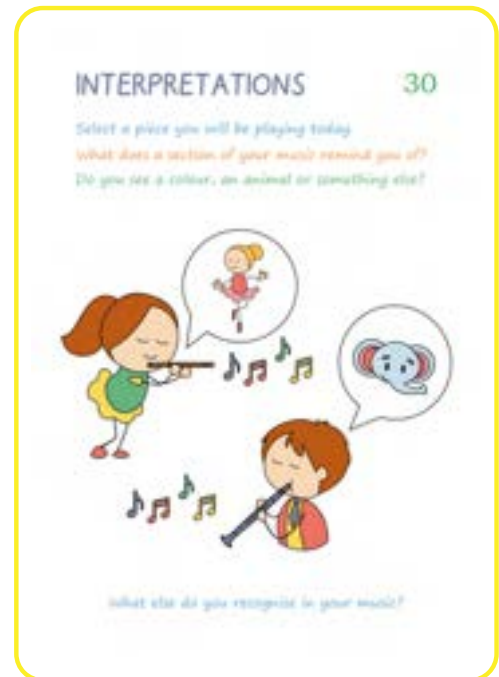
If you aren't sure of the steps, make them up (or do some research). The most important aspect of this activity is to feel the rhythm of the music and how the body responds.



Interpretations

Theme: Thinking

Useful items: Paper and pencil



The Activity

Today, we invite your young musician to discover that playing music is more than just playing notes. Today, we ask them to express the mood of the music they are playing.

This is a skill musicians use to make their music more enjoyable to listen to.

When thinking of a piece of music they are playing, your young musician is to imagine what the music tells the listener. Hint: sometimes it is in the title of the piece of music.

Some examples:

- Music named "Elephant Song" might "sound" like elephants stopping
- A piece named "Little Birds" might remind you of birds chirping
- A waltz may encourage dancing
- The name "Lazy Day" may be associated with sitting on green grass relaxing under a tree.

Ask your young musician to think about the pieces they are playing and then talk with you or write down what they see, feel or hear in the music. This helps them bring out their own personal expression of the music.

Interpreting their music this way adds enjoyment, sparks imagination and encourages more skilful playing.



Audience

Theme: Acting

Useful items: Paper, pencils, scissors, toys, chairs

AUDIENCE

31

It's always fun to play your instrument for an audience.

Ask household members to be your audience or put your toys out to watch you.

You may like to organise tickets and programs for dates.



Enjoy your performance!

The Activity

It's always fun to have an audience.

You and other members of the household could become the audience and listen to your young musician as they play a concert at home.

Or, your young musician may prefer to set up teddies and other toys as their audience.

Before their practise today, help your young musician set up for their performance.

Steps:

1. Invite the audience. This could be family members or their toys.
2. Provide seating for the audience or arrange the toys.
3. Decide on the program.
4. Optional - organise tickets for the concert.
5. Ask the audience to arrive and take their seats.
6. Perform.
7. Pack away the toys and the seating.

For their performance (step 6), remind them to

- Bow to the audience before they start
- Introduce their pieces or scales
- Play as beautifully as they can
- Bow to the audience once again at the end of the performance to accept the applause.

Colour Code

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Photocopier, coloured pencils or highlighters



The Activity

Today your young musician will have a closer look at the music they are playing and decide what mood and emotion they want to convey when they play.

The idea is that they will use colours to show where the mood changes. This could be where there are dynamic changes (louds and softs), or style differences such as smooth or staccato or where they feel happy, sad or another emotion.

Steps:

- Photocopy⁽¹⁾ the music they will need today
- Ask your young musician to examine the music, determine the mood of the piece and where there are changes of expression (changes to the mood)
- Next, ask them to choose appropriate colours for the mood themes they have identified
- Now colour the different sections with the colours they have chosen for each of the different moods

An example: Colouring according to the dynamics: Have a look at the markings on the piece. If there are dynamics marked *pp*, *p*, *mf* and *f*, then they would choose four colours. Perhaps they might choose soft pink for *pp*, light blue for *p*, orange for *mf* and red for *f*. Choose any colour that motivates you. Colour in the bar or draw lines under the bar to match the colour code chosen.

When they play using the coloured music, the colours are there to remind them of the musical expression they can add to their performance.

(1) Please consider copyright restrictions

Make A Change

Theme: Variety

Useful items: Access to the internet

MAKE A CHANGE

33

Need a change?

Do something different today when you are playing your instrument.

Here are some suggestions:

Play in a different room

Play in front of a mirror

Sit in a different chair



Stand on a box



Play in your backyard



Lie on the floor

Could you think of something different?

The Activity

Sometimes one small change can make practice time more enjoyable and give a new perspective.

Allow your young musician to make a small physical change to their usual practice area or change their playing position, just for today, to have a different experience in their practice session.

Some suggestions are:

- Play in a different room
- Let them look in the mirror to check their posture and playing position
- Sit in a different chair
- It could be fun to sit down or stand up or even lie on the floor while playing their instrument.

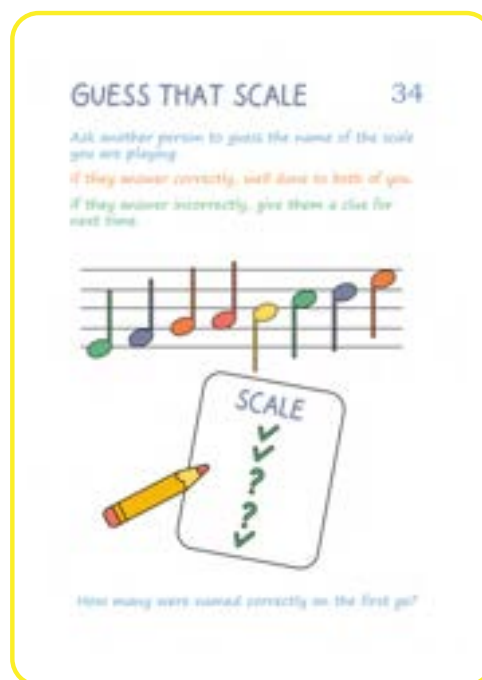
Giving them variety will encourage skill development and concentration.



Guess That Scale

Theme: Family

Useful items: None needed; Internet is optional



The Activity

Playing scales are often part of music practice. This game is to encourage your young musician to enjoy playing their scales.

For this activity, they will play to you a selection of scales they are learning. After each scale is played, you are to try to guess the name of that scale.

If they aren't learning scales, they may like to play a note and you are to guess the name of the note they are playing.

Steps:

1. Make a list of scales your young musician is learning or a list of notes. If using scales for this game ensure you have the complete scale name. For example: C major, or B flat harmonic minor. Note examples would be A, B flat, C, D sharp...
2. Decide the rule with your young musician. What will they do if you guess correctly? What happens if you guess incorrectly?
3. Some rule suggestions: if you guess correctly, they play another scale/note for you to guess. If you guess incorrectly, then must play that scale/note again or they could give you a clue so that you can guess correctly next time
4. Your young musician plays a scale/note for you
5. You guess the name of what they played and follow the rules determined in step 2.
6. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you are both satisfied.

Note: You don't need to know music to guess the scale correctly, simply guess from the list. Encourage your young musician to help you.

Hopefully, there will be a few laughs between you as you play this game.

Textures

Theme: Body Awareness

Useful items: Things around the home, for example: clean sponge, bubble solution, china bowl, flower petals, feathers, hair brush



The Activity

Today we will explore textures as a tool to differentiate "feelings". When playing music we use words like "smooth" and "staccato" to describe the sounds. We are going to represent these ideas with physical items to touch.

With your young musician, find things around the house they can touch, keeping in mind these objects could be another way to express musical concepts. Allow yourselves to be creative.

Examples:

- Playing softly requires a softer touch. Which items around the house require a soft touch? Bubbles, petals, feathers...
- Smooth – stroke a china bowl
- Staccato (shortened notes) - take a plastic hair brush and bounce the finger tips off the bristles
- Loud - clap hands for crescendo, decrescendo... perhaps use play-dough to leave imprints of the fingers
- What other musical concepts could lend themselves to textures?

During the practice session, they can use this awareness to enhance their playing.



36

Countdown

Theme: Thinking
Useful items: Timer



The Activity

Today, you will decide together the duration of the practice session and then set an alarm to sound when "time is up". If you usually have a set length of time for practice sessions, let's vary it just today.

Steps:

1. Decide together how long today's practice session will be.
2. You may like to suggest a time duration range to your young musician. For example, "Choose how long you would like to practise for today from between 25 and 35 minutes".
3. Choose a timer. A phone alarm, digital kitchen timer or alarm clock are all good options.
4. Have your young musician set the timer to sound when their time is up.
5. Away they go!

If they need a break during their practice session make sure they stop the clock/timer and then restart it after their break.



Make a Movie

Theme: Acting

Useful items: Video camera or phone

MAKE A MOVIE

37

Make a short video about you and your instrument. You are the star.

Use a recording device or pretend you are being recorded.

Here are some ideas: introduce yourself, talk about your instrument, show your practice room, play a few pieces. Light, Camera, Action!



When it's finished, invite the family to the PREMIERE!

The Activity

Let's make a movie about your young musician and their instrument. Your young musician is the director and the actor. Perhaps you might volunteer to be camera operator.

Encourage your young musician to determine a theme and then to plan or outline what to present in the video. As with all stories, the movie needs a beginning, middle and end.

What will the theme be? Some ideas for you to consider:

- "About my instrument"
- "Watch me play"
- "My favourite scale"
- "Why I like this piece"

Some ideas for the movie:

- Show how to look after the instrument
- How to prepare the instrument for playing
- Talk about what music they like to play
- Give a demonstration on how to play
- Play a piece or some scales or both.

Once the film is finished, invite the family to the "Premiere"!

Calendar

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Calendar, planner or paper and pencils, stickers or stamps, access to the internet (optional)

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

Having your young musician keep a record of when they practise can be rewarding and motivating.

Before beginning their practice today your young musician will decide how they record their practice sessions. You may already have a family planner they can use or they may prefer to make one of their own just for tracking their music practice.

Find or create a calendar or planner. Once completed it could be placed on the fridge or near their music stand for easy access.

Each day, when they have finished their practice, they will record their practice on the corresponding date on the planner. They might like to use a sticker, a stamp, draw their own picture or write something, such as the word 'yes'. It's their choice.

After a month they will have a great visual record of their practice sessions.

Variations:

- They may use two stickers for the day if their practice session was extra long
- Perhaps use a different sticker if they practised mostly scales
- Use a colourful sticker if they started a new piece.

Samples and templates are available at the link above.

Poetry

Theme: Variety

Useful items: Access to the internet

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>

POETRY

39

Music has rhythm. Songs have rhythm and so do poems.

Clap along as you read the poem to discover its rhythm.



Can you hear the music in the poem?

The Activity

Like music, poetry has rhythm.

Today we'll recite a few rhyming poems before playing music to awaken a sense of rhythm and sharpen listening skills.

Read some poems to your young musician or ask them to read them, encouraging them to hear musical elements such as beat, tempo, melodic phrasing and expression.

Here are 3 poems that pair beautifully with music learning. Suggestions on their musicality are in brackets.

1. "One, Two, Three, Four, Five"; music element - beat
2. "Hey Diddle Diddle" (Traditional Nursery Rhyme); music element - tempo
3. "Rainbow Parade"; music element - melodic phrasing:

"Red and orange, marching by,
Yellow like the sunny sky.
Green like trees that wave and sway,
Blue like oceans far away.
Indigo and violet too—
A rainbow just for me and you!"

As you read the rhyme, you may like to ask your young musician to clap along to the words to feel the rhythm.

For your reference, recordings of these poems are available at the link above.

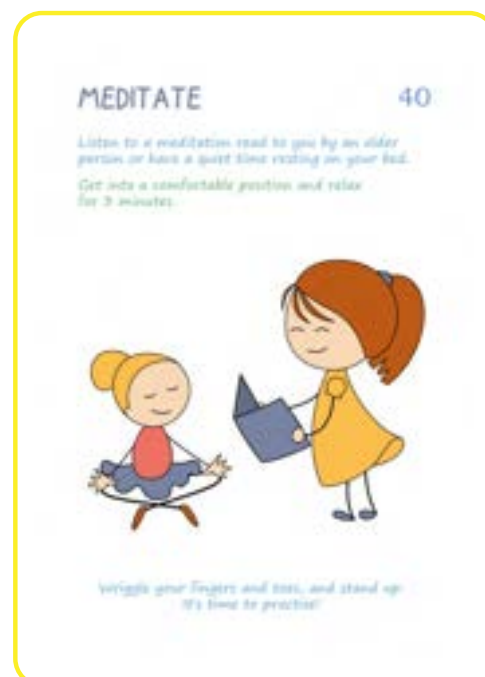
40

Meditate

Theme: Family

Useful items: Optional: Access to the internet

Link: <https://musictimecards.com/downloads/>



The Activity

Before your young musician starts their practice session, spend some time relaxing with them. You may like to read a gentle story, the meditation script below or listen to the recording (link is above). Your young musician can lie or sit and relax their body while they listen. This will give them a chance to re-energise. Quietening the mind and body could help your young musician enjoy their practise more, as it promotes concentration.

A suggestion for the meditation.

Before you start, ask your young musician which is their favourite colour as you may wish to use it in the meditation.

Ask them if they would like to sit or lie down (lying down is preferable). Once they have settled, read the following slowly, in a relaxed and softened tone.

“As you lie/sit quietly there with your eyes closed, you can hear a drum far off in the distance. It is very quiet and slow. Although you may like it to go faster, you notice it stays slow and steady. Listen to the slow, soft drum. (pause). While you listen, a beautiful shiny star appears above your head. Its rays of light are shining towards you. You can feel the warm rays on your head, your arms and legs, and fingers and toes, and your whole body feels warm. (pause). Now you see your [instrument]. Is it far away or close by? Bring it closer to you. As it gets closer imagine it surrounded by a lovely ____ [young musician's favourite colour] light. Hear your instrument play some beautiful music. Listen to the music for a while (pause). The music is stopping now. In your mind, say thank you for the beautiful music. (pause). Let your instrument disappear into some clouds. Slowly wriggle your fingers and toes. When you are ready, stretch your arms and legs and body. Put your hands over your eyes and now slowly open your eyes. Gently take your hands away from your eyes.”

Debrief: ask your young musician what they saw in their meditation.

Draw The Music

Theme: Writing

Useful items: Paper, coloured pencils or crayons, a table and chair or firm surface to draw on

DRAW THE MUSIC

41

Choose a piece you will play today

Thinking of the music, draw whatever you hear, and feel.

No need for real things in this picture.
Use lots of colours and shapes.



How did the picture help you play your piece today?

The Activity

The theme of today is for your young musician to make a drawing that represents how they feel when they play their music. The drawing may be abstract - shapes and lines - in colours that your young musician 'sees' or 'feels' when they play.

Set up place for your young musician to do the drawing and provide drawing materials such as paper and coloured pencils.

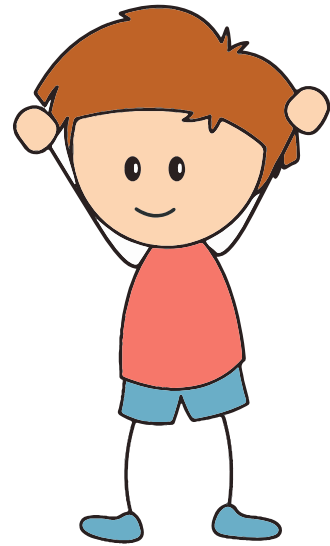
Ask your young musician to create a drawing using colours, lines and shapes that visually describes their music.

There's no right or wrong for this one - they can draw whatever they like. They may like to include swirls, dots, zigzags and other ideas. They can let their imagination and creativity run wild.

If they prefer to draw more realistically, that's perfect too. The purpose of this exercise is to express their music visually. It's their interpretation. Allow them to feel free to express themselves.

They may enjoy doing this activity either before they start their practice or after they have played the music they want to express as a drawing.





Some Final Ideas

Five Minute Activity Evaluation

Do you find that your young musician is easily drawn to screen-based activities, videos or TV and may grumble and be reluctant to start their music practice?

In this exercise, young musicians can explore the 'value' of various activities. They will be assessing their perceived value of enjoyment, concentration and self esteem for various activities.

The purpose of the exercise is to realise that sometimes the things we like to do, such as watching TV and play computer games, aren't always the 'best value for time'. The personal reward for the time given to an activity such as video games is much lower than spending the same amount of time playing an instrument or another creative learning task.

This exercise takes about 40 minutes to complete.

Together you will select various activities you would like to evaluate. Your young musician will fill in a chart that you have prepared and record their reactions after spending 5 minutes on each activity.

Steps:

1. Start by writing a list of various activities that your young musician may do during the week.
2. Ask your young musician to choose about six activities for this exercise. Ensure there is a mixture of skills required. For example, include at least one activity of these types: playing a musical instrument, sport/exercise, television/computer game. For a younger musicians who are six years and under, four activities may be enough.
3. Prepare a chart for your young musician to fill in. This will be the 'Report Card'. The chart will list the activities that will be considered for the exercise. It is a good idea to mix up the activity types. The chart should provide space for the young musician to record their evaluation of the activity once they have spent 5 minutes doing it. The chart should be simple to complete.
4. Decide, by discussion with your young musician, how they will evaluate the activities. When we ran this exercise with our family with musicians aged eight and eleven, we chose four (4) evaluation criteria.

We rated the activities this way:

1. How much concentration was required
2. Enjoyment because they were using personal developed skills
3. How aware of themselves they were
4. How quickly the time went.

You are welcome to consider other evaluation criteria.

Include columns on the report card where your young musician will record their scores.

5. Use a stopwatch or timer to sound an alarm once 5 minutes has elapsed.
6. Set up stations around the house for each of the activities. Make sure everything required is readily at hand – books, remote controls, power, instruments and so on.
7. Prepare the young musician for participation by going over the ground rules:
 - Remind them they will need to do all the activities in the list before stopping the game. It could take over half an hour depending on the number of activities you have chosen.
 - Your young musician will spend 5 minutes at each activity.
 - At the end of 5 minutes the alarm should sound and they will stop immediately and fill in the report card with their impressions.
 - They have one minute to complete the report card and to move to the next activity.
8. Go!
9. When all the activities have been completed, sit with your young musician and discuss their findings.

When our family did this exercise, the young musicians were very frustrated that their 5 minutes on the computer was spent setting up the game (it had timed-out since we first set it up) and they didn't get to play the game much at all. They were surprised that they were beginning to enjoy their violin practise and didn't want to stop when the time was up. They couldn't believe how little TV they saw in 5 minutes and that they spent nearly 3 of their 5 minutes watching ads. They found the experiment an eye opener!

Here is an example of the chart we used. The numbers recorded here are not the answers, nor are these the results you should expect from your young musicians, they are just an example of a scoring page.

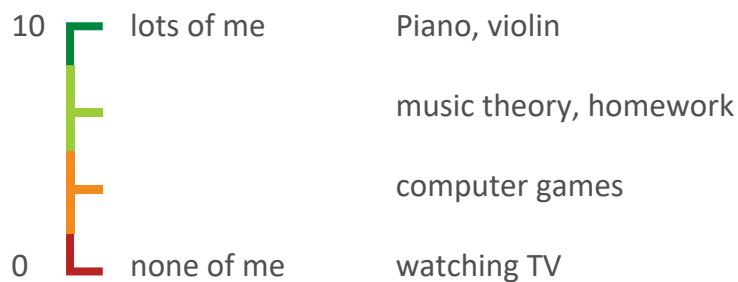
We scored 0 as the lowest value and 10 the highest value.

ACTIVITY	CONCENTRATION (how much was needed)	SKILLS (used/learnt/ utilised)	ME (how much of the self was involved)	TIME - did it go Fast or Slow?
Music Theory	8	4	5	slow
Basketball	2	9	9.5	slow
Piano Practice	9	9	7	slow
TV	3	2	1	fast
Reading	9.5	4	1	fast
Computer game	8	4	3	slow
Violin	6	9.5	9	slow

Outcome Overview

The aim of this exercise is to discover that activities that require more of personal involvement and concentration are more rewarding over time than those that require very little personal skill. Young musicians may notice that time has different values according to the activity they are doing.

You may like to present your finding on a scale:



Encourage your young musician to spend more time in the higher rating activities.

This exercise could be repeated in a few months time. Compare the results to find out if your young musician's perception has changed.

When to practice?

The question of when to practice is an interesting one. Essentially it will be up to you and your young musician to find the time that suits best. Here are a few ideas.

Some families like their young musician to practise before school. The practicality of this will depend on whether your young musician is an early riser. If they are, definitely take advantage of this, as practising before school has many benefits including being fresh and not already overwhelmed by the day's experiences.

For other families, the practice time occurs after school or after dinner and is often part of a busy life style.

Over the years we tried various times of the day for the practice session. Generally after school suits us best as we are not early risers. We have found that young musician's are too tired to practice as soon as they get home from school. They want a snack and rest before they start.

The largest obstacle to practice seems to be screen-time. If the rest period includes watching television, or playing computer games, it can be much more difficult for the young musician to begin their practice.

We recommend not allowing any TV watching or computer games until after the practice session is complete. 30 minutes of relaxing in front of the TV or playing computer games before the practice session rarely works well, as when it is time to practise, their minds seem unfocused and they are not ready to play their instrument.

Some families schedule a 'screen free hour'. For example, every day between 5:00pm and 6:00pm all screens are off. All televisions, computers, hand held games and even telephones are turned off. Even the parents are 'screen free'. This hour can be used for reading, outside games, family activities and of course music practice.



Thank you



To all young musicians: Music is about expressing who you are. Your practice today is your song of tomorrow. Let your music be the voice of your heart.

To all the young musician supporters: your encouragement and guidance allows the music to bloom.

Together, you create harmony and joy.

Thank you for embarking on this journey of delighting in music practice with Music Time Cards. Every note and every moment of practice is a step forward to making your music a beautiful and joyful part of your life.



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