



Prodigies

RAISING A YOUNG MUSICIAN

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HELPING YOUR KIDS
LEARN, LOVE & PLAY MUSIC

BY ROB & SAM YOUNG



PRODIGIES.COM





Welcome to Raising a Young Musician

Welcome to Raising a Young Musician, the ultimate-yet-concise guide to giving your kids a musically well-rounded childhood.

My name is Rob Young, aka Mr. Rob. I am a drummer, a long time music teacher, a dad of two little girls, an amateur surfer and the host and creator of the Prodigies music program.

In this guide, you will....

- Learn the fundamentals of music (notes names, pitch and rhythm)
- Discover how brain based vocab can help develop memorized pitch
- Discover the unique musical advantage that young children possess
- Understand the trajectory of young musicians from birth to 12
- Understand how to make the most of each stage of development
- Unlock tools and tips for getting kids to sing in tune
- Unlock tools and techniques for teaching kids rhythm
- Learn the guiding principles behind the Prodigies music program

"My youngest son developed perfect pitch before he was age 4 by using Mr. Rob's lessons! He is 5 now , and loves to point what notes his Dad is playing on the guitar.

When he can't think of the name of a note he wants to hear, he says stuff like "Mom, I want the song that starts with a G Note! Prodigies music lessons are amazing!"



**Jenni
Lemerand**
Mom

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WHAT WE WANT FOR OUR KIDS



When I first wrote this book some seven years ago, I was proud of the research & ideas that went into it. Back then, I was teaching and performing music all day everyday, and I had a pretty good grasp on how to help parents and teachers raise young musicians.

But even as I wrote the first edition years ago, I knew I was missing an epic piece of the puzzle. My own kids! Since becoming a dad, I'm learning new things every day!

Which is why now, in throws of raising two beautiful girls, I'm pulling my head out of the parenthood sand to revise what I believe raising a young musician is really all about.

This time around, I'm armed with the sheer exhaustion of being a super present dad who works from home. I've learned a lot about trying to teach our own kids music and what it means to marry the reality of parenthood with my dreams for an ideal musical upbringing. I've learned more, changed my priorities and maybe more than anything, I understand just how demanding being a parent is.

Lil summed up my thoughts quite nicely when she said... "Phew...I'm exhausting."

Yea kid...you sure are.

I would do nearly anything for my daughters. Some days that means making several versions of lunch until the quesadillas are just right. Other times that means playing UNO for hours at a time.

But then other times, being a parent can feel a lot heavier. Are we connecting with our children in meaningful ways each day? Did we choose the right school? Am I setting the example for my children with intention?





I'm sure anyone who has kids or teaches full time knows the feeling. Our kids are always on our minds and they take up a ton of our time and energy.

So when it comes to adding music education on top of the pile, you might be thinking, "I can only do so much!"

Which is why, thankfully, you have this new edition of *Raising a Young Musician*, which has been heavily revised to be more digestible and more mindful of the time and energy constraints on the modern family.

Here you'll discover actionable resources, songs, games and ideas for helping spark legit musical growth in your little one WITHOUT requiring you to be a musician yourself.

Because no matter what the subject is, our parents are always our first teachers. My hope is that this little manual creates some good routines, a few a ha moments and a clear path for parents helping young musicians learn, grow and thrive.

On behalf of me, my team and (most importantly) your kids, thank you for being here. #HappyMusicing and I hope you enjoy *Raising a Young Musician*.



- Mr. Rob



2. WHY A MUSIC EDUCATION?



WHY MUSIC

MANY benefits of learning music

- Enjoyment
- Enhanced performance on verbal tests
- Positive effects across different cognitive domains
- Increased levels of grey matter
- Enhanced motor and auditory skills
- Improved listening skills and aural comprehension
- Improved memory
- Increased ability to express emotion
- Higher IQ
- Higher order cognitive functions
- Behavioral, structural, and functional changes in the brain

More at [Prodigies.com/Research](https://www.prodigies.com/research)



Why teach our kids music? Simply put, we want our kids to be students of the world. Art, music, poetry, literature, food, athletics -- it's all part of human experience.

But beyond being a cultured and lived human, by studying music, your kids will...

- get creative about **problem solving** while developing **difficult technical skills**
- spur **neurological growth** for **memory**, **math** skills & **verbal** capabilities
- better understand and **appreciate** the **emotions** music makes us feel
- become **better listeners**, both literally and figuratively
- **express themselves** and create original works of art
- come to appreciate and even **fall in love with the process of learning**

Because honestly, most people who study music don't become professional musicians and that's 100% okay. There's value in the process of learning anything (music especially) and of all the things one can learn, music is emotionally expressive, it's therapeutic, beautiful and mainly it's just a lot of fun. It gets all the brain cells firing in a unique way that's unlike almost anything else on earth.

2. WHY A MUSIC EDUCATION?



But inside their brains,
there's a party going on.

TED
Ed

Anita Collins talks about this in her [TED ED video](#) in saying that "playing a musical instrument engages practically every area of the brain at once." She points out that music trains the brain like a muscle, whose increased strength can be used in a variety of disciplines and activities.

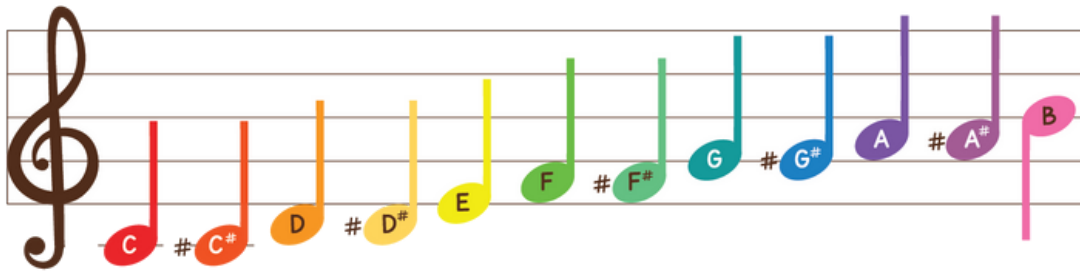
Maybe it's this brain wide engagement that helps music compete for attention in our modern world. Picking up an instrument and rocking out somehow fulfills our short term need for instant gratification while being a lifelong skill that requires discipline and focus.

But before we're ready for brain melting solos, let's have some fun with the fundamentals.

Music training "primes the brain" to learn other things, even subjects unrelated to music. This might help explain why music students tend to do better in all subjects in school, both as kids and adults.

A 2004 study by Glenn Schellenberg, PhD showed that 6 year olds given music lessons for 1 year saw an increase in IQ of 7.5 points while 90% of preschool children studied showed increased verbal intelligence in just 20 days of musical training!

3. THE ABCS OF MUSIC



Before we dive into research and principles, let's quickly review the basics of our musical language.

In western music, the musical alphabet has 12 unique pitches and makes up most of the songs we know and love. Just like the ABCs, it starts at the letter A and goes up to G. These are the only letters in our musical alphabet and we use sharps and flats to find the pitches in between those 7 letters.

Your job as the molder of young, musical minds is simple -- give your kids fun and memorable experiences with the ABCs of music.

Memorable and meaningful exposure to the notes can take a few different forms, so it's helpful to think of teaching your kids musical notes the same way you teach them language.

Think about the ways you expose your kids to verbal expression. Perhaps you're singing the ABCs, focused solely on the individual sounds that make up our language. Maybe you're reading them simple books with playful grammar and catchy rhyming patterns. It could be the talk radio that's on which is more or less gibberish to young kids.

You'll want to approach music with your kids in a similar scope, which we'll divide into **3 categories:**

- Meaningful play with the individual notes (i.e. "Hello C")
- Singing & playing simple melodies, chords and patterns (i.e. "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star")
- Listening to high information music (i.e. Aydin Essen, Rachmaninov, Mozart, etc)

3. THE ABCS OF MUSIC



In this book, we'll introduce brain based vocab that is used to accurately identify or discuss the musical notes.

In the example to the right, you can see that each note has a...

- Letter name (C D E)
- Color (red orange yellow)
- Hand-Sign
- Solfege syllable (do re mi)
- Scale degree (1 2 3)



[For more about the language of music - Check out the introduction section of My First Songbook: Volume I FOR FREE](#)

We use these different classifications to make the idea of the notes more concrete, relatable and easier to memorize. Making these associations for each note allows us to connect with all different ages. Most kids learn colors before they learn letters or numbers, so I'm a strong believer that **color-coding your instrument and your music is one of the best ways to make music accessible to young kids.**

By color-coding the notes, we enable learners of all ages and levels to start playing their instruments quickly. The advantage of using color-coded notes for preschoolers is simple. **Many two and three-year-olds can distinguish the colors red and yellow much faster than they can distinguish the letters C and E.**



Furthermore, when reading music, having color-coded notes means preschoolers don't have to understand standard music notation (i.e. which note goes on which line), which is a skill better learned by school age children.

3. THE ABCS OF MUSIC



Pink			Rosado
Plum			Ciruela
Purple			Morado
Blue			Azul
Teal			Turquesa
Mint			Menta
Green			Verde
Yellow			Amarillo
Gold			Dorado
Orange			Naranja
Poppy			Amapola
Red			Rojo

While coloring the notes are a big help, keep in mind that the colors themselves are more or less arbitrary (they make up a ROYGBIV-ish rainbow from C to c). In other words, we're not suggesting the colors create true synesthesia (which is the rare phenomenon of seeing sound and/or hearing sights). We're just using the colors to make musical play more memorable, error-proof and fun. In the process, we help you and your kids distinguish the subtle nuances of pitch.

3. THE ABCS OF MUSIC



Hand-Signs for Singing More in Tune

Simple Solfege hand-signs will help your kids sing more tunefully and even help them memorize the sounds of the musical alphabet

The Curwen Hands Signs (aka The Solfege Hand-Signs)

Every note in our musical alphabet has a different sound and learning their sounds can be tricky. Hand-signing along is a great way to help you memorize the sounds of notes much faster. The Solfege syllables are “do re mi fa sol la ti do.” Not only do the musical notes each have a color and a letter name, but they also have a Solfege name. Grab an instrument, play the note and sing and sign with the 8 hand-signs seen to the right!

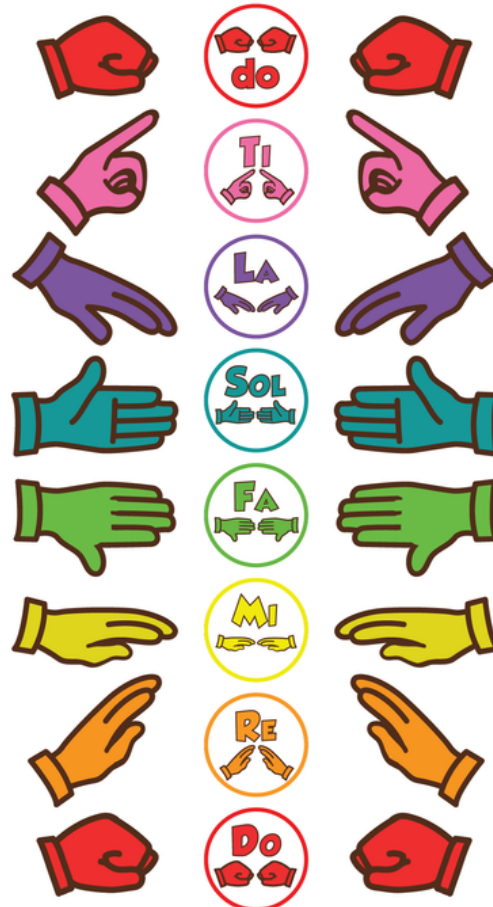
The Solfege Hand-Signs are a Powerful Tool for Signing in Tune

1. Kinesthetic motions help make the musical notes more memorable.
2. Hand-signs allow shy singers to get involved in music with confidence.
3. Early practice with Solfege will develop a life-long sense for pitch & music.

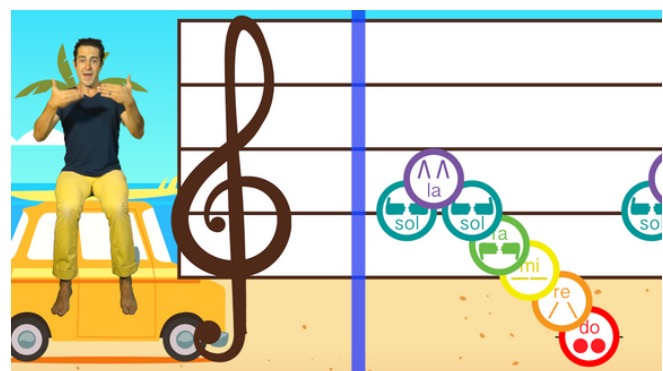
Prodigies Lessons Featuring The Solfege Hand-Signs

The Solfege Hand-Signs are a BIG component of Prodigies. Be sure to check out our Melodies collection inside Prodigies.com. Signing with short echo melodies will reinforce pitch and get your child well on their way to singing in tune!

Prodigies
SING, SIGN, PLAY



Prodigies.com



4. EARLY EXPOSURE TO PITCH



The Musical Disadvantage of the English Language

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but if you grew up speaking English (or any other non-tone language) you actually grew up with a bit of musical disadvantage.

Diana Duetsch, professor of music at USC, found that when you give a musical pitch test to speakers of Mandarin Chinese and speakers of English, the Mandarin speakers out-perform the English speakers by a factor of 6 to 1.

This is because Mandarin is a tone base language. Simple two or three letter words (like "ma" or "shi") can have an impressively wide range of meanings depending on how you pitch and contour the word (as perfectly illustrated in this [TikTok from @kenanheppe](#)).



This means that from birth, native Mandarin speakers are **constantly listening, isolating and interpreting different pitches** in a very meaningful way. This in turn means they're always flexing that musical muscle a little bit, even in early childhood, which in turn, makes them more sensitive to pitch and music than their non-tone counterparts.

If you're like me, maybe you'll add this to the short list of things that aren't so great about being an American. We miss out on base 10 math, universal health care AND tonal language? Dang...

But don't worry... there's a solution! At least for the tonal language part!

4. EARLY EXPOSURE TO PITCH



Your Kids can Learn Perfect Pitch during the Critical Period for Auditory Development

We know from science and psychology that early childhood is critical for developing the language centers of the brain. In Duetsch's study comparing Mandarin and English speakers, she concludes that it's this early and regular exposure to pitch that makes Mandarin speakers more musical.

In other words, do what the Mandarin language does and **give your kids exposure to pitch during early childhood.**

So simply put... if you want to raise young musicians, you need to take advantage of the critical period for auditory development and help your kids come to know the 12 musical notes in a way similar to how they know their own native language.

THIS is the unique musical advantage of the young child: their brain is eager to experience, categorize and learn the sounds of music.

Furthermore, there is no other age in life where this kind of learning can have a truly life-long impact.

And finally, and most importantly for us parents -- this kind of musical exposure doesn't require a prior music education on your part.

In the beginning, YOU can be your child's greatest music teacher. By surrounding them with the sounds, the instruments and the knowledge of the 12 musical notes, you can instill A LOT of musical skill into your kids (even if they don't develop the coveted skill of Absolute Pitch).

If you want to run an ensemble, explain music theory, or teach a complicated instrument like the guitar, then yes, you'll want a trained and professional musician on board. But when it comes to giving babies, toddlers and preschoolers the musical moments they need to thrive, most of the time it's up to us parents, and I promise you that you're more than up to the task.

You won't have to learn to read music or really play a technical instrument -- you just need to help your kids experience regular and meaningful play with individual notes.

If you think about the musical sounds like colors, it's not so crazy to imagine kids learning to identify, sort and combine them in a seemingly natural way. After all, the musical notes are easily discernible stimuli for your brain to categorize and identify.

4. EARLY EXPOSURE TO PITCH



A Few Findings from Research

We're always learning about music education and the child's brain, and we try to share some of the compelling literature at prodigies.com/research. We of course can't cover it all...scientific journal memberships are expensive (hello, Google Scholar!)...but here a few of the major findings:

- A child's brain at age 3 has reached 80% of its adult size.
(Harvard University Center on the Developing Child)
- The number of neural connections in a baby's brain doubles during the first year of life.
(Zero to Three)
- A child's vocabulary at age 2 can predict their academic success in later years.
(National Institute for Literacy)
- Learning to play a musical instrument during childhood can increase the size and connectivity of certain brain regions...
(National Association for Music Education)
- "It is very interesting that the children taking music lessons improved more over the year on general memory skills that are correlated with non-musical abilities such as literacy, verbal memory, visio-spatial processing, mathematics and IQ than did the children not taking lessons....It suggests that musical training is having an effect on how the brain gets wired for general cognitive functioning related to memory and attention."
(Oxford University Press)
- "Music makes your kid interesting and happy, and smart will come later. It enriches his or her appetite for things that bring you pleasure and for the friends you meet."
(PBS)
- "The idea that a potentially enjoyable activity such as learning to sing or to play a musical instrument could have beneficial side-effects on cognitive functioning is obviously appealing."
(University of Toronto)
- "Our work explores how musical training affects the way in which the brain develops. It is clear that music is good for children's cognitive development and that music should be part of the pre-school and primary school curriculum."
(Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute)

4. EARLY EXPOSURE TO PITCH



Beyond the Research...My Why for Teaching Early Exposure to Pitch

My senior year of high school was legendary. I was crushing AP classes, getting my braces off, winning music scholarships and I had been accepted to NYU's music tech program. Life was great!

Then I actually got to music school in the big city... the land of my dreams. And I got my butt kicked.

As it turns out, being the best drummer in your high school doesn't matter much in college level music. I was surrounded by kids who could hear a song and just play it - no practicing or thinking or sheet music required.

And then there was me, who was quite good with a pair of drumsticks...but not much else. I'd get embarrassed in 8 AM piano class, a little bit less in 9:30 theory and then I would be a puddle of blushing goo by the end of 11 AM sight singing. It was a NIGHTMARE.

Why could some of my peers do all this awesome pitch identification and I couldn't? I thought I was musically pretty gifted and practiced (up until now anyway).

Well, as it turns out, practicing mostly on the drumset meant I wasn't getting real exposure to pitch. I knew this about my instrument and my music education, but I never realized just how big of a hole it really was.

Thankfully, **pitch is a learnable skill**, and with some grit and some good friends (and my first ever homemade computer program), I managed to turn my college experience around and learned A LOT about pitch development in the process.

So if you're ready for lots more tips, tricks and resources, press on and discover less ranting and more to-doing for kids 0-3, 3-6 and 6-12.

5. INFANTS & TODDLERS (0-3)



It all begins with infants and toddlers! Zoltan Kodaly, one of the most famous music educators of all time, joked that the right time to start a child's music education is "9 months before they were born."

Indeed, many of the perfect pitch wielding kiddos I meet had parents who played classical music to them through headphones on mommy's belly, so maybe Kodaly had a point. After all, HALF of the critical period for auditory development is in this 0-3 year old stage.

Below you'll find age appropriate activities for babies and toddlers, and on the following page, you'll find resources, milestones and more specific songs and suggestions.



WHERE INFANTS & TODDLERS EXCEL

Play

Children learn through play, and so having some musical instruments or toys around will allow your child to explore the notes in their most natural way: play.

Parent Modeling & Engagement

Infants and toddlers both need and CRAVE physical touch and connection with their parents. Activities that involve baby and parent together will keep baby happy and learning while deepening your attachment and bond.

Meaningful Exposure to Pitch

Playing individual bell sounds or piano sounds for your child at this age is a great way to start their brain down the path toward Absolute Pitch.

High Information Music

Babies and toddlers don't get much say in what they're listening to so you can hit 'em with their musical vegetables by playing them some high information music (Charlie Parker, Rachmaninov, Ravi Shankar, or use the music app Nuryl).

Repetition

The whole world is new and overwhelming at this age, which is why kids both love and need repetition. It can feel monotonous for a parent, but if you can lean into repeating the same songs, games & activities, your kids will start to recognize, interact and enjoy (instead of being overwhelmed by novelty).

Rhythm & Movement

Classics like Wheels on the Bus, Where Is Thumbkin, etc. will also help your child discover timing, tempo, rhythm, pulse and beat. Start with finger games and hand songs, then progress to stomping and dancing and moving to music.

5. INFANTS & TODDLERS (CONT.)



MILESTONES & GOALS

- Baby will ask for "more" when a song is over
- Baby will start clapping, signing and moving to music
- Baby will try to express what song they want through hand movements
- Baby will start predicting, anticipating or even singing the end of songs or phrases
- Baby will mimic your applause at the end of a song
- Toddlers are similar, but will enjoy exploring instruments, dancing more and they'll be able to follow simple instructions for movement games
- Toddlers will pick up more and more motions and movements like waving, clapping, peekaboo
- Toddlers may begin to play and or recognize the sound of bells and Boomwhackers based on color

RHYTHM REINFORCEMENT

- Babies can practice the basics of rhythm by clapping and following the actions in songs like "The Wheels on The Bus."
- Clapping, stomping and marching to a steady beat build a solid foundation.
- Model rhythmic pattern with simple syllables like "Ta Ta TiTi Ta" or "Beet Beet Cherry Beet."

MUSIC TO PLAY THEM

- Raffi's [Nursery Rhymes for Kinder Times](#)
- High Information Music (jazz, classical)
- Dancing songs like Freeze Dance
- Anything sung often by mom or dad
- [Totigies](#) (Solfege listening from Prodigies)
- Instrumental versions of lullabies & songs they're familiar with

RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

- [Education for Absolute Pitch](#) paperback book by Taneda
- Shakers, noise makers, little drums
- Chromanotes Deskbells, Boomwhackers or xylophone for play with the individual notes
- Parachutes, slides & soft mats for moving to music
- Prodigies Bells app & Prodigies streaming app
- Songs for Littles Youtube channel

ACTIVITIES THEY'LL LOVE

- Finger songs and hand-movement songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider", "Wheels on the Bus", "Open Shut Them", "Where is Thumbkin", etc.
- Bouncing songs like "Grand Old Duke of York", "Horsey Went to London", etc.
- Press and sound books with songs they can control and pictures to see
- Peekaboo songs using hands, scarves, mirrors, stuffies, etc.
- Instruments like the bells, piano and strumming the guitar
- Intraverbals (i.e. fill in the blank or finish the song)

WHERE THEY STRUGGLE

- Dexterity for instruments like piano and guitar (better to focus on bells, movement and singing)
- Attention span and long term focus (short and sweet musical activities or songs that you repeat often will help you win the day)

6. PRESCHOOLERS (3-6)



This is really the ideal time frame to be focused on teaching your kids the language of music. At this age they'll be able to follow instructions about singing, hand-signing and playing their first instrument.

In our society, most classes and schools are NOT focused on pitch with this age group. Instead, the focus is often on music and movement and singing by rote memorization, which is different from exploring and playing the individual musical notes.

THIS is the age where most perfect pitch methods and techniques have the most success, so don't hold out on your preschoolers - they're ready for it all!

“The best time to begin training is between 3–3½. Parents often don't think of their children as “teachable” at this age, and neglect the best time for learning absolute pitch.”
– Taneda Method, [We Hear and Play](#)

ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Practice Simple Melodies by Singing with the Solfege Hand-Signs

Visit Prodigies.com to get some practice hand-signing with the Solfege syllables. This will attach a concrete bilateral motion to the abstract idea of pitch and improve your child's overall sense of pitch. It will probably improve mom & dad's singing, too!

Play Listening Games

Using the bells or a piano, pick two or three (to start) musical notes. Play them each several times with your Young Musician. Then hide the notes from view and see if your child can guess which note you are playing. Help your child by making it fun, leading them and giving them multiple tries.

Play Simple Melodies, Chords & Patterns on Bells or Color-Coded Piano

Exploring the musical notes with a well-tuned instrument is vital at this age, and whether you've got some bells, some Boomwhackers, or a piano with colorful stickers, make sure there's an instrument that stays in tune around for your kids play.

Repetition

The whole world is still new and overwhelming to preschoolers, which is partially why they love and need repetition. It may feel monotonous for a parent, but replaying the same songs, games & activities will help kids feel confident and in the know, and they'll start to recognize the songs and interact more (instead of being overwhelmed by novelty).

6. PRESCHOOLERS (CONT.)



ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Use Short Melodies to Serve as Cues

If you play C, A, F, you might recognize it as the NBC jingle. Can you hum it from memory? Probably! But did you know the names of the notes? Short melodies like that are easily remembered and very distinguishable. Giving your child exposure and knowledge of short melodies is a great way to build their musical ear.

Incorporate Bells into Freeplay

The red bell makes an excellent fire truck bell, and the orange bell works well in a fruit salad. The yellow bell can be the lemonade stand bell and the purple bell can be a bath-time boat bell. This will give your child frequent exposure to individual pitches during play, which is when children learn best.

Play your Child Instrumental Versions of Songs they Already Know

This will help your child bridge the idea of lyrics and melody, as well as increase their confidence when they realize they can recognize a song without lyrics.

Listen to and Talk about Music

It doesn't take a record producer to recognize the different instruments and different elements of a song. Talk with your child about the music you both enjoy; they'll come to understand the elements of music faster and with more certainty (i.e. "here's the guitar solo", "this is the chorus which is the part that repeats and makes you want to sing along", "did you hear the crazy drum fill?", "when these two people sing together, they make harmony", etc.).

Invest in (at least) One Instrument

The colorful deskbells we sell are a solid bet. If you get a set that for whatever reason doesn't work, we will replace the broken bells! A piano with Chromanotes stickers is a solid substitute as well, just a little less guided and kid-friendly. Stay away from toy guitars as your "main" instrument and check the end of this book for our favorite instrument suggestions!

If you'd like to hear some of this in action, check out our podcast for kids, "[Prodigies Music Lesson Show for Kids](#)".

6. PRESCHOOLERS (CONT.)



WHERE THEY STRUGGLE

- Perfectionism. Some children may become shy when they realize their singing doesn't sound like the radio; encourage them to channel that awareness into practice.

MILESTONES & GOALS

- Preschoolers might start to freely sing about what they're doing and their thoughts and feelings
- Preschoolers may start to recognize notes by sound or continuously sing and repeat little Solfege passages (Do Mi Sol, Cya Later, etc.)
- Preschoolers may start to practice, perform and memorize simple melodies from simple songbooks or songs they know
- Preschoolers may begin to write their own lyrics and melodies more intentionally (or just make them up as they go)
- Preschoolers should begin singing more tunefully with nursery rhymes and songs they know
- Preschoolers may want to perform small shows or songs for friends and family

RHYTHM REINFORCEMENT

- Clapping, stomping and marching to a steady beat.
- Introduce and model increasingly complex rhythmic patterns with more complicated syllables
- Practice often while singing in the car or at home

MUSIC THEY'LL ENJOY

- ✓ Favorite film, TV & movie soundtracks
- ✓ High information music (Jazz, Classical)
- ✓ Anything sung by mom or dad
- ✓ Raffi's [Nursery Rhymes for Kinder Times](#)

RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ Music apps like Prodigies Music Lessons
- ✓ [Education for Absolute Pitch](#) paperback book by Taneda
- ✓ Music books like Barefoot Books collection and CDs/MP3s
- ✓ The research of Diana Deutsch
- ✓ Chromanotes Deskbells, Boomwhackers or xylophone for play with the individual notes
- ✓ Songbooks and sheet music with iconic notation

ACTIVITIES THEY'LL LOVE

- ✓ Playing along with their favorite songs on the bells
- ✓ Learning to sing their favorite songs in Solfege names (Do, Re Mi, etc.)
- ✓ Playing music with their parents or care giver
- ✓ Singing with Solfege hand-signs to help learn and internalize the musical notes
- ✓ Exploring instruments like the bells, piano and guitar
- ✓ For true Absolute Pitch, follow Tanedas 9 month C Major, G Major, F Major schedule (3 months, 3 months, 3 months)

7. SCHOOL AGE KIDS (6-12)



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart penned his first three compositions within weeks of each other somewhere between the age of 4 and 5. Sergei Prokofiev composed an opera at age 9. Sure these are legendary names in music history, but you don't have to go too far to see kids these days doing astonishing things.

Whether your young learner is destined to be composing sonatas or destined to be the life of the campfire jam, any success in music must start with the fundamentals. There's no getting around consistent practice--it is required for proficiency. Teach your child to love the process of learning.



WHERE SCHOOL AGE KIDS EXCEL

Play

Music, above all, should be fun. Play can be structured with a metronome or backing track and the freedom to explore. Choose 3-5 notes to outline a chord or scale to give the playtime more structure.

Sight Reading

Like speaking a language, music literacy involves reading and writing. Practice with 3 note melodies like "Hot Cross Buns" & "Mary Had a Little Lamb" that use Do Re Mi. With regular practice, sight reading becomes second nature.

Listening Games

Ear training exercises are hands-down the fastest way to improve as a musician. Listening is paramount in communication, the same applies to music. Listen to chords, single pitches & rhythms on a regular basis.

Spontaneous Dance Parties

You don't have to be Sting to write a catchy chorus. If you're making lunch, walking a trail or brushing your teeth, hum a little tune and tap a little beat. Sing about what you're doing with your child & encourage them to do the same.

The Language of Music

Is there an echo in here? School age kids are little parrots. Speak the language of music to them and they will speak it right back. Put on the Prodigies Podcast in the car and sing along with Solfege. Before you know, you'll be singing the language of music along with all your favorite songs.

7. SCHOOL AGE KIDS (CONT.)



WHERE THEY STRUGGLE

- Staying motivated. Studying music or learning an instrument can be tough. Lots of encouragement, support and setting attainable goals are a must.
- Finding time to practice. School age children's schedules are packed with school & extracurriculars. Try to build the habit so you don't have to think about it.

MILESTONES & GOALS

- School age children can memorize music for performance and play in front an audience
- School age children can overcome obstacles related to performance anxiety
- School age children can compose an original piece of music
- School age children can improvise in an ensemble setting

RHYTHM REINFORCEMENT

- Practice with a metronome. Start at a slow tempo and gradually increase with accuracy
- Clap patterns with more difficult syllables like "TikaTika" and "Tum Ti"
- Keep a rhythm while singing a simple melody

RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ Music apps like Prodigies Music Lessons, Hoffman Academy, etc.
- ✓ The research of Diana Deutsch
- ✓ Local concerts and music events in your area
- ✓ Private instruction at a local music studio or school
- ✓ Prodigies Music Lesson Show for Kids podcast

ACTIVITIES THEY'LL LOVE

- ✓ The Rhythm-based, echo song series, Sweet Beets. Use rhythms syllables like beet, cherry, melon, avocado, pineapple, blueberry and more to practice! Sounds appetizing, right?
- ✓ Chromanotes Deskbells, Boomwhackers or xylophone for play with the individual notes
- ✓ Colorful songbooks, printables, cutouts and coloring pages
- ✓ Polyphonic instruments like the piano or strumming the ukulele or guitar

MUSIC TO PLAY THEM

- ✓ Film & musical soundtracks
- ✓ High information music (jazz, classical)
- ✓ Bluey, Blippi's Treehouse
- ✓ Popular music (r&b, rock, rap, funk)



8. ROUTINES & RESOURCES



Practice is Perfect

If you've spent as much as five minutes with a preschooler, you can probably imagine that getting him or her to practice music in the traditional "sit-down and play the piano" sense might prove a somewhat difficult task.

This is a common fear among preschool parents. Though it's true that preschool aged children tend to have both high energy and a short attention span, they are most certainly capable of engaging in meaningful music practice.

My drum teacher used to tell me to "strive for excellence, enjoy the process." Similarly, you'll often hear teachers encourage the idea of "process, not product".

This means that if your young musician doesn't play "Hot Cross Buns" right on the first, third, or even tenth time, it's okay. Not only is practicing music giving them that meaningful exposure to individual notes, but they are also developing their voice, their motor skills, coordination and patterning abilities. Most of all, we hope they are having fun!

The last thing you want to do is apply a ton of pressure on your child to do something "right". While it's true that a strict and rigorous approach MAY lead to a more tangible end-result product, if a child grows up focused on the end-result and not on the process, they are missing the whole point and probably going to end up loathing their music education experience.

Make music fun by being patient with the process and aiming to foster a genuine love and curiosity for music.

1. Practice at least 10-15 Minutes Every Day

Short daily practice is better than long occasional practice. Aim for at least five out of seven days a week. Remember any practice time is good, so ignore excuses to postpone practicing and just go for it. Practice is perfect.

2. A Child's Attention Span is about 5 Minutes for Every Year of Age

Plan several short music activities ahead of time, so you can jump around while practices. Move around the room, keep it high energy, what ever you can to expand your child's practice time beyond their initial burst of attention (first we play the bells, then we play a listening game, then we play some drums and we finish up with some piano or dancing).

3. Reward your Child for Practicing

You know your child best, so find the reward system that works for you. Ideally, your child will inherently enjoy the process of playing music, but we all need a little encouragement sometimes. Set them up for success! Building the feeling of accomplishment in some kind of tangible way is encouraging and fun. A gold star chart is a classic for a reason--it's so fun to watch us grow a habit and celebrate when we achieve a streak!

4. Find a Consistent Time to Practice

Consistency is not only the key to improvement, but it builds positive learning habits that your young musician will benefit from in every aspect of their future. Furthermore, your young musician will know what to expect and easily form a routine.

9. ROUTINES & RESOURCES



Apps, Resources, Books & More for your Musical Toolkit

[Prodigies.com](https://www.prodigies.com) - 800+ video music lessons for kids 2-12

[Prodigies Bells App](#) - free instrument app for kids

[Prodigies Music Lesson Show for Kids](#) - free podcast music lessons for kids

[Music Decoration Pack](#) - free hand-sign posters & more from Prodigies

[My First Songbook](#) - free songbook download from Prodigies

Toca Band - playful jam sessions app for iOS

Loopimal - arrange and loop chill lo-fi beats with animals

Figure - 4 instrument looper with rhythmic clocks and circles

Simply Piano & Piano Maestro - great piano learning apps

Yousician & Fender Play - solid guitar learning apps

iDrumSchool - drum groove library

DM1 - drum machine with classic 16 beat layout and sounds

Chrome Music Lab - colorful music apps on the web by Google

Chet - incredibly fun and effective ear training app

Ultimate Guitar - app/website with a HUGE library of lyrics/chords

Garage Band - Apple's beginner music production app/software

Super Simple Songs - music and movement songs for toddlers

Songs for Littles - YouTube channel for infants & speech therapy

ClearTune - quality app based tuner

[Barefoot Books](#) - paperback book + CD combos w/ stories & songs

[Education for Absolute Pitch](#) - Taneda's parent manual w/ valuable insights about teaching perfect pitch

Smule Ocarina & Karaoke App - modern musical apps for kids and adults

Hoffman Academy - excellent online piano curriculum for kids 6+

[Faber Piano Adventures](#) - beginner piano curriculum book series

Swicks Classroom - YouTube channel w/ Boomwhacker playalongs

9. TOP 5 INSTRUMENTS FOR RAYM



The Top 5 Instruments for Young Musicians

When it comes to finding an instrument for your kids, these are what I consider the top 5.

1. Chromanotes Deskbells, Boomwhackers & Xylophones

Durable, colorful and well-tuned, this individual bells make meaningful play with individual notes a breeze. I've built a lot of our Prodigies curriculum around this instrument as it's visibly appealing, easy to play and helps reinforce all memorized pitch during early childhood.

The Boomwhackers and color-coded xylophones have similar advantages, but for ease of play and quality of sound, the Deskbells are still #1.



9. TOP 5 INSTRUMENTS FOR RAYM



With the bells, you and your kids can play songs about the colors, about the letters and about the numbers (1 through 8). As you play, sing along and try to match your voice to the bell.

The bells are also individual objects, which means you can easily isolate 1 or 2 notes for increased focus and success with simple songs and concepts.

The colors also make teaching songs a lot easier. Asking a child to play "yellow, orange, red" on bells is much easier than asking them to play "E D C" on a piano. Colors come easier and there aren't similar looking but wrong notes.

Plus, the bells sound good enough to be a real instrument, but they're not so expensive that you'll cringe every time little Susie throws it off the counter.

You can also work individual musical notes into your child's free play with the bells. Maybe they're part of a fire station game or the "next patient" bell or something of that sort. This allows for more meaningful and memorable play with pitch in a very unique and child-centered approach.



Buying Bells & Our Free "Prodigies Bells App"

You can find Chromanotes Deskbells (CNDBD) on [Amazon](#), [Rhythm Band](#), [Music in Motion](#) & [Optimum Percussion](#). We sometimes carry Prodigies Deskbells (same bells, different box), but after years of trying to compete with the big shipping companies, we're keep our energies focused on developing our app and our curriculum more than importing and shipping bells.

You can also find digital bells on our web platform or download our "Prodigies Bells" app from your favorite app store today!

9. TOP 5 INSTRUMENTS FOR RAYM



2. Piano

The piano is probably the most versatile and well rounded instrument for a lifelong musician to learn. That said, babies tend to whack lots of keys, and toddlers don't have quite enough dexterity or focus to get a lot of meaningful exposure to the notes. They often hit wrong keys, and the keys all look the same, making it hard to associate the specific note with an obvious visual.

But when it comes to following up an early childhood full of bells, piano is definitely the right move as it reigns supreme in the world of music theory, composition and production.

For young kids, I like [these Casio light up pianos](#), or if you're ready for legit piano, digital pianos will have less sounds and distractions ([we have this one](#)) and acoustic pianos have their own grandiose, sound and beauty (though they might be overkill for the average family).

I also definitely recommend [these residue free Chromanotes piano stick-ons](#) for color-coding your piano to match the bells and Boomwhackers.

3. Drums & Percussion

I grew up on the drums and they are A TON of fun and great for high energy kiddos. Smaller percussion like, bongos and shakers are also an essential experience for any young musician. That said, I advise folks against making drumset their main instrument during early childhood because it won't give your kids meaningful exposure to pitch when it matters most.

9. TOP 5 INSTRUMENTS FOR RAYM



4. Ukulele

SO many kids and adults alike are drawn to music because of the guitar. The attraction of the guitar in popular culture makes sense, but it's a bit of a double edged sword as the guitar is difficult and can cause frustration for young musicians.

For a faster and easier learning curve, the Ukulele is really the perfect beginner string instrument. There are plenty of chords that can be played with 1, 2 or 3 fingers (whereas the guitar almost always requires 2-4 fingers per chord). The instrument is smaller and physically easier on the hands, which means you'll have more stamina, success and fun playing right from the start. Kids as young as 3 and 4 can play a C and an F chord on Ukulele, and in grades 3-5, students can play chords, melodies and even sing while playing.

5. Recorder

The recorder is the perfect beginner wind instrument and a great precursor to more difficult band instruments kids will learn in upper elementary, middle and high school. I've taught preschool recorder classes (difficult, but doable), but generally speaking, 2nd-4th grade is the best time to do some serious recorder work. While it gets a bad reputation for being squeaky, it can be a beautiful and fun (and extremely portable) instrument for all ages.

10. OUR MISSION AT PRODIGIES.COM



Helping kids sing,
hand-sign and
play their way to
an incredible
music education



There is a lot you can do at every stage of a child's life to encourage musical development and I hope this book gave you some new ideas, inspirations and paths to follow.

Here at Prodigies, it's our goal to help kids across the world make the most of their early musical years. We make colorful videos and books that help kids sing, hand-sign and play their way to an incredible music education. We have a streaming app and web program called Prodigies where you can find hundreds of videos from me, my wife Sam and the whole Prodigies team.

Inside Prodigies, which is kind of like Netflix for kids music lessons, kids develop their musical ear by singing about colors, note names, Solfege and numbers. They will learn the musical hand-signs for each note, play simple one note studies, learn about the chords, level up to more difficult songs and eventually perform complex melodies from some of the greatest composers in history.

It is our mission to provide high quality, accessible music lessons that are fun and affordable for families and classrooms all over the world. We have free videos on YouTube and free resources mentioned in Chapter 8, but we put the vast majority of our content and energy into the series, live events and fun inside of our curriculum app Prodigies, which you can stream from, Roku, tablet, phone, Apple TV, Android TV and more.

























You can learn more about our curriculum at [Prodigies.com/curriculum](https://prodigies.com/curriculum) or enroll today at [Prodigies.com/enroll](https://prodigies.com/enroll).

On behalf of me, my team and YOUR KIDS (who probably don't thank you enough) thanks for checking out this book. #HappyMusicing and until next time I will...

Cya later, cya later, cya, cya, later!!

- Mr. Rob, Ms. Sam & the Prodigies Team

Prodigies
SING, SIGN, PLAY





SING, SIGN, PLAY



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