



Do It Yourself

MUSIC CLASSES HANDBOOK

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DIY Music Classes Handbook

Starting your own music class is a great way to give your child all the benefits of singing together in a way that fits your lifestyle! Here are just a few:

- ❖ Singing teaches basic concepts such as numbers, letters, and shapes
- ❖ Singing build memory and increases spatial reasoning, which increases the ability to think and do problem-solving
- ❖ Singing builds empathy
- ❖ Singing builds relationships and develops social skills
- ❖ Singing builds and strengthens all the skills needed to get ready to read
- ❖ Singing gives children the life skill of self-soothing
- ❖ Singing gives you a way to connect with your child, whether it's a newborn, toddler, or older child
- ❖ Singing builds community as it makes your child feel part of something bigger than himself (which is one of the ways it builds empathy)

There are numerous local and nationally offered music classes for babies and young children, but they may be out of your price range, unavailable in your area, not the right fit for the ages of your child or children, or simply not fit your schedule. Or maybe you are a musician with a new baby or young child, and you would like to use those skills as a parent. Whatever your reason for forming your own music class, this handbook is being created to provide all the necessary tools to make it a fun and successful experience. Every parent, child, and family deserves to know the joy of singing together. By providing these materials I hope to make singing accessible and a part of every child's life.

What to Expect

When young children begin anything new it takes a while for them to settle into the routine. Keep the songs the same until everyone is comfortable, and then change out a few every couple of weeks. Children won't sing right away, but **repetition is key** to learning and their eventual participation. Sing the same songs every week for a while, or make minimal changes so they become familiar to both you and the children. You can easily build class materials using only the free songs available on my two websites, so everyone will have free access to those songs.

Don't be concerned if your child doesn't join in right away. Different children respond differently, and at their own comfort level. Just know it's all going into those little brains and will all come joyfully out - often when you least expect it! So just sing and have fun.



Getting Organized!

Who will be in your music class?

Ages

There are pros and cons to having same or mixed-age classes, and this might be the first decision you make when creating your class

- **Same age:**
Having a group babies who are all pre-walkers allows you to do a very specific lullaby, baby massage, and tickle songs. If you are a new parent, this is the most fun way to connect with your baby. As soon as babies start crawling, this becomes a different class!
- **Age range of a few years**
Once children are walking, ages 1-4 work together beautifully.
- **True family style**
Having an afternoon/after school music class with older children provides opportunities for little ones to learn from older friends and siblings. **Younger kids love to watch and copy older kids, and this can leave you free to give one-on-one attention to babies.**

Building a Class

There are many options for finding parents to join your class. Think about your lifestyle, and the people you already interact with as a parent. If you don't have any support, look around your community and find others in the same situation. Below are some scenarios to give you some ideas for putting the group together.

- **Parent Groups:** PEPS or other parent support groups you already belong to can be the core of your music group. This might be all first-time parents, or include older siblings. If it's a large group, you might work with other member to form music groups for each.
- **Neighborhoods**
Maybe you are a stay at home mom in a neighborhood with others like you. You could easily get together for thirty minutes a week and rotate houses. No loading up kids in the car and all that involves!



- **Apartment Complex**

Do you live in an apartment complex with a lot of families with young children? You might be able to use a community room for a weekly class made up of either stay at home moms, or on the weekend with working parents. You can advertise within your complex.

- **Church Community**

Advertise within your church community to find others who are interested in forming a group. You might even be able to use a church room for your class.

- **Grandparents!**

Many grandparents are caring for young children, and they often have no support. Finding other grandparents and forming a music group is a wonderful way to connect and give them a support network.



It's your class, so if it's a nice day- take it outside!



Location

Holding your own classes gives you total flexibility to use all of the resources within your group. Here are some options to discuss

- Rotate member's houses monthly
- Look into free public spaces, such as community rooms or public library
- A combination of places
- Same location every week
- Private homes, and library once a month

Space

Creating a space with minimal distractions and maximum possibilities

Holding classes in homes takes some strategies! Children LOVE seeing toys that are new to them, and you don't want to have to pull your child away from a fun time with new toys to join the class.

If you will be in a play room, you might want to cover the toy shelves with sheets and cover or remove large toys before the group arrives. If there is a living room or other space without toys, that would be a better choice. It may mean moving some furniture, but will be well worth it. But any space can be used, and sometimes the best open space is an entry way! Look around and be creative. It doesn't take a lot of room, and when you want to spread out for marching or dancing you can make a line and snake through additional rooms, hallways, or even outside and back in.

Teamwork

Below are some of the tasks necessary to keep your class running efficiently. Split up the jobs and you can all reap the benefits.

- downloading or printing materials from SWOK website
- checking out library materials
- collecting rhythm instruments
- collecting additional props such as puppets and movement aids (parachute, scarves, balls)
- Making sure there is a way to play recorded music at class location (CD player, mp3 player with speaker)
- Consider a small one-time fee to join (\$5 or \$10), to be used to purchase materials such as scarves, parachute, instruments. Of course you can discuss whatever instruments members have they could contribute to the group or plan to make some during an adult evening.
- Keeping a class notebook, organizing phone list, being the group secretary
By keeping an official notebook with songs, class plans, and books used, the group can continue to function as members change

Don't Stop There!

Consider celebrating and sharing all you have done by having seasonal parties or gatherings with parents and other family members who haven't attended the classes, further making singing an important family and community tradition.



The Sticky Wicket How to handle inevitable awkward situations.

As with any group of human beings, there are issues that are bound to arise; chronically tardy families, distracting behaviors. The more you plan for these things, the better able you will be as a group to handle or even prevent them.

- Take a cue from the wisdom of the children's librarian! If a child isn't ready to participate, or is not having a good time, it's fine to leave and try another time, or step out and return after a few minutes
- Have a verbal agreement about when class will begin; five or ten minutes to remove coats and get settled, but not much longer or it will be play time!
- Agree to turn off cell phones, or use only for taking photos but never at the expense of participating. You might take turns being the official photographer of the class to avoid the device trap and to develop the habit of *not* using devices.
- Agree not to socialize as adults once the class has begun. You can always have a free play time and or refreshments afterwards, but class time should be consistent.
- Discuss ahead of time whether adults should take turns leading the class, or if there is a member who wants to be the official leader. Either way is fine as long as every one is comfortable with it. Or a pair of moms might want to share leadership.



Sometimes you just don't feel like joining in, and that's okay! Come back another day.



Sample Class Format Ideas

A good rule of thumb is to keep the opening and closing songs the same, and change out the other songs with similar types. Having the rhythm instruments at the end works best, as it's sometime difficult for children to give them up. Movement songs are built in at points in the thirty minutes where children typically need more physical activities.

It's always nice to have recorded music playing as the children and parents arrive. It sets the tone and becomes part of the ritual of singing together. Turning it off becomes the signal to begin the class.

Sample 30 minute Class Format for 1-4 year-olds

1. Welcome song with names
2. Seated activity song
3. Animal song using a book
4. 2 or three finger plays or nursery rhymes (repeated when first introduced)
5. Song with Felt shapes
6. Book with a Beat or song that relates to felt board song
7. Get up and Wiggle Song
8. Circle Game
9. Egg Shakers or other rhythm instrument
10. Goodbye Song (same as hello, but as a goodbye)

Sample 30 minute Class Format for 0 -12 months

1. Welcome song with names
2. Seated activity song
3. Book with large simple pictures of animals, or simple objects used with song
4. 2 or 3 Bouncing rhymes
5. Baby massage song with baby on blanket, facing mom
6. Stand up and Move! Sing while walking in a circle, going in and out
7. Simple book with a song
8. Egg Shakers
9. Goodbye Song



30 minute class using free SWOK website materials Ages 1-5

SWOK : songs located in song library at SingWithOurKids.com

Nancymusic : Songs are located on Nancymusic.com song of the month alphabetical list

1. Welcome song with names **Hello Song (for learning names)** on Nancymusic.com
2. Seated activity song **Join in the Game** (SWOK)
3. Animal song using a book **When Ducks Get Up in the Morning** Nancymusic & SWOK
4. 2 or three finger plays or nursery rhymes (repeated when first introduced)
Open, Shut Them (SWOK)
Little Miss Muffet (SWOK)
The Itsy Bitsy Spider
The Wheels on the Bus
5. Felt Board Song **Felt Board Train** (Nancymusic)
6. Book with a Beat or song that relates to felt board song
Chugga-Chugga, Choo Choo, by Kevin Lewis
7. 1 or 2 Get up and Wiggle Songs
Head and Shoulders (SWOK)
Peanut Butter and Jelly (will be on SWOK)
8. Bring it and Share it Song
Favorite pantry food item **Let's Go to the Market** (Nancymusic)
Favorite teddy bear -**Put Your Teddy Bear on Your Head** (will be on SWOK)
Stuffed animal other than a bear- **Old MacDonald Had a Farm** (SWOK)
9. Circle Game- **Ring Around the Rosy** (SWOK)
10. Egg Shakers or other rhythm instrument - **Egg Shaking Song** (Nancymusic and SWOK)
11. Goodbye Song (same as hello, but as a goodbye)



More materials will be added as pilot project classes progress, so stay tuned!
Be sure to sign up for mailing list to be notified of all project updates!

www.SingWithOurKids.com