



Tune In!

A 5-day music experience for kids

*Explore, create, read, write,
and learn — all about music.*



Brought to you by Reading Rockets, with support from
the Park Foundation and the National Education Association





Tune In!

A book-based musical experience
for young kids

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Welcome to Tune In!

The best way to get kids learning is to build on their curiosity and interests. The Tune In program is kid-centered with an emphasis on active engagement, inquiry, and creativity.

We've designed the program to be user-friendly and adaptable. Use any or all of the lessons, materials, and resources each day for five days in a row, or once a week, for five weeks, (or any other way you like) to add hands-on learning to your summer, after-school, or home-school programming.

Day 1: Music in our lives

Day 2: Creating our own music

Day 3: Music makers and musical styles

Day 4: Connecting to each other with music

Day 5: Changing our world with music



A note about your own relationship to music

Singing, making music, and moving to music can be fun, joyful, or anxiety-provoking, depending on your relationship with music and movement. Even if you don't have experience as a musician or even if you feel self-conscious as a singer or dancer, you can still be an effective facilitator. Videos and audio provided in this Tune In Toolkit will give you tips and support along the way. As you explore this curriculum with kids, keep in mind that the following tips can help:

- **Embrace humor:** smiles and appropriate laughter can lighten up the tension that always exists when learning something new.
- **Accept and teach the idea that the only way to fail is not to try:** mistakes are part of the learning process — if you make them, it means you're trying.
- **Allow emotions:** listening to or making music can sometimes cause emotions to bubble up. If a song makes you feel sad or happy, talk about it.
- **Tell stories:** share your own stories about music, as appropriate. The message of the toolkit, overall, is that music is in our lives; sharing how music matters to you will make the teaching and learning experience stronger and richer.
- **Acknowledge your self-consciousness:** simply saying aloud that you don't know how to play an instrument or that you've never thought of yourself as a "great" singer or that you feel awkward when you try to dance can help kids to see you as a whole person. Your honesty and your willingness to try will make you a role model for those kids who also feel awkward or who are struggling with self-consciousness.

Getting yourself ready

- **Each day has an emphasis on one or more topics related to music.** You'll find an introduction to the concepts covered and recommended books for each day, as well as a list of questions to guide explorations and activities, and a list of music-related words that kids might not be familiar with.
- **Start by gathering books from your library** using the booklists here in the toolkit.
- **Choose both fiction and nonfiction books** from the lists provided.
- **Read them through before you read them to the kids**, so you know what happens and can spot any unfamiliar words or concepts you'll need to explain. Also, look for **places to ask questions** while you're reading to engage listeners.
- **Take a look at the activities and suggestions** in the toolkit for each day and choose which you'd like to do with your group.

Integrating movement and playfulness

Standing to sing

Getting kids up and moving is a must. Whenever singing is suggested as a part of an activity, you can integrate movement by using any or all of these ideas.

- Before you sing together, stand up.
- Stretch to warm up the body. (Reach arms up slowly, bend over gently, etc.) Share the fact that warming up the body is what voice teachers recommend because we sing by activating the same muscles we use for breathing: air moving through our vocal cords produces sound. Taking a breath in and letting a breath out can be a great way to call kids to be present.
- Encourage appropriate movement during a song, such as swaying, bobbing, etc.

Making video-watching more fun

We recommend watching videos as a group. Add engagement to the experience by including some or all of the movie-themed rituals listed below.

- Sit on the floor or move the kids' chairs into a new position when it's showtime.
- Ask the kids to give you pretend tickets before they can sit down. Or ask one kid to be the "ticket taker."
- Pretend to eat popcorn (or use this time to eat a snack, if snacks are a part of your day).
- Turn off the lights!
- Say "quiet on the set" as you settle down.
- Teach the kids to make the classic "Action" motion of the Hollywood clacker with their arms as they say, "Action" in unison. Use this as a group cue to turn on the recording.
- If there is talking, say: "Quiet on the set."
- If you have to stop the video, say, "Cut."
- When you finish a video, say, "That's a wrap."



Learning with the kids

When your program begins, start each day with a book! Read aloud one or more of the books on the suggested list and ask questions. Listen carefully to the kids' answers. By reading to them and asking questions, you'll get them thinking about the topic, and what they want to learn. You'll also increase their understanding and excitement. Read another book and repeat. You'll see a list of suggestions, but you won't see specific books required — that's because we understand that access to specific books may differ.



After you've read a book together, you might want to warm up with a song. Choosing one song to sing every day is a ritual that kids enjoy. You'll see our suggestion for the song "Celebration" and a link for it in the plans for Day One.

Next, introduce whichever components of the activities in this toolkit you've decided to use. As you get started:

- Look for personal or local connections. How can you connect the ideas in the books or the activities with the kids' experiences? Pay attention and think about the ways music sings its way into our everyday lives — yes, not only the recorded songs we hear from the music industry, whether it's pop, hip hop, jazz, country, R&B, etc., but also the music that is used to influence us through commercials, TV shows, or movie soundtracks.
- Keep asking questions throughout and listening carefully to your kids' answers.
- Encourage kids to write and draw about what they are learning or curious about by using the writing/drawing prompts in this toolkit and by contributing to a collaborative **Music Mural** (more about that on page 7). Model this by adding your own entries to the mural.
- Consider playing music in the background during art activities.
- Provide access to books about the topic for kids to look at on their own.
- Share appropriate digital media with kids (websites, apps, videos, and podcasts) to learn more.
- Take a field trip to hear live music if possible. Many locales offer free music experiences — check to see what might be happening in your neighborhood. If you can't take your group on a field trip, know that some artists are available and interested in sharing their music and experiences by connecting online.

Each subsequent day, connect the ideas and activities from the previous lesson. At the beginning of the session, ask them, “*What did we talk about yesterday?*” Then tie their answers to the focus for the day. Connecting what you explore and learn day to day will help them create a big picture.

Reviewing and teaching new words

Throughout your exploration, take time to talk about new words and tell kids what they mean. You can provide images, videos, and real objects to help them build understanding of unfamiliar words. You can even act words out! You can do this before you read or before you do an activity or while you are reading or working hands on.

If words or concepts are being repeated, ask kids if they remember what they mean and how they might be used the same way or differently in this new context.

Along the way, suggest that kids add whatever new words they are learning to the Music Mural. This communal visual tool will reinforce the learning.

Activating background knowledge

You’ll see specific discussion questions each day, but feel free to begin the entire program with overall questions.

- What is music? How is music important?
- When and where do you hear people singing or making music?
- Is singing in the shower music?
- What are some favorite songs? Favorite parts of songs?
- What musicians do you admire? Why?
- Have you ever played or tried playing a musical instrument?
- What kind of music makes you want to tap your feet?
- What kind of music makes you want to go to sleep?
- In what ways can music influence your emotions or how you feel?



Technical considerations for playing audio/video recordings

Throughout the toolkit, you'll see links for either audio or visual recordings that can be shared with kids. You'll need some way of sharing these.

For a small group, the simplest method can be a laptop or even a phone.

For larger groups, you may need to hook your laptop to a monitor or display screen (such as an interactive whiteboard) to show a video or to an external speaker to play an audio recording.

Technical considerations for making audio/video recordings

Some of the activities will suggest the option of making an audio or video recording of an activity, such as the group singing, or one participant performing their commercial jingle. A phone may be the simplest recording option.

Recording a performance or rehearsal can be exciting for kids and inspire them to put their all into an activity. Listening or watching a recording that you made together can be rewarding and educational. Sharing the audio or video with parents, families, and friends can also be a highlight.

First, permissions from parents or guardians need to be obtained. Follow all appropriate guidelines for this. Make sure to be clear about how, when, and where you will be using these recordings.

Things to remember throughout the toolkit

Kids like rituals and you can give them something familiar to look forward to each day by repeating certain elements of the toolkit.

In addition to reading a book or books each day and singing a warm-up song together, the following can be done each day.

- **Music Mural** — a place for kids to post what they're learning about.
- **Open Mic** — a chance for kids to practice being performers and audience members.
- **Songwriting Studio** — a corner of the room where kids can go to work on songs during the day.
- **Tune In Tonight** — a suggestion of one thing to think about or do at home.
- **Kid-Friendly Digital Media** — links to extend the learning.

Music Mural

Each day you'll be invited to add words and images to a mural about music that will get kids thinking about the lessons, help them remember what they're learning, and make connections day to day. Using various senses simultaneously helps the learning stick and the enthusiasm grow.

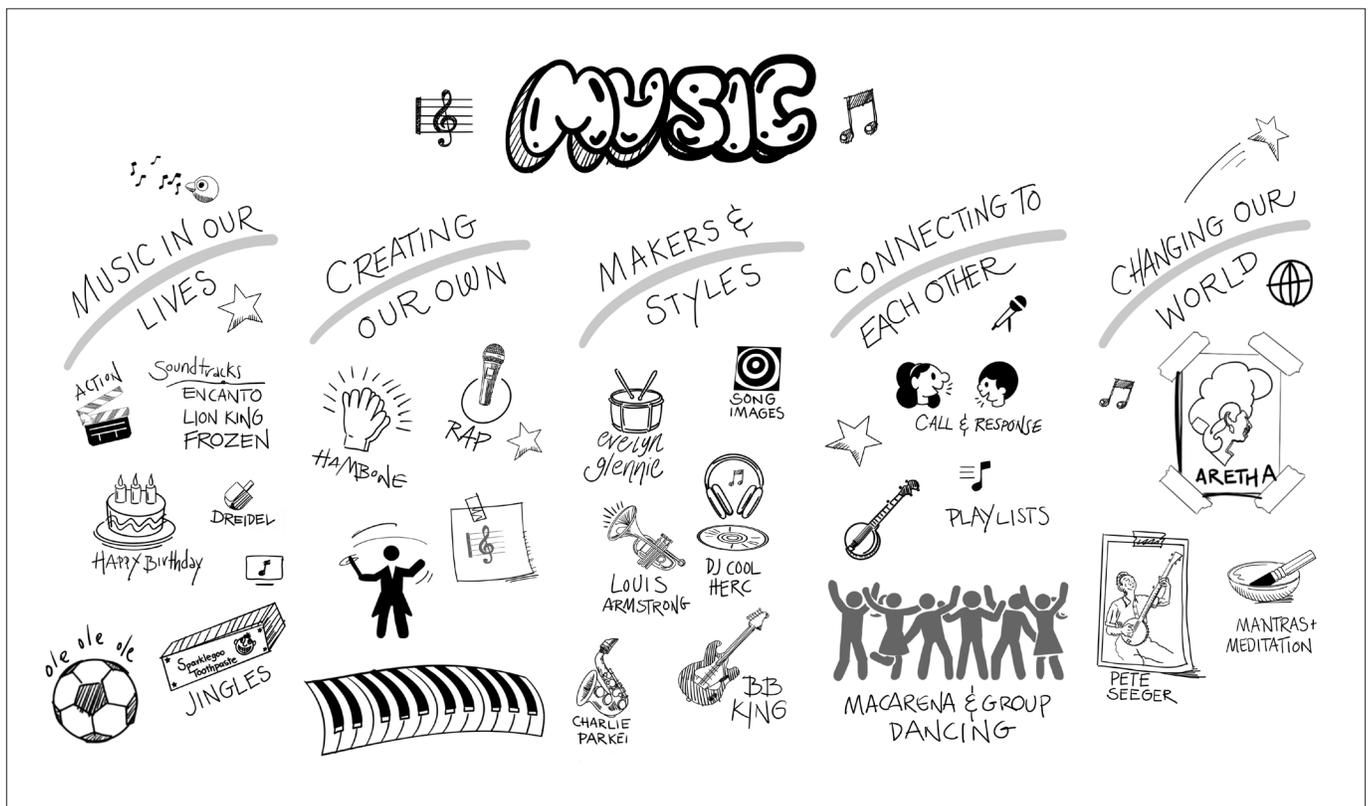
You'll find instructions for what to write or draw. Encouraging kids to do the writing and drawing is a great way to get them engaged.

You'll also find black-and-white images in the Printable Resources section, which you can use in two ways. You can use these as references for drawing your own images or you can print these out and invite kids to color them. Then you can cut them out and paste them to the Music Mural.

There is no right or wrong way to create your Music Mural. Use it to invite kids to add their own images and words each day.

If you're doing all five days of the toolkit, you'll have five different sections: Music in our Lives, Creating our Own, Makers and Styles, Connecting to Each Other, and Changing our World.

Your finished Music Mural may look something like this:



The Open Mic

An Open Mic is an informal concert that typically occurs at a coffee house, restaurant, or small venue to give individuals a chance to perform in front of a live audience. The Open Mic host usually has a sign-up sheet and anyone is invited to sign up for a slot — first come, first served. Often there is a microphone. Audiences are encouraged to be welcoming and supportive. Only positive comments and applause or finger snapping is permitted.

An Open Mic is all about sharing. It's a give and take between performer and audience. In hosting an Open Mic each day, you can give kids a chance to practice both being a performer and being an audience member — both are essential.

Kids of all ages and experience levels can participate. Whether it's squeaking out one verse of "Twinkle, Twinkle," flawlessly belting out a favorite *Hamilton* song, or testing out a rhythmic hand-clapping routine, an Open Mic gives kids a chance to glow and grow.

Introducing the Open Mic

Build excitement by introducing the sign-up sheet (see the Printable on page 45). Explain that each day kids can sign up to perform a song or even just a part of a song. Remind kids that they don't need instruments to perform. Options include:

- Singing
- Chanting
- Rapping
- Beatboxing
- Body-percussion rhythm (see activity on body percussion)

They can perform something you've learned in Tune In or something they know on their own. Remind them about appropriate language in lyrics and encourage them to preview their act with you if there are any uncertainties.

Establish a time for the Open Mic and let kids know an Open Mic will occur at the same time each day. First or last activity of the day often works.

Some kids love being in the spotlight and other kids may take time to get their nerve up. Consider allowing kids to let you know they want to sign up throughout the day or leaving the sign-up sheet out so kids can sign up when the spirit moves them.

Model enthusiasm and the willingness to take risks by signing up for the Open Mic yourself!



And remember, not all students are going to be comfortable performing. There are so many other people that help put performances together: sound and lighting technicians, stage crew, conductors, directors, etc. Invite kids to be involved in whatever way feels comfortable. People who arrange the chairs and music stands are just as important as the diva!

Role of the host

Being the host of the Open Mic is a fun way for kids to also practice public-speaking skills! Model what the host does by being the host yourself on the first day. Then, ask kids to volunteer to be the host for subsequent days. Here's what to expect from a great host:

- **A friendly welcome**

Hi Everybody! Welcome to today's Open Mic. We have a line-up of great performers, so get ready to enjoy the show!

- **A friendly reminder**

Remember, we want this Open Mic to be fun and friendly, so let's be extra encouraging to our performers and show them lots of love with our applause and cheers!

- **Introductions for each performer**

And now, Keesha will be singing her song. Give her a warm welcome! Come on up, Keesha!

- **A thank you after each performer is done**

That was fabulous! Thank you, Keesha.

- **A final thank you and goodbye**

What a show! Thanks to all our performers — and to all who made the show possible. You guys were a great audience! Come back tomorrow!

Tips to create an Open Mic atmosphere in any room

Adding a few "professional" touches can make your Open Mic more fun.

Create a "stage" in your room with your kids' help using one or more of the following ideas:

- Hang twinkle lights or construction-paper chains in one area of your room and call it the stage. To make paper chains, cut thin strips of construction paper. Staple one strip together to form a loop and then put each subsequent strip through the loop and staple to form a chain.
- Make and hang a banner that says Our Open Mic! Or create a name for your Open Mic so the kids feel more ownership and excitement.

- Introduce a pretend microphone. Holding a mic — even if it’s not real — can be fun and make young performers feel special. Try any of these options:
 - empty paper towel tube
 - ruler
 - fat paintbrush
 - drumstick



Pull chairs in “audience style” whenever it’s time for the Open Mic.

Open Mic etiquette

Establishing a safe, positive environment for the Open Mic is important. Make sure you emphasize this with your students. Talk through how negative comments will not be tolerated. Only positive comments, applause, and cheers will be allowed.

Handling stage fright

Engaging your kids in a discussion about stage fright before you start is a great way to address this issue. Assure them that even professional performers get scared and sometimes freeze or make mistakes. Having a plan for when it happens can really encourage kids to try.

The following video about how performing is a way to share joy with the audience can be shared in advance.

How to Enjoy Performing (Mary Amato)

<https://youtu.be/lx1a8UoNCF8>

If stage fright hits, here’s what a young performer can do:

- **Say that it’s happening!** Sometimes it helps just to admit the fear to an audience in real time.
- **Ask for encouragement.** Cheerleading from friends can make a difference. “You can do it!” “It’s okay if you mess up!” or “Just try!” from the audience can help.
- **Ask for a partner.** Fear can dissipate if a friend steps up and stands by the performer “on the stage.”
- **Ask for everybody to sing along.** A kid will never feel alone if everybody joins in.

Songwriting studio

If desired, you can create a “studio” in your room, facility, school, or home for listening to or creating music. What you can include:

- Headphones to block out noise or to listen to music
- Pencils, pens, paper
- A rhyming dictionary
- Laptop or cell phone (with music for inspiration)

Invite kids to go to the Songwriting Studio whenever they are in the mood or have free time and want to experiment with songwriting.

Resources for your songwriting studio

**“Songwriting by Kids for Kids — A Recipe and Process for Writing Songs with Kids”
by FreshMade Music**

<https://www.freshmademusic.com/?p=806>

Songwriting with Kids

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/songwriting-kids>

Songwriting Worksheets (SongChops)

<http://songchops.com/songwriting-worksheets/>

Songwriting Exercises That Work (MusicianPort)

<https://musicianport.com/best-songwriting-exercises/>

LessonPlans — Composition

<https://www.littlekidsrock.org/Lesson/LessonPlans-Composition.pdf>

“Setting Up a Mini Music Studio for Kids at Home” — a blog post from Margaret Francis

<https://www.semissourian.com/blogs/francis/entry/76870>

Songwriting Journal: Lined Paper for Songs, Manuscript Paper for Notes, Lyrics and Music

<https://www.amazon.com/Songwriting-Journal-Manuscript-Songwriters-Musicians/dp/1973898381/>

Guitar Notes Songwriting Tip from Lea

https://youtu.be/yrbx05p6_xw

Project Noteworthy with Lima Symphony Orchestra

A songwriting project led by Mary Amato with 4th and 5th grade classes in four different Ohio schools to explore and celebrate songwriting.

<https://www.maryamato.com/songwriting-in-schools/>

Sample video from Project Noteworthy:

“Deep in My Emotions” — Heritage Elementary/Crystal Miller and Lima Symphony Orchestra

<https://youtu.be/iTK5y3K1HF0>

Tune In Tonight

Each day you’ll see a suggestion of one thing a child can do or notice at home related to that day’s topic. Before the kids go home, remind them how to “Tune in Tonight.” When you meet together the next day, remember to ask if they have anything to share from the night before.

A word about appropriate language and images

The resources we are including in this toolkit have been checked and do not contain profanity. Be aware that kids may want to share lyrics or images from musicians they like that may not be appropriate for all ages. Follow your own guidelines for determining what is appropriate to share with the group.

General books about music

- *First Steps in Music for Preschool and Beyond* by John Feierabend (adults)
- *First Steps in Global Music* by Karen Howard (Ages 6-9)
- *Learn to Speak Music* by John Crossingham (Ages 9-12)
- *M Is for Melody* by Kathy-Jo Wargin (Ages 6-9)
- *M Is for Music* by Kathleen Krull (Ages 6-9)
- *Maker Projects for Kids Who Love Music* by Rebecca Sjonger (Ages 9-12)
- *Music and How It Works: The Complete Guide for Kids* by DK (Ages 6-9)
- *Music Is for Everyone* by Jill Barber (Ages 6-9)

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Mary is an educator, songwriter, musician, and the award-winning author of many books for children and young adults. A former classroom teacher, she develops and teaches popular songwriting workshops and residencies for schools, libraries, and nonprofits across the country and online. Her partners have included Carpe Diem Arts, Strathmore Music Center, the Friends of the National Zoo, The American Library Association, the Lima Symphony Orchestra, and *The Washington Post*. Often, her fiction, including *Guitar Notes* and the *Lucy McGee* series, explores the joy of music and inspires young readers to write their own songs.

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Gayle is a poet who has received numerous awards for her work over the past three decades — from being named the Maryland Young Audience's Artist of the Year and National Young Audience's Artist of the Year to being named the International Poetry Slam Champion. Recently, the Maryland Library Association chose her as Maryland Poet of the Year. In addition to writing and performing, she teaches children across the country how to access their emotions through the force of words. She has been profiled by *CBS 60 Minutes*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. A passionate educator, she develops curricula, including her online course, "Lessons in Poetry:" "Becoming a Slam Poet in 5 Steps:" <https://youtu.be/9f8VcV8v2LE>

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Lea was born in Baltimore to a father who toured the world playing trumpet in the funk band, Black Heat, and a mother who dreamed of opera while performing with her siblings in the Jones Family Gospel Singers. Lea was singing on the pulpit of the Baptist church where she grew up as soon as she could speak. When she discovered the acoustic guitar as a teenager, she began teaching herself to play by writing songs. Her exploration continued as an exchange student at a German music conservatory. Having shared the stage with luminaries including Odetta, Mavis Staples, and Dar Williams, Lea's sound seamlessly blends gospel, jazz, country, and R&B into her own style — SoulFolk. <https://www.thisislea.com/>

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