

Learning to Play: Tips for Parents of Young Musicians

Whether you play an instrument yourself or can't even whistle, these tips will help you guide your child into the wonderful world of music-making.

Choosing the right instrument

- Ask your child what sounds she likes and what instruments appeal to her.
 - Talk to the school band or strings teacher about your child's interest, as well as her size and facial structure, before making a decision. Most beginning band and orchestra teachers let students hold and try out different instruments to help them make a choice.
 - Allow your child to explore. Many musicians started out on one instrument only to switch a few years later to another instrument with much greater success.
- Learning a musical instrument is a family affair! Your child needs your guidance and encouragement.

Practice Tips for Elementary-School Kids

- Help your child set up a special place at home to play the instrument.
- Establish a time each day to play. Some children are at their best in the morning, before school. Some parents set a time after the evening bath when the child is relaxed, but not tired.
- Consider using the phrase "playing time" rather than "practice time."
- If possible, be a positive part of your child's playing time. Sit with your child while he plays and ask, "Show me what you're learning." Or, consider learning to play the instrument with your child.
- Praise your child for each step forward.
- Never make negative remarks about how your child's playing sounds. It takes time and effort to produce musical sounds.
- Encourage other family members to applaud the child's efforts. Positive attention is a great motivator.
- Remember that there are always peaks and valleys in the learning process. You and your child should expect times of discouragement, accept them, and focus on the positive fact that she's learning to make music. Remind her that everything worth doing takes time and effort.
- Provide positive role models. Bring your child to hear amateur or professional musicians perform. Take your child to movies that show musicians in a positive light, such as "Music of the Heart."
- When seeking private lessons, find a qualified teacher you can talk to easily. Ask about the teacher's philosophy of education, and ask to talk to some of the teacher's current students or their parents. Make sure your child is comfortable with the teacher.

By Ardene Shafer and Christine Stinson

(<http://fun.familyeducation.com/musical-instruments/music-fun/35127.html>)



nafme.org