

Family Orchestra

One of the best activities you can do with your children, especially if they are in need of a little 'brain break', is to put on some music and have a sing and a dance around. Music has been shown to support learning, reduce stress and increase creativity.



Even if no one in your family plays an instrument, your home is full of items which, with little or no adaptation, can be turned into musical instruments so that you can play along to your favourite tunes. Why not try some of these ideas and maybe you could create your own 'family orchestra'!

Pots and Pans



Find some pots and pans and a selection of utensils made of different materials, such as spoons, whisks and spatulas. Arrange the pots and pans upside down in front of you in any way you like and you have your own drum kit!

Investigate how the different utensils make a different sound when you bang them on the pans. You could also investigate why different pans make a higher or lower sound and what happens if you hit the pans harder or more gently.

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Crisp Tube Drum Kit

You will need some empty cylindrical crisp tubes, some strong tape and something to use as drumsticks (chopsticks are good for this). Simply tape the tubes together in a circle with one in the middle and you have made your own set of drums. You can also cut the tubes to different lengths to create a variety of tones.

If you don't have crisp tubes in the house, look around to see what else you could use. Try empty jars, tin cans (beware of any sharp edges) or any empty cardboard packets.



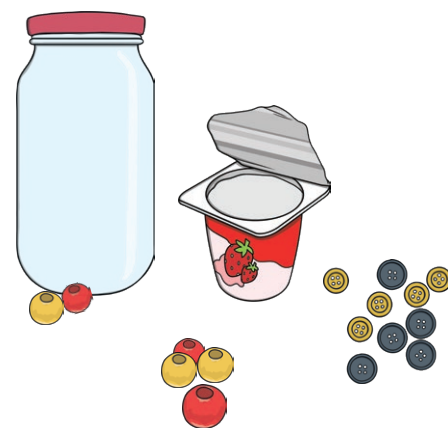
Shoebbox Guitar

Cut a hole in the lid of a shoebox, similar to the sound hole in a guitar. Place the lid on to the box and tape it down. Stretch around four to six elastic bands longways around the box so that they sit across the hole. Attach a long cardboard tube to one end. You can decorate your guitar with paint, pens and stickers if you wish.

Try using different thicknesses or sizes of elastic band and see what difference it makes to the sounds.

Shakers

Fill a selection of different containers with small objects such as beads, buttons, paperclips, rice, pasta, dried beans or lentils. If your container has a lid, screw it on tightly. If it doesn't, cover with cling film and secure with tape or an elastic band. Shake your shakers and see what different sounds you can make.



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What's Next?

- When you've made your musical instruments, find some of your favourite songs with a strong beat and see if you can play along to them. Listen carefully first for the main beat that underpins the whole song – this will usually be beats in groups of two, three or four.
- Next, see if you and another family member can alternate your beats, or maybe add another beat of eight over a beat of four, for example:

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|------|-------|-----|------|-----|
| One | Two | Three | Four | | | | |
| One | and | Two | and | Three | and | Four | and |

- If you don't want to listen to a pre-recorded track, sing some of your favourite songs together and add an accompaniment using your instruments. If you want to write your music down, use these [Compose a Piece of Music](#) sheets.
- Investigate different musical elements such as pitch (how high or low a note is), timbre (what a note sounds like) or dynamics (how loud or soft a sound is). What do you have to do to change them?
- You could do some research into the 1950s musical craze of 'skiffle', where people used homemade or improvised instruments to play their own music. Try listening to the track 'Rock Island Line' by the British skiffle artist Lonnie Donegan.

Why not listen to other great tracks with a strong beat? You could try:

- Another One Bites the Dust – Queen. Listen for the driving 1-2-3-4 motif that plays throughout the track on the drums and the bass guitar.
- Hymn for the Weekend – Coldplay. Again, a strong four-beat rhythm throughout with lots of other musical elements layered over the top.
- It's Oh So Quiet – Bjork. This song alternates three and four beat sections and is also a great example of contrasting dynamics!
- See how many of your own favourite songs you can add to the list.