



Ten Tips Guaranteed To Get Young Kids To Love Music Class

Learn how to turn young kids into raving fans of your music classes with my ten top tips for engaging and making them super excited about coming to your class week after week.

For sure, the songs you share with the kids are an important element. I mean, who doesn't want to have a really fabulous repertoire? However there's more to teaching music to young children than you might think.

A repertoire of fabulous songs PLUS a keen awareness of how to successfully implement those songs offers a winning formula for making you into a skilled and much-in-demand early childhood music teacher. Read on to learn a few tips that will supercharge your early childhood music teaching chops.





Tip #1

Include sitting songs and moving songs.

By choosing a variety of songs that require different physical positions (sitting, standing, moving), your kids will be kept more engaged. It gives them less time to get restless and instead gives them a myriad of opportunities to stay focused and engaged.

EXAMPLE

Sitting song: Old MacDonald Had A Farm

Standing song: Hokey Pokey



Your turn: Name 6 songs that reflect these 2 different ways of engaging kids – 3 songs to sing while sitting and 3 songs that require movement.



Tip #2

Variety is the spice of life

Sharing songs in different keys will make for a much more interesting listening experience. Too many songs in the same key can lead to sonic boredom and restlessness, even though it can be more tempting and easy to play your instrument or sing in your “home comfort key”. Challenge yourself!

EXAMPLE

Share one song in the key of A minor. Then share a song in the key of C Major. If you decide to include a few songs on your setlist in the same key, be deliberate about not sharing them consecutively.



✓ Your turn: Create a setlist with 6 songs, each in a different key. If you're playing a guitar, feel free to use a capo to modify the key of the song.



Tip #3

Share songs with hand motions or authentic ASL

This is a great way to keep kids engaged. Though you don't have to use hand motions or ASL (American Sign Language) for every song you share, you will learn that it is a very effective method for keeping the kids engaged. Challenge yourself to create your own hand motions for some of the songs you share.

Consider the song 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'.

For the word 'twinkle', open both hands and wiggle your fingers. For 'Up above the world so high', aim your two pointer fingers to the sky, on the word 'diamond', make a diamond shape with your two hands.



YOUR TURN: Create hand motions for a song of your choice. Alternatively, google sign language for the words of a song that you'd like to share with kids.



Tip #4

Singing books offer another way to share music

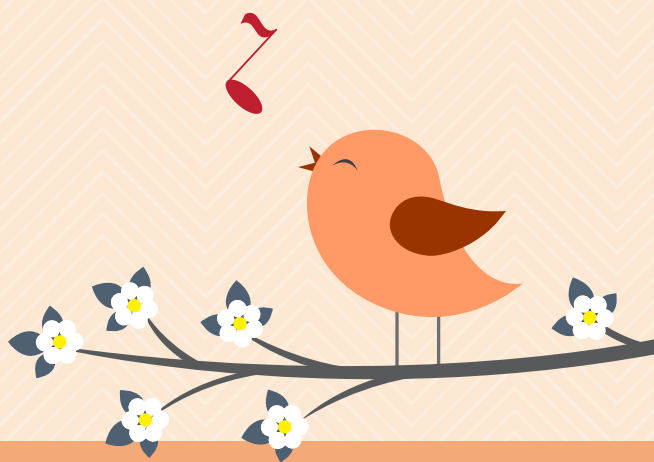
So many songs have been made into picture books, some of them even big books that are oversized versions of the book. Kids love when you sing through these books. If possible, show the pictures of the book while you're reading it.

Make sure to allow ample time for the kids to see the pictures.

EXAMPLE

One of my favorite singing picture books is called Down By The Bay. This is a song by the very well-known children's performer, Raffi.

Here is a link to the book:
<https://amzn.to/3qo6yJw>



YOUR TURN: Do some googling and find a handful of singing picture books you can share in your music classes.



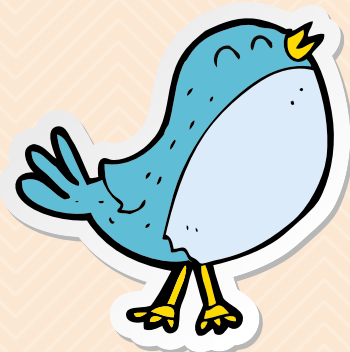
Tip #5

Repeat songs from week to week

Kids thrive on familiarity. It builds safety into their world. Though you (or the classroom teachers, if you're a music teacher) might be tired of singing the same songs, the kids will love it.

EXAMPLE

When I teach regular music classes, I always start and end my classes with the same song, even employing this technique from one year to the next. I always start with "Hello Everybody" from my Sing it! Say it! Stamp it! Sway it! CD. I always end with Hush A Bye, which is a quiet lullaby (folk song).



✓ YOUR TURN: Create a sample music setlist that features the same beginning and ending song.



Tip #6

If the kids aren't responding favorably to a song, move on

Don't take it personally. Sometimes kids don't like certain songs. They might like it the next time you present it. Try it again on another day.

EXAMPLE

Let's say you've shared Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, and the kids say it's a baby song. If you're not quite ready to give up on it, try telling them you're going to sing it in different styles, and that you want them to vote on what style they like best. But if that still doesn't work, move on to the next song!



YOUR TURN: Stand in front of a mirror. Share a song and pretend that the kids object to it. Practice how you will react to it. Might take a bit of practice for you to move on gracefully!



Tip #7

Sing your instructions.

This is a super effective tip. It's a nice change of pace from speaking directions. Plus you're modeling how to use a familiar song in a different way.

EXAMPLE

Let's say you want the kids to put their shaker eggs into a storage basket. Instead of speaking the directions, you can sing (adapt the words of your directions to a tune you know). For example, to the tune of Mary Had A Little Lamb, sing "put your eggs into the box, into the box, into the box. Put your eggs into the box then give a clap clap clap."



YOUR TURN: Pretend you're singing directions to your kids. Use either a familiar tune or make up a melody. When you're feeling confident, try this with your students.



Tip #8

Songs with nonsense lyrics are so much fun to sing.

Kids love to sing songs that have silly words, especially if some of the words aren't "real" words. And if they have alliteration, even better.

EXAMPLE

Look at the lyrics to the song Ding Dong Diggidiggidong. Lots of nonsense words, lots of alliteration. Here's a sheet music [link](#).

Ding dong diggidiggi dong
Diggidiggidong the cat she's gone
Ding dong diggidiggi dong
Diggidiggi ding, dang dong.



YOUR TURN

Practice singing Ding Dong Diggidiggidong. Once you know it, play with the tempo. Try singing it faster and slower. Sing it loud and sing it soft. Sing it with your eyes closed. Sing it in your head! If you don't read music, speak the words



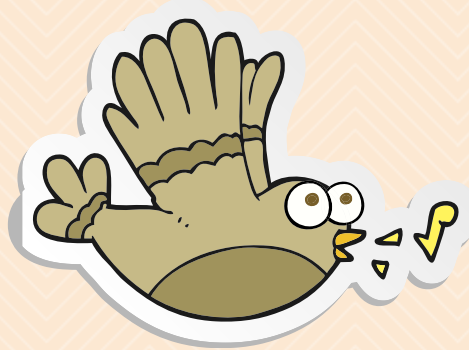
Tip #9

Classic folksongs definitely belong in your setlist.

By sharing classic folksongs, you are helping to preserve them. They represent cultures (yours and others) and are a part of history that deserves to be celebrated and remembered.

EXAMPLE

Listen to the song "Old John Braddelum" which I recorded on my Sing it! Say it! Stamp it! Sway it! Vol. 2 recording.
What makes this a classic folksong?



YOUR TURN

There are so many folksongs that you can share. Google the topic and begin to curate a list of this genre of song.



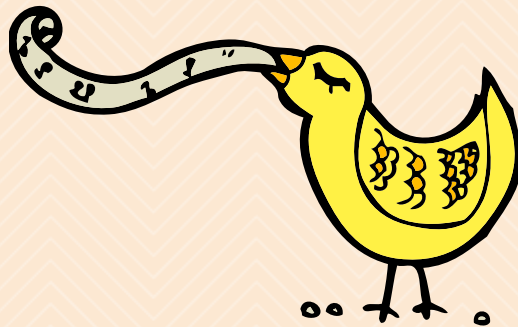
Tip #10

Zipper songs are fantastic to share with kids

A zipper song is a song where the melody and the lyrics remain the same from verse to verse, with a few small modifications (see the example below). Zipper songs allow the kids to offer suggestions that get “zipped” into your song. It’s a great way to empower the kids and give them a chance to be a composer.

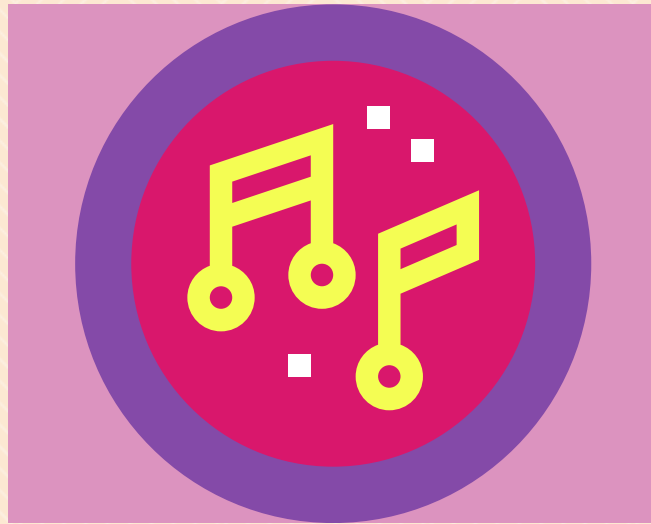
EXAMPLE

A classic example of a zipper song is Old MacDonald Had A Farm. For each new verse, you zip another animal and the sound the animal makes into the song.



YOUR TURN

Do you remember any classic folksongs from your childhood? Is there one that stands out in your memory? Can you still sing it?



Teaching music to young children is such a rewarding job. Not only do you provide enriching and engaging opportunities for them, you also help stimulate growth across all the domains - cognitive, language, social, physical and spiritual. So, my friends, let's keep doing this amazing work we are so blessed to do!



ELLEN ALLARD,
an award-winning recording
artist, music educator,
composer, and coach, is one
of the most influential
performers on today's Jewish
early childhood music scene.

With a strong commitment to building community through music, Ellen has a unique, charismatic, charming, and heartwarming way of encouraging audiences to join together in playful singing, whether she is performing a concert, presenting a workshop, conducting her On-The-Spot choir, or leading Tot Shabbat, Religious School or Intergenerational Wow Worship.

Ellen holds a BA in music from Boston University and a Master's in education from Arcadia University. She is a certified holistic health coach, baby/toddler yoga teacher, Kidding Around Yoga and Yoga Yeladim teacher, and a certified Rhythm 'n' Ruach teacher.

She lives in Boston, MA and has two daughters and sons-in-law who have blessed her with six grandchildren and two granddogs. If asked, she will extoll the virtues of eating dark chocolate daily.