

Keeping the Beat

Music is an important part of every child’s life. Moving to music is a natural process and children need opportunities to use movement to freely express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage your child to enjoy music by understanding musical patterns related to the rhythm, tempo, and beat of a variety of music.



Tempo suggests the speed at which the music, or a child’s movement, is performed. The best way to introduce your child to tempo is by contrasting the extremes—very slow or very fast (“Play the drum slowly.” or “Play the drum fast.”). The beat in music is a recurring rhythmic pulse. A steady beat can be fast or slow. Being able to keep a steady beat helps your child understand basic timing and can assist with the development of physical skills like galloping, skipping, and even throwing, catching and kicking. Having your child practice keeping a beat using a drum or other musical instruments will help him/her be able to match their movements with a rhythmical beat—an important skill to enjoying dance.



What Parents Can Do

- Clap hands together with your child to help them keep a steady beat.
- Provide musical instruments such as drums, rhythm sticks, and even pots and pans with a wooden spoon. Encourage your child to explore the sounds they can make with simple instruments. In the process they will begin to understand how to keep a rhythmic beat.
- Ask your child to tap a beat on a drum or with sticks and pans. Join him/her and keep a beat together.
- Help your child get started with keeping a beat by using the rhythm of your words to get them started, “One, Two, Ready, Drum.”
- Play music with different beats. Ask your child to strike the drum to the beat of the music.
- Practice marching with your child as you both beat on a drum or strike two sticks together as you march raising your knees high each time you step.
- Repetition plays a vital role in helping children understand and be able to keep a rhythmic beat. Repeat rhythmic activities several times each week.
- Moving and playing an instrument at the same time is more challenging than doing either alone. Have fun as you and your child experiment with learning about rhythm, tempo, and the beat.

