



Engaging & joyful songs for 0-5 year olds

Introduction

As part of our Let's Play programme our programme lead and early years music specialist Kate Maines-Beasley has recorded several songs that she uses in her own practise to share with early years practitioners, teachers, music practitioners, parents, family members and anyone with an interest in early childhood studies.

We hope you enjoy using these resources with the babies, toddlers and children that you work or care for.



London's Bridge

London's Bridge Adapted (trad)
Ukulele chords (C, F, G/G7)



Top tips:

I use my knowledge of the child to respond sensitively. I do not take over play or turn into Julie Andrews, transforming the nursery environment into a scene from a musical!. When I sing in this way, I am using it in the way a speech and language therapist would use spoken commentary: this is sensitive, responsive and attuned.

I always stop if the child communicates that this is not enjoyable for them.

Original words:

London's bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down,
London's bridge is falling down,
My fair lady.

Adapt:

Mya likes to build a tower, build a tower, build a tower,
Mya likes to build a tower,
When she's at nursery.

This is a great tune to adapt to do a singing commentary about children's play.

I use this one sitting alongside a child who is playing. I sing about what they are doing, provided this does not compromise that important play. The act of singing about their play is me showing how much I value it.

Skip to my Lou



Top tip:

Don't be afraid to make up songs on-the-spot in response to children's play. The ability to do this empowers you to follow the children's lead and means you'll never be stuck for a song.

Can you play at peekaboo

This is the sing-along sound only version of the song 'Can you play at peekaboo' by David Evans.



Top tip:

I recommend slowing the pace of the song down and building up the words over time. Start by getting the child to join in with the last word in a line or phrase, then add more words each time, until they are confidently singing whole parts of the song.

What's going to come out of the bag?



Top tip:

My song bag currently has a selection of puppets in it. I have fun taking my time and revealing the puppets as they come out of the bag. I make this musical, by using this simple tune, which uses notes some younger children find the easiest to sing.

A hedgehog is very prickly

(Tune of one finger, one thumb, keep moving)



Words:

A hedgehog is very prickly x 3
(make fingers into shape of prickly hedgehog)
It couldn't be anything else

Repeat then make up your own words, e.g.

A snake likes to slither x 3
(encourage child to lie on their tummy and belly-crawl)
She couldn't do anything else
Repeat then make up more of your own words

This is a great tune to adapt so that it can be a song about anything at all.

I often use this one with the song bag and change the words depending on what is in there. It is also a great idea to include actions and movement so that your child's need to move is met.

Top tips:

Make up your own words. Think of other animals and how they move, or just sing your child's name and sing about what they like to do e.g. 'Jane likes to spin x3, She couldn't do anything else'.

Try to take your child's ideas and watch how they like to move their bodies. There is something very magical about personalising a song for one child depending on their preferences for movement/role play.

Please note this is from Bobby Shaftoe, clap your hands: Musical fun with new songs from old favourites by Sue Nicholls, A & C Black 1992. Huge thanks to Sue Nicholls for kindly sharing this with the world.

Little green frog (adapted to be about absolutely anything)



Top tips:

Sing about something your child is doing/interested in/playing with e.g. they are pushing a car along the carpet, so you sing brum, brum went the little red car one day etc.

Incorporate movement and actions to make it more engaging.

Take your child's ideas. They don't have to be able to talk or tell you in words. Look for body language, gesture and movement play ideas too.

The original:

Mmmm, nnn, went the little green
frog one day
Mmm, nnn, went the little green frog
Mmmm, nnn, went the little green
frog one day
And the little green frog went
mmmm, nnn, weeee

But we know frogs go
(clap and do jazz hands) tra, la, la, la, la x 3
We know frogs go (clap and do jazz hands) tra, la, la, la, la
They don't go mmmm, nnn, weee!

Stick tongue out
Start high and slide down with your voice.

Adapt so you are singing about different animals and incorporate movement e.g. 'slither, slither went the snake' on your tummies, 'jump jump' for the frog, or just sing about the child in front of you 'spin, spin went Toby one day' etc. Keep the tra, la, la, la, la section the same each time.

Let's go in the ring

(Tune of brown girl in the ring)



Let's go in the ring, tra la la la x 3
We'll watch you doing your thing.

E.g. Tia goes in the ring

I might change the words to fit what the child chooses to do in the middle e.g. Tia jumps in the ring etc.

I find it is simpler to just sing the child's name, as it frees the movement from a label and language. There are no rules, other than those which keep us safe. Sometimes a child chooses to stand or sit still in the ring and that is grand. It requires a lot of courage to even go into the middle.

What I do:

We take our shoes and socks off if possible, so we can really enjoy our movement and feel our bodies from the inside out.

I sit in a circle with a group of children and adults. We all hold onto the scrunchy together. Individual children take it in turns to go in the middle and 'do their thing'.

There are no rules at all about what to do in the middle, apart from being careful that we do not hurt ourselves or any of our friends.

I do not ask a child to tell me what they are going to do in the middle. The children I work with have limited language. I have also found that putting them on the spot in this way makes it harder for them to enjoy it.

I try to show that I value every child who goes into the middle. I show as much interest and praise for the child who sits picking their nails and looking at the carpet, as I do for the child who is showing me their ballet pirouettes or break dancing.

I stay engaged and look at the child in the middle. I try to encourage eye contact. I try to give them my full attention to show that I value whatever they choose to do.

Shyer children often prefer to go in the ring with a friend, and I encourage this.

I offer each child a 'high five' on their way out of the ring. I might ask them 'What was your thing?' if I think they are able to tell me, and might like to. There is no pressure though. If the child doesn't want to tell me or I know they cannot, I would comment on and praise what they did, then give them a high five for their efforts.

Brown girl in the ring, by Boney M. Thanks to Boney M. for giving us such a classic tune. I hope they would not mind us using it to encourage children to have so much fun.

Aye Aye Yippee

Lycra song (tune of comin' round the mountain)
(F maj, C maj, B maj)
For ages 3+



Learning benefits

Working with a group of children with a piece of lycra offers opportunities for:

- Communication
- Turn-taking
- Sharing
- Physical development
- Shared focus and attention which supports speech and language development

There are lots of stars bouncing on the cloth x 2
There are lots of stars bouncing,
Lots of stars bouncing,
Lots of stars bouncing on the cloth.

Singing aye aye yippee yippee aye x 2
Singing aye aye yippee, aye aye yippee,
Aye aye yippee yippee aye

Notes:

I might choose different things to put in the middle and bounce on the lycra. Soft is best for safety.

This works best with a smaller group and I need extra adult hands to make it work. It requires a lot of strength and dexterity in the hands to hold on to the lycra.

We have fun working together and counting how many bounces it takes until every last star has bounced right off the lycra.

When working with two year olds, I am more likely to play peekaboo, do ring-a-roses, or follow the child's lead, as they rarely want to sit in a circle and hold onto the edge of the lycra.