



PART OF THE
"BETTER BRAINS FOR BABIES" COLLABORATION

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Building Baby's Brain

The University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences

The Role of Music

Music is powerful! It can change the way we feel. Parents know soft music can calm a fussy baby. And loud, booming music excites us. But did you know music can also change how we think?

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE BRAIN

Babies are born with billions of brain cells. In the first three years, brain cells connect with other brain cells. These connections form pathways in the brain.

Children who grow up listening to music have strong music pathways. Some of these music pathways can change the way we think. Listening to classical music can improve some thinking skills for a short time. Learning to play music improves those thinking skills for even longer.



DOES MUSIC MAKE US SMARTER?

Music gets our brains ready for certain kinds of thinking. Adults who listen to classical music solve some problems faster, like putting together puzzles.

Why does this happen? Listening to classical music gets certain brain cells “turned on” and ready to work. This makes it easier to work a puzzle quickly. But our brain pathways do not stay “turned on” for very long—only about an hour.

Learning to play music also helps “turn on” some brain pathways. Children who take music lessons for at least six months can work puzzles more quickly. Music lessons help the brain cells make new connections. This helps the brain work better.

IS ALL MUSIC THE SAME?

Classical music is not the same as other kinds of music. It is more complex. Even three-month-old babies can tell the difference between classical music and other kinds! Classical music helps the brain work faster and think well. It helps the brain solve problems quickly.

But other types of music are not bad. Music makes us feel good. And that can make learning easier.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Parents and caregivers can help children learn to love music. Here are some things you can do:

Play music for your baby.

Play many kinds of music. Do you play the piano? Practice with your baby in the room. But do not play music too loud. Loud music can hurt your baby’s hearing.

Sing to your baby.

You don’t have to be a great singer! Sing songs that your baby likes over and over. Hearing your voice helps your baby learn language.

Sing and dance with your child.

Most young children like to sing. Putting words to music can help your child remember them better. Moving with music helps learning, too.

Start music lessons early.

Do you want your child to learn to play music? You don’t need to wait until she is in school to begin lessons. Even young children have brains that are ready to learn some music. Most four- and five-year-olds have fun making music.

Be sure that music is taught in your school.

Music classes in school can help children think. Singing helps to “turn on” brain cells, at least briefly. And learning music helps your child to be a well-rounded person.