



MUSIC AND MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Introduction

Music and dance provide a rich, multisensory experience for children with deafblindness. This guide offers practical strategies for using music and movement to enhance communication, motor skills, and social interaction. Whether at home, school, or in the community, these activities can turn everyday moments into opportunities for learning and connection.

Materials Needed

- Simple instruments: Drums, rhythm sticks, tambourines, shakers, bells.
- Household items: Pots, pans, plastic containers, wooden spoons.
- Music player or radio for recorded music.
- Open floor space or soft mat for free movement.
- Hand-over-hand or hand-under-hand support from intervenors or family members.
- Mirrors for visual reinforcement and self-recognition.
- Non-slip mats or stable chairs for children with mobility challenges.

Steps for Musical Engagement

1. Setting the Scene

- Arrange children in a semicircle with intervenors behind them for physical support. At home, recreate this setup using cushions, chairs, or a soft mat.
- Introduce musical instruments one at a time, allowing the child to touch and explore.



2. Capturing the Rhythm

- Begin by tapping, clapping, or humming simple beats.
- Encourage children to respond in their own way—through residual hearing, feeling vibrations from instruments or the floor, or sensing through touch.
- Allow children to explore sound individually and with peers, ensuring turn-taking and inclusion.

3. Tailoring to Individual Needs

- Identify each child's preferred way of capturing sound (hearing, touch, floor vibrations).
- Provide repeated opportunities for children to practice and strengthen their response modes.

4. Incorporating Movement

- Support children in swaying, rocking, clapping, or dancing to the rhythm.
- For children with limited mobility, position them comfortably and provide sensory input (e.g tapping, vibrations) to include them in the activity.
- Use mirrors to reinforce self-recognition and boost confidence.

5. Fostering Communication and Social Interaction

- Use praise and positive feedback after each musical response: "I love how you tapped the drum!"
- Encourage children to make choices, such as selecting instruments or deciding when to play.
- Sing during challenging activities like therapy to ease the experience.

Tips for Success

- **Consistency:** Create a routine with regular music sessions.
- **Adaptability:** Use whatever instruments or materials are available.
- **Clear cues:** Describe actions before doing them.



- **Inclusivity:** Ensure every child, regardless of mobility or sensory preferences, can participate.
- **Engagement:** Use captivating instruments to encourage communication (e.g. holding out a drum for the child to request).

Inclusion for All Abilities

- Children with significant mobility challenges should not be excluded. Whether seated on a chair, wheelchair, or bed, they can still feel the rhythm and be part of the group.
- Intervenors should ensure contact and physical prompts are provided so these children can follow the beat, enjoy the movement, and feel included.

Extending Learning at Home

- **Routines:** Sing to your child during daily activities (e.g. mealtime, bath time) to establish rhythm and comfort.
- **Instrument Exploration:** Use household items as instruments (pots, wooden spoons) to encourage experimentation.
- **Movement and Dance:** Move/Dance with your child to music that they enjoy. Encourage them to initiate movements or gestures in response to the rhythm.
- **Requesting and Choice-Making:** Hold up an instrument and wait for the child to communicate their choice (“I want the drum”), reinforcing communication skills.
- **Motor Skills Development:** Engage them with different instruments to encourage hand and leg movement.

The Power of Music

Music creates a joyful and powerful platform for connection, learning, and self-expression. With supportive interventions, children with deafblindness can participate in cultural activities, strengthen family bonds, develop essential life skills, and build stronger social bonds—both at home and in the community. Even children with severe mobility challenges can experience music and rhythm from seated positions with gentle support and encouragement.



Learning Points

- Use music as a tool to build anticipation, support motor development, and encourage self-expression.
- Include family members and peers to promote inclusion and acceptance.
- Remember that every child's way of experiencing music is unique, be patient, and responsive to their cues.