

# TOP

## Tips on parenting



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## Children and Music in the Family

by Joan Benedict, Ph.D.

Recently, the music director of our local symphony shared several articles with the staff in our preschool on infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their musical ability. Several were summaries of research studies that took place in the families of professional musicians when they were at home in their early years. Some were current musical practices that parents and caregivers are encouraged to follow when caring for young children early in life.

Parents' attitudes toward music and the involvement of their children in musical experiences while very young were described. It was determined that concert attendance by parents (not necessarily accompanied by the children), parent and children's ownership of CD players, tape players, record players, and parents' playing of musical instruments were found to have a strong influence on children's musical achievement. On the other hand, no relationship was found between musical home environment and musical aptitude (the music ability of the child). The strongest influence on a child's musical achievement was the parents' attitudes toward music and their musical involvement with their child. This suggested that all children potentially have an equal start in music. What good news!

An early musical environment is as important for the young child's development in music as the language and literacy environment is for talking and reading. A rich environment in music actually speeds up the development of musical achievement. Children were studied from birth until two years of age. In some homes, one of the parents was a professional musician. In these homes the children had models (the musician parent) and many opportunities for music experiences. They expressed themselves musically very early. In homes without a professional musician, typical of most children's homes, children acquired the ability to sing in a manner different from the others. Rhythmical words were heard first and then tones for words followed, while the children in musical homes began making sounds with tunes first. The question is, does music development follow a "set path," or does development vary due to individual influences? The answer is that influences on the individual child are an important part of musical development. All children start with musical ability. Its' development takes a different path depending on the musical experiences of the child.

Concert pianists were interviewed about their experiences as they grew up. They all reported that the first 10 years of their lives were spent in playful, positive experiences with parents and warm, kind teachers. The adolescent years became more serious for the pianist, and the acquisition of a teacher who was recognized for teaching more

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## Children and Music in the Family

continued from pg. 1...

accomplished musicians was obtained. Parents arranged for their children to take part in competitions, bought better pianos for the home, and provided transportation to reach the more recognized teacher. The adolescents began to sacrifice other activities in their lives for time spent in music activities such as practicing the piano.

The next phase in the lives of concert pianists evolved between the ages of 16 and 20 when the musicians began a serious disciplined approach to the study of the keyboard. All this is to say that a W. A. Mozart shows up very rarely. It takes a love of music by the family and the child. All children have the "potential" to become an accomplished musician. Parents can encourage their child to at least enjoy and appreciate all types of music. All children will not have the desire to be an accomplished musician, but music can be a life-long enjoyable experience for most.

Music has a positive influence on the development of the child. It has been related to achievement in math. Both music and math abilities are directed by the same side of the brain. Participation in music activity encourages the social development of the child. Music is a social activity from the very beginning when the infant listens to mother sing until the time when a child can participate in a choir or band. Physical development is affected as musical activity encourages the dexterity and coordination of the child. Language ability is enhanced as a child listens and becomes familiar with words in a song. Songs that tell a story, sometimes a long story, like "Hush Little Baby Don't Say a Word, Papa's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird," increase a child's ability to memorize. Music is not like other areas of artistic ability. It does not develop in a sequential or linear fashion. It exhibits itself in early childhood and grows with the experiences of the child.

Children the world over enjoy music. Music encourages imagination and helps children feel good. When children hear music, they move and sway, expressing their love for it. Singing soft lullabies is a wonderful way to communicate with

infants. Young infants can have soft music in their environments. But, one word of caution: if it is always playing, it becomes background noise.

Parents are encouraged to **SING TO BABIES AND PRESCHOOLERS**. Those who study children report that being a great singer is not as important as just singing and looking into the faces of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers while you are singing. Even parents who think they cannot carry a tune can sing on at least two different tones. This will help your child develop the ability to hear different sounds. Sing those nursery rhymes that you remember from your childhood like "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Your infant will stop moving, maybe even crying, and look and listen to you.

Enjoy music with your young children.



Here are a few additional ideas for parents:

### 1. Infants:

Sing "la, la, la," as you rock and comfort your baby and as babbling begins. Listen for the "la, la, la" to become part of your infant's vocabulary.

Play classical music, lullaby music, and nursery rhyme tapes or CDs as you hold your baby. Your baby will relate music to the loving experience of being held.

### 2. Toddlers:

Wind up a music box and hide it somewhere in the room where your child can find it. Following the sound will increase your toddler's listening ability.

Encourage using the toddler's own body for rhythmic sounds by clapping to a familiar tune. Your child will begin learning a steady beat.

### 3. Preschoolers:

Give your child pairs of objects to hit together to make "loud and soft" sounds. Use identical blocks, pot lids, rubber balls, tennis balls, large buttons, toilet tissue rolls, paper towel rolls, and other identical safe objects. Your child will learn to recognize loud and soft music.

Place three different sized rubber bands around an empty tissue box or large matchbox. Have your child pluck the rubber band listening to the different pitches. Your child will begin to distinguish high and low sounds in music. \*

An internet address that gives good ideas about children and music is <http://www.childrensmusic.org/>



~Joan Benedict is the mother of two children and has a brand new granddaughter. She teaches preschoolers in the laboratory program in the School of Human Ecology at Louisiana State University.

## question corner

"Our son is nearly two years old and we don't leave him often, and when we do, we only leave him with his grandparents (whom he knows well). Should we enroll him in preschool this next year? Are there other options for providing him with various social experiences?"



~ Karen in Colorado

Your son has approached the perfect age to start expanding his social contacts. Two-year-olds love the company of other children their age, and this is a good time to introduce him to other children and adults outside his immediate environment. Play groups, consisting of a few children and parents (or caregivers), for a short period of time, are a perfect beginning for this age. Initially invite the group to your house for a playdough party or some other appealing activity, then go to someone else's house for muffin making, or a simple backyard sand and/or water party. Outings to the park or zoo are also appropriate for expanding a two-year-old's social interactions. Occasionally sharing child care with other mothers is another option for socialization, and can be a welcome break or errand running opportunity!

If there is a relaxed, child-centered, appropriate preschool program nearby, by all means check into that. Most children, by the age of two or two-and-a-half are ready for a short preschool session a few days a week. By the time the child is three years old, preschool four or five days a week for a few hours a day can be a beneficial experience. A word of caution however - make sure you have located a QUALITY preschool program. And what might that include? That would be a subject for another query! Enjoy your two-year old, and break out the sand and the playdough!

~Farol Nelson, Lecturer in the Child Development Lab in the Department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University

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## HBO Family Channel Documents Life in Kindergarten

In a unique documentary, the HBO Family Channel will portray 23 kindergarten students in their first year of school in a New York elementary school. During the series, the "5-year-olds interact, solve crises and wrestle with the outside world" ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)).

The HBO Family Channel will air the documentary on the following dates:

- December 25, Kindergarten 01: Welcome to Kindergarten
- December 26, Kindergarten 02: Open Wide
- December 27, Kindergarten 03: Spread Your Wings
- December 28, Kindergarten 04: A New Season
- December 30, Kindergarten 05: F is for...
- December 31, Kindergarten 06: One Fast Cookie
- December 18, Kindergarten 07: Hooray for Holidays
- December 19, Kindergarten 08: Doin' the Right Thing
- December 20, Kindergarten 09: Many Kinds of Kindness
- December 21, Kindergarten 10: Be My Valentine
- December 22, Kindergarten 11: As I Grow
- December 23, Kindergarten 12: How Does Your Garden Grow
- December 24, Kindergarten 13: Movin' Up

(See local TV listings for times.)

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## activity corner

### Reading with Your Child Right From the Start

Some of the most intimate and lasting memory building experiences that you can give to your child are the moments spent reading together. From the very beginning you can begin to read to your child before he or she is born. Studies have show that the unborn fetus can respond to sounds and especially the sound of mom's voice. Think of it as the perfect time to establish the routine of reading to your child and the opportunity to establish books for baby. Not to worry if your child is already born, there's no time like the present to develop a good habit like reading together. Begin with book selections and with your budget in mind.



Make your selections base upon the seasons, holidays, special days, religion, or the interest of the child. The following is a list of practical and inexpensive ways to choose and acquire books for your child.

- Request books or a gift certificate from a book store as gifts for your baby or child.
- Your public library creates age appropriate listings of books with access to these books at no cost to you. Some public libraries sell books in good condition at inexpensive prices to make way for new editions.
- Book stores have very cozy and "chooser friendly" children's corners. Some book stores allow you to purchase and earn points that afford you free books in the future.
- Join a children's book club. Membership will allow you to establish your child's personal library as he/she grows.
- Network with other parents with children older than your child/children. See if they are willing to part with books their children have out grown.
- A visit to a thrift store with books can yield a bundle of top rated books in good condition at very inexpensive prices.

No matter the age of your child, no matter the selection, or the source of acquiring the book...reading to your child is key. So what are you waiting for? Select the book, snuggle up, get cozy and start making impressionable memories for you and your child.

~Theresa S. Maxie, M.A.T., has twenty-three years in education. She currently teaches four-six year-olds at Howard University School of Education, Early Learning Programs.

## question corner



"My two sons who are 6 and 9 years old don't get along very well. They argue over toys and tease each other constantly. The older one seems to enjoy making the young one cry. How can I prevent problems before they happen and deal with them when they do?"

~Janet in Utah

Most parents have children who fuss and fight with each other, tattle on each other, and tease each other. It is especially common among two siblings of the same gender who are close in age. To some extent, that's life. But it is possible to prevent many sibling battles.

Sometimes without meaning to, parents cause sibling rivalry. They do this by paying too much attention to it (even if it is negative attention), and not paying enough attention to appropriate behaviors. So, as much as possible, you need to ignore the tattling and teasing and pay attention to appropriate behavior.

When your boys are getting along well, playing cooperatively, or helping one another, be sure to reward it with a touch or a brief comment such as "I like it when you play so well together." If inappropriate behavior can't be ignored, try to deal with it calmly, matter of factly, and briefly. Pay as little attention to it as possible.

Your older boy will have less need for gaining attention with misbehavior if you build up his general level of feeling important and cared about by spending one-on-one time with him regularly, catching him being good, and being a good listener. All these things communicate that he is important and valued.

Your boys will still bother each other sometimes, but when they feel secure in their place in your family and in their importance to you, they will have less need to compete for your attention through sibling rivalry.

~Thomas Lee, Ph.D., Professor & Extension Specialist in the Department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University.

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# What does Quality Child Care Look/Sound/Feel Like?

a three part series by Mary Sciaraffa

## Just what does quality child care LOOK like?

According to a 1999 report produced by the Children's Defense Fund, an estimated thirteen million infants, toddlers, and preschoolers spend either some or all of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents. A good early childhood program can have benefits for children, families, and communities. How does your child's early childhood program look when compared to the ideal program?

Does your child spend his/her day in a place that has...

- a room arrangement where it is possible to see all the children at a glance?
- sinks and toilets that the children can use independently?
- caregivers who wash their hands with soap and water in the following situations:
  - before and after handling food?
  - before and after helping the children use the toilet or changing a diaper?
  - after wiping a runny nose?
  - after playing with the children outdoors?
  - after doing messy activities with the children?
- children who wash their hands with soap and water in the following situations:
  - before and after handling food?
  - before and after using the toilet or having a diaper changed?
  - after wiping a runny nose?
  - after playing outdoors?
  - after doing messy activities?
- child-sized tables and chairs (Do the child's feet rest on the floor?)?
- an eating table that their elbows rest comfortably on the top when they children are sitting at it?
- materials within the child's reach on low, open shelves available to the children when they want to use the materials?
  - toys
  - books
  - sturdy puzzles
  - art supplies
- caregivers who interact with children on the child's eye level and make eye contact with the children?
- caregivers who are involved in activities with children?



- simple photos, pictures, and children's artwork displayed on the child's eye level?
- a variety of toys that advance physical development, as well as, imaginative play?
  - blocks in all sizes
  - wheel toys
  - balls
  - dress-up props
  - a variety of dolls from different ethnic backgrounds
- hands-on materials to stimulate creativity?
  - sand
  - clay
  - water
  - wood
  - paint
- children's books that are age appropriate?
  - sturdy cardboard books for infants
  - books with few lines per page for infants and toddlers
  - attractive
  - have pictures of children and people from various ages
  - have pictures of children and people from various racial and cultural backgrounds
  - have pictures of two-parent families, single parent families, and step families
  - have pictures of children and people with various abilities/disabilities



Professionals in early childhood education and child development have identified these pieces as part of the picture of an ideal program for young children. Stay tuned for the next article on what an ideal early childhood program sounds like. For additional information on quality early childhood programs, please contact the National Child Care Information Center at (800) 616-2242. ✱

~Mary Sciaraffa is a former infant/toddler teacher, child care director, and Early Childhood Education Instructor. Currently, she is pursuing a doctorate degree at Louisiana State University.

## activity corner



**SPECIAL FULL-PAGE EDITION OF OLYMPIC ART ACTIVITIES JUST IN TIME FOR THE SALT LAKE CITY 2002 WINTER OLYMPICS**

### Olympic Medal

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

Frozen juice can lids or circles of cardboard  
Paper  
Glue  
Ribbon  
Markers  
Glitter



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut a circle of paper a bit smaller than the size of the juice can lid. (You can use a circle of heavy cardboard in place a juice can lid, but the lid gives it a little more weight.)
2. Glue the paper securely to the center of the lid.
3. Decorate with markers, crayons, and glitter. Have the child write things like his/her name, #1, Winner, or draw a picture of the Olympic Rings.
4. Measure a length of ribbon that will fit around the child's neck.
5. Attach the two ends of the ribbon to the back of the medal and secure with glue and/or tape.

### Olympic Torch

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper towel tube  
Glue  
Red tissue paper  
Yellow tissue paper



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the tissue paper into 8"x8" squares.
2. Hold one piece of tissue paper in the center (point) of the square and gather up the edges.
3. Stick the "points" into one end of the paper towel tube and secure each with tape, staples or glue.
4. Fill with enough pieces of tissue paper to give it a full flame look (alternating red and yellow).
5. You can even add a little glitter on the edges of the tissue paper to give it a little sparkle!
6. Let it dry and you have your own Olympic Torch!

### Olympic Rings

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper plates  
Markers  
Glue or stapler  
Scissors

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the centers out of five paper plates, leaving only a 1-2 inch rim.
2. Color each rim 1 color of the Olympic Rings: blue, black, red, yellow, and green.
3. Assemble as follows: There are five rings forming two rows of three rings above and two below. The rings of the upper row are, from left to right, blue, black and red. The rings of the lower row are yellow and green. Assemble by glue or staples.
4. You can punch two holes at the top to hang or display!



~Reprinted with permission from "Idea Box: Early Childhood Education and Activity Resources" ©2000. For more great ideas, visit "Idea Box" at <http://www.theideabox.com>. To see pictures of the above ideas, visit <http://www.theideabox.com/ideabox.nsf/web/olympics>.

## book review: INFORMATION BOOKS

by Sylvia Read, Ph.D.

### IS THAT A FACT?: YOU SHOULD READ INFORMATION BOOKS TO YOUR CHILDREN

Information books are very important to read aloud and young children really enjoy them. Nonfiction or informational books are distinguished from fiction because of the balance of fact and fiction. However, storytelling can be used as a way to convey facts, as in *Magic School Bus* books. Nonfiction books are becoming increasingly available and the quality and appropriateness for younger children has improved. Many of the newest nonfiction books have exciting four-color photographs and illustrations rather than black and white photographs and pen and ink drawings that you may remember from your childhood. They have less dense text than older books; some books have a single line of text on each page or only a short paragraph, thus making them appealing to beginning readers.

Nonfiction books present facts in the context of meaningful wholes and allow children to integrate new ideas into their existing store of knowledge. You can find good nonfiction books on almost any topic. The excitement of finding a book on a topic that is interesting to them encourages children to grow. They don't just dump facts into their brain;

they respond to ideas, interpret the information for themselves and construct their own understanding of it. The new ideas and information thus

become a part of their whole way of thinking. Here is a list of good, recent books to look for:

- **"My Visit to the Zoo"** by Alik
- **"Cowboys: Roundup on an American Ranch"** by Joan Anderson
- **"I See Animals Hiding"** by Jim Aronsky
- **"My New Kitten"** by Joanna Cole
- **"A New Baby at Your Home"**
- **"Red-Eyed Tree Frog"** by Joy Cowley
- **"Creepy, Crawly Caterpillars"** by Margery Faclam

• **"How to Talk to Your Dog"** by Jean Craighead George

• **"Bats"** by Gail Gibbons

• **"From Head to Toe: How a Doll is Made"** by Susan Kuklin

• **"Sod Houses on the Great Plains"** by Glen Rounds

• **"Tapenum's Day: A Wampanoag Indian Boy in Pilgrim Times"** by Kate Waters

You can "test drive" these books by



checking them out from your local library, and librarians and bookstore clerks can help you find similar titles that you and your children will enjoy. Most of these books and other quality books for children (and parenting and teaching books, too!) are also available for free check-out from the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education's Resource Library at Utah State University. Call the Center at 435-797-8629 or send email to [eejcenter@coe.usu.edu](mailto:eejcenter@coe.usu.edu) for more information. ✨

~Sylvia is a parent and teacher at North Park Elementary School in Logan, Utah.



This will be the last article in the "Book Review" series by Sylvia Read. We would like to extend a special thanks to her for the wonderful book reviews she has shared with us and our readers. Look for our "Science Corner" series in upcoming issues.

# Utah State UNIVERSITY

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