The Child Unplugged

MUSIC & RHYTHM

Activity Book



@TheChildUnplugged
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Introduction



Music & Rhythm is a joyful journey into sound, movement, and creativity. This book helps children explore rhythm, beat, and musical expression through hands-on activities that make learning feel natural and fun.

As children clap, tap, shake, and move, they build coordination, listening skills, memory, language, and confidence. Each activity is simple to use at home or in a learning space, encouraging interactive and meaningful musical exploration.

Let's clap, move, and make some joyful noise!



Why Music & Rhythm Is So Valuable



- Supports language development through listening, repetition, and sound patterns.
- Builds memory and concentration skills.
- Encourages movement, coordination, and body awareness.
- Enhances creativity and self-expression.
- Helps children understand rhythm, timing, and patterns.
- Promotes emotional expression and mood regulation.
- Strengthens listening skills and attention.
- Creates opportunities for social interaction and shared experiences.

How to Support Play at Home

Create a fun, relaxed space where children can freely explore sounds, movement, and music.

Basic setup:

- A safe, open space for movement
- Simple instruments (shakers, drums) or household items (pots, spoons)
- Access to music or songs
- Comfortable area for sitting and listening

Simple steps:

- Play music and encourage clapping or moving to the beat
- Explore fast and slow rhythms through actions
- Sing familiar songs together
- Let children create their own sounds and patterns

Helpful tips:

- Keep it playful—there's no right or wrong way
- Repeat favourite songs to build confidence
- Join in and model enthusiasm
- Follow the child's lead and interests







Ideas

Use songs, clapping games, and everyday objects to explore beats, patterns, and movement while making music fun and interactive.

WATER SOUND

SETUP:

- Fill a large bowl or tray with shallow water
- Add cups, spoons, small containers
- Add a sponge and other play tools

PLAY IDEAS:

- Fill a bowl with water and tap for a different sound
- Add water and notice together how the pitch changes.
- Tap different bowls to hear tone changes
- Show the child how each bowl makes a different sound when tapped.
- Drum along to a simple song or beat
- Play a rhythm and invite the child to drum with it.
- Encourage the child to make a simple 1–2–3 rhythm
- Help them repeat an easy pattern to build rhythm skills



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Supports sensory regulation** - Gentle splashing and pouring can calm or engage a child, helping them manage sensory input.
- **Introduces rhythm through water movement** - Repeating actions like splashing, dripping, or pouring helps children feel simple rhythmic patterns.
- **Strengthens fine motor skills** - Scooping, squeezing, and pouring water build hand strength and control.
- **Encourages language (“splash!”, “pour”, “drip”)** - Water play naturally invites fun sound words and action words that boost early vocabulary.

SOFT TOY BAND

HOW TO PLAY:

- Give soft toys “instruments” (rattle, shaker, plastic cup, rice container)
- Provide safe, easy-to-hold objects so children can explore making different sounds.
- Pretend the toys are playing music
- Encourage imaginative play by having the toys “perform,” which sparks creativity and storytelling.
- Toddler conducts: “Go! Stop!”
- Let the child lead the play, practicing self-control, timing, and early executive function skills through starting and stopping the music

VARIATIONS:

- **Change the instruments** - Use spoons on pots, wooden blocks, or even paper shakers to create new sounds.
- **Different tempos** - Have the toddler lead with fast, slow, or mixed rhythms instead of just “go/stop.”
- **Add emotions** - Pretend the toys are playing “happy music” or “sad music,” encouraging expressive play.
- **Group play** - Include siblings or caregivers so each “toy” has its own sound, teaching cooperation and listening.
- **Call-and-response** - The toddler “conducts” and the toys (or you) echo the sounds or rhythms, reinforcing attention and imitation.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Boosts imagination** - Children create their own stories, sounds, and actions, fostering creativity.
- **Teaches start-stop control (executive function)** - Practicing when to begin or pause an action helps develop self-control and planning skills.
- **Encourages pretend play** - Acting out scenarios with sounds or movements strengthens role-playing and symbolic thinking.
- **Supports emotional expression -** Using sounds, gestures, or movements allows children to express feelings in a safe, playful way.

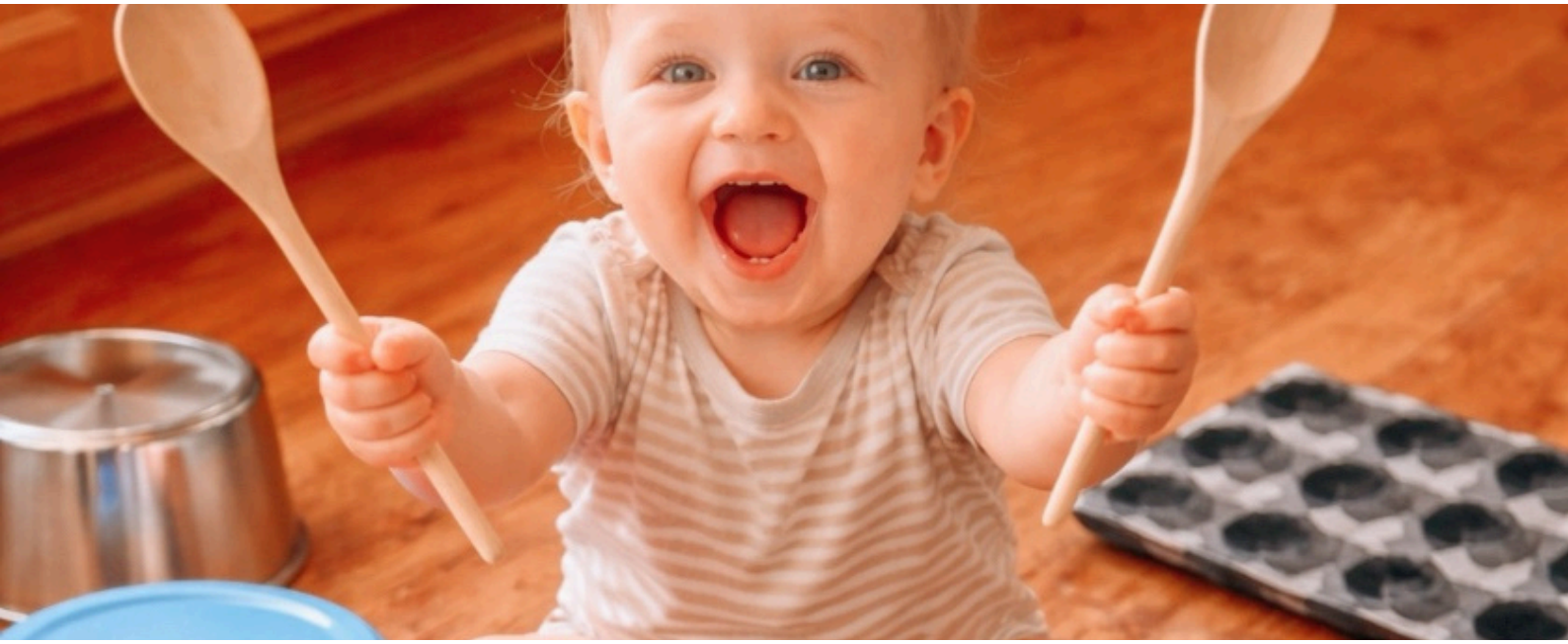
KITCHEN BAND

WHATS NEEDED:

- Wooden spoons
- Plastic bowls
- Pots (for older toddlers)
- Muffin tins
- Metal or silicone whisks

PLAY IDEAS:

- Tap different bowls to hear tone changes
- Let the child explore how each bowl makes a unique sound—deep, high, loud, or soft—when tapped.
- Fill a bowl with water and tap for a different sound
- Add water and listen together as the pitch and vibration change, showing how sound can shift with simple adjustments.
- Drum along to a simple song or beat
- Play a song or clap a steady rhythm and invite the child to drum along, helping them connect movement with music.
- Encourage the child to make a simple 1–2–3 rhythm
- Guide them to create an easy repeating beat, building early rhythm skills and pattern awareness.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Encourages creative exploration -** Toddlers experiment freely with different ways to make sounds, helping them use imagination and discover new possibilities during play.
- **Builds fine + gross motor skills -** Grasping, tapping, shaking, and moving their bodies all strengthen hand muscles, coordination, and overall physical control.
- **Helps toddlers learn that material = sound changes -** They begin to notice that different objects (metal & plastic etc) create different sounds, building understanding of cause & effect.
- **Supports early problem-solving -** As toddlers try new actions to get a desired sound, they learn to test ideas, adjust their approach, and figure out what works.

SOUND DISCOVERY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Bells, containers, foil, rice, elastic bands, spoons, wooden sticks, small boxes, shakers
- Variety encourages different sounds and textures

HOW TO MAKE:

- Freely explore: Shake, tap, hit, or scrape materials to discover different sounds.
- Investigate cause and effect: Notice how changes in movement, force, or object create new sounds.
- Celebrate experimentation: There are no mistakes—every sound is part of learning.
- Spark creativity: Invent rhythms, patterns, or “music compositions” to combine imagination and auditory skills.

BENEFITS:

- Auditory discrimination: Children learn to hear differences in pitch, volume, and timbre
- Experimentation: Encourages curiosity about cause and effect
- Focus and attention: Sustained engagement as children explore sound
- Joy and creativity: Provides a playful, expressive outlet for self-expression
- Fine motor development: Manipulating objects in different ways strengthens hand muscles and coordination



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Blindfold listening games to heighten auditory attention
- Sound matching challenges where children find objects that make the same or different sounds
- Introduce props like water, rice, or sand for different textures and sound effects
- Group exploration to encourage collaborative music-making and turn-taking

MUSIC SHAKER-TAMBOURINE

WHATS NEEDED:

- x2 paper plates
- Rice a
- Tape

What to do:
Tape x2 paper plates together with rice inside.

Note:
Always seal shakers tightly to avoid spills or choking hazards
Choose safe, non-toxic materials
Supervise during play with small parts

BENEFITS:

- Children will love to explore the different sounds they can create. It will also encourage toddlers to explore through their senses, experimenting with a range of materials. This will support toddlers in developing coordination, fine motor skills and early rhythm and rhymes.
- While your toddler is having fun shaking, so much more is happening than we often realise. The brain is getting a great workout! They are not just shaking, they are learning how their bodies move in space, how their body parts interact with each other, how to listen and change sounds, follow basic musical concepts (temp and dynamics) and practice their fine motor skills.
- Great for rhythm, listening, and motor skills
- Encourage self-expression through sound and movement



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different-sized containers for varied sounds
- Add various fillers: rice, beads, or pasta
- Decorate the Tambourine for creativity
- Play along with songs or rhythms
- Use scarves or scarves for movement and dance
- Try call-and-response shaking games

SHAKERS

HOW TO MAKE:

- Use an empty spice jar or small plastic bottle.
- Add rice, pasta, lentils, or beans (each creates a different sound).
- Tape lid securely.

DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- Teaches cause and effect
- Children learn that their actions (tapping, shaking, rubbing) create specific sounds, helping them understand how behavior leads to outcomes
- Builds rhythm awareness
- Repeating sounds and patterns helps children develop a sense of beat and timing, supporting early musical and language skills.
- Supports motor coordination
- Using objects to make sounds strengthens fine and gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination, & controlled movements.
- Strengthens sensory discrimination
- Different textures and materials create different sounds, helping children notice and compare variations in touch and sound.



PLAY IDEAS:

- Shake slowly, then fast
- Try shaking the instrument in slow motions, then switch to quick shakes to hear how the sound changes.
- Shake loudly vs. softly
- Experiment with big shakes for loud sounds and gentle shakes for soft ones.
- Trade shakers with a caregiver
- Take turns swapping shakers to practice sharing and explore new sounds.
- March around the room with your shaker
- Move and shake while you march or dance for added rhythm and fun.

SOUND SHAKERS-LOOSE PARTS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Empty bottles, jars, or small containers (plastic or glass, depending on safety)
- Fillers like rice, beans, beads, pasta, or small pebbles
- Tape or glue to seal containers securely
- Optional: ribbons, stickers, or paint for decoration

HOW TO MAKE:

- Fill bottles or jars with different amounts and types of fillers.
- Seal the containers tightly with tape or glue to prevent spills.
- Shake, tap, or roll the containers to explore the variety of sounds they make.
- Compare how different materials, container sizes, or quantities change the sound.
- Encourage children to create simple rhythms or patterns with their shakers.

BENEFITS:

- Auditory Exploration: Children learn to distinguish different sounds, pitches, & volumes.
- Creativity & Expression: Encourages experimenting with rhythm, tempo, and combinations of sounds.
- Rhythm and Coordination: Shaking, tapping, and moving the shakers helps develop motor coordination and timing.
- Cause-and-Effect Learning: Children observe how different materials produce distinct sounds.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Tone Sets: Make sets of shakers with varying sounds (soft, medium, loud) to explore musical dynamics.
- Group Music: Create a “band” where each child contributes a different sound to a song or rhythm.

MUFFIN TIN SOUND

WHATS NEEDED:

- Muffin tin - Acts as a simple, divided container to organize objects and create separate “sound zones” for exploration.
- Small noisy objects (safe size): balls, bells, blocks, lids
- Provide a variety of textures and sounds for children to tap, shake, or roll, promoting auditory exploration, fine motor skills, and safe, hands-on learning.

WHAT TO DO:

- Place different objects in the tin
- Fill a container with various items to explore how each one sounds when tapped.
- Tap each section: notice different sounds
- Encourage the child to tap different objects or areas and listen to how the sounds vary.
- Sort “loud sounds” vs. “soft sounds”
- Have the child group objects by volume, helping them develop auditory discrimination and early sorting skills.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Strengthens auditory discrimination** - Children learn to notice and differentiate between different sounds, pitches, and volumes.
- **Introduces early math skills (sorting)** - Sorting objects by sound, size, or material helps develop categorization and comparison skills.
- **Encourages curiosity** - Exploring new sounds and objects motivates children to investigate and ask questions.
- **Supports focused attention** - Listening carefully and paying attention to patterns or differences builds concentration and sustained focus.

ECHO & CALL-AND-RESPONSE GAMES

HOW TO PLAY:

- Make a fun sound – Use playful sounds to engage the child.
- Encourage repetition – Let them copy the sounds to support early speech.
- Keep it short & predictable – Simple, consistent sounds are easier to learn.
- Add gestures – Clap, tap, or stomp to combine movement with sound.

VARIATIONS:

- **Whisper vs. normal voice -** Let the child hear how a whisper sounds different from a regular speaking voice, helping them explore volume and tone.
- **Slow vs. fast sounds -** Practice making sounds at different speeds so they can notice how pacing changes the "feel" of the sound.
- **Add movement (clap on echo) -** Include a simple action—like clapping when they hear an echo—to make the activity more engaging and build coordination.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Builds imitation → foundation of language** - When children copy sounds and actions, they practice the early skills needed for learning words and communication.
- **Strengthens attention & memory** - Repeating gestures or sounds helps them focus and remember simple patterns.
- **Encourages turn-taking (early social skills)** - Going back and forth with a caregiver teaches patience, sharing, and understanding social cues.
- **Promotes emotional connection with caregiver** - Playful imitation creates warm, positive interactions that strengthen bonding.

SOUND MATCHING GAME

SETUP:

- Use 2 or 3 shakers with different fillings
- Provide a small set of shakers (e.g., rice, beads, or pasta) so each produces a distinct sound for comparison.
- Shake one behind your back
- Hide the sound source to encourage attentive listening and focus.
- Ask the child to choose which shaker matches the sound
- Have the child identify the shaker by sound, strengthening auditory discrimination, memory, and problem-solving skills.

VARIATIONS:

- **Change the number of shakers** - Start with 2 for simplicity, then increase to 3–4 for a greater challenge.
- **Alter the fillings** - Use different materials (rice, beads, coins, pasta) to create more distinct or subtle sound differences.
- **Vary the shaking method** - Shake fast, slow, softly, or loudly to explore volume and rhythm.
- **Turn it into a game** - Make it a “mystery shaker” game where the child closes their eyes and guesses which one is shaking.
- **Use movement** - Have the child shake their own shaker to match the sound they hear, combining listening with motor skills.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Improves working memory** - Remembering sequences of sounds or actions helps children hold and manipulate information in their minds.
- **Sharpens listening skills** - Focusing on specific sounds or patterns strengthens attention and auditory discrimination.
- **Builds confidence** - Successfully completing sound-based tasks or games gives children a sense of achievement.
- **Supports problem-solving** - Figuring out which actions or sounds come next encourages planning, reasoning, and creative thinking.

SCARVES & RIBBONS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Lightweight ribbon – Wave slowly or fast, trace shapes, or move to music.
- Scarf – Toss, twirl, or use in pretend play.
- Dish cloth – Shake, wave, or drag to explore movement and texture.
- Baby-safe streamer – Wave, follow a beat, or join a “ribbon parade.”

WHAT TO DO:

- Wave ribbons slow or fast
- Encourage children to explore different speeds, noticing how movement changes the visual effect and flow.
- March and wave at the same time
- Combine arm and leg movements to develop coordination and body awareness.
- ·Trace shapes in the air
- Use ribbons to draw circles, lines, or letters, building fine motor control and spatial awareness.
- ·Dance to a steady beat
- Move in time with music or a rhythm, strengthening timing, rhythm sense, and whole-body coordination.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Encourages self-expression -** Children can explore their own sounds, movements, or patterns, expressing creativity and emotions.
- **Strengthens coordination -** Clapping, tapping, or moving with rhythm helps develop hand-eye and whole-body coordination.
- **Supports rhythm learning -** Repeating beats and patterns builds an understanding of timing and musical flow.
- **Great for sensory-seeking toddlers -** The tactile and auditory feedback from instruments or movements satisfies their need for sensory input in a safe, fun way.

BODY PERCUSSION

SOUNDS TO EXPLORE:

- Clapping – Clap hands together repeatedly to create a rhythm.
- Stomping – Stomp feet on the floor in time with a beat.
- Knee taps – Tap your knees with your hands, alternating or together.
- Finger tapping – Tap fingers on a surface or together to make small sounds.
- Gentle chest pats – Pat your chest softly to produce a rhythmic sound

PLAY IDEAS::

- Make a simple sequence: clap–clap–stamp
- Create easy action patterns for toddlers to follow, helping them learn sequencing and rhythm.
- Clap to the beat of a song: Encourage clapping along with music to develop timing, coordination, and listening skills.
- Toddlers choose a sound (“Show me a stomp!”)
- Let them pick actions to make sounds, promoting decision-making, creativity, and engagement.



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Supports body awareness** - Moving to music or beats helps children recognize and control different parts of their body.
- **Strengthens motor planning** - Coordinating steps, claps, or jumps builds the ability to plan and execute movements.
- **Teaches rhythm patterns** - Following beats and repeating movements develops a sense of timing and rhythm.
- **A fun, screen-free way to burn energy** - Active play engages the whole body, keeping children entertained and physically active without screens.

SOUND WALK AROUND THE HOUSE

WHAT TO DO:

- Walk around the home & listen
- Encourage the child to move quietly and focus on the sounds in their environment.

Pause to notice:

- Fan – Hear the steady hum and discuss its rhythm.
- Water running – Notice the flow and changes in volume.
- Fridge hum – continuous background sounds.
- Birds outside – Listen for varying pitches and melodies.
- Footsteps – Observe differences in sound from walking on different surfaces.

EXTENSION IDEAS:

- Include outdoor sounds: Cars passing by, Wind rustling leaves & Dogs barking or cats meowing
- Add a playful element & encourage the child to mimic the sounds they hear
- Have them classify sounds: loud vs. soft, high vs. low
- Use a simple “sound scavenger hunt” chart to check off what they hear
- Extend learning
- Discuss how sounds are made (fan spins, water flows)
- Compare similar sounds in different locations (kitchen vs. living room)



DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Teaches sound awareness** - Children learn to notice and differentiate between different sounds in their environment.
- **Supports early mindfulness** - Focusing on sounds encourages present-moment awareness and calm, attentive play & enhances attention skills Listening carefully to subtle sounds helps strengthen concentration and focus.
- **Builds vocabulary** -Describing sounds introduces new words and concepts, supporting early language development.

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Slow, calm sensory experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials