



ROYAL  
COLLEGE  
OF MUSIC  
*London*



# Songs for Babies

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.  
To find out more and get involved visit [www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks)

**Mini Sparks is our specialist programme for children age 0-4. It is proven that children who engage in high-quality, regular musical learning from an early age gain musical, intellectual, emotional and social advantages. At Mini Sparks we want every child to access great music!**

"Playing music is more than recreation; through music children find confidence and happiness unrelated to money or social status...Music is inclusive. Music works across culture, across class, across language...Music is spontaneous, and with some teaching music can enrich children's lives forever." **Jeanette Winterson**



## Peek-a-Boo

Peek-a-boo songs are important for babies' early learning. By playing peek-boo songs babies realise that events continue to exist even when they can't be directly seen heard or touched.

This song explores surprise, excitement, expectation, reassurance and fun.

Try using hands, scarf, blanket, bath towel, hood of babies clothing to hide baby's face while you sing. Uncover baby's face frequently to reassure your baby that you are still there. Babies become more and more confident with this song when they realise that the parent/carer has not gone for good! Then they often initiate the game themselves.



## Tum Drum

This song is based on an English Folk Tune called Keel Row, written around the 1700s. It evokes the life and work of fishermen in Newcastle upon Tyne.

This is a useful song to form part of baby's daily routine. Try singing this song during a nappy change or when getting-dressed. Tap baby's back to the beat of the song (especially helpful when winding), stroke or tap baby's tummy in time to the song, tap their feet together, wave baby's arms, massage parts of baby's body - their feet, hands, flex arms and legs in and out or, for toddlers, make up new actions eg. the hand tap, the leg shake, the head nod etc.

You could also try a gentler version by humming the tune softly or a faster version whilst dancing with baby.

## The Tum Drum – Lyrics

Oh, the tum drum, the tum drum,  
The rumbly grumbly tum drum,  
The tum drum, the tum drum,  
The finest drum for me.  
And I shall play the tum drum,  
The round as current bun drum,  
I shall play the tum drum, the finest drum for me.

The toe tap, the toe tap,  
The happy, tappy toe tap,  
The toe tap, the toe tap,  
The finest tap for me.  
And I shall play the toe tap,  
The give my mom a nap tap,  
I shall play the toe tap, the finest tap for me.

The wave about, the wave about,  
The wave my arms around about,  
The wave about, the wave about,  
The finest wave for me.  
And I shall play the wave about,  
The bend them in and stretch them out,  
I shall play the wave about, the finest wave for me.



## Tick Tock

This song explores excitement, anticipation, vocalising and movement.

Listen to the steady beat of the song and tap baby's back or gently rock baby in time. If you have a shaker gently tap it on baby's body, so that they can hear the sound and feel the beat.

As baby gets stronger, help them test their strength by standing on you knee whilst holding them. Let baby jiggle and bounce and then the exciting bit - lift them up in the air when the clock goes CUCKOO!

Use your voice expressively using an exciting high pitch and loud/soft dynamics. Listen to the sounds that your baby makes and imitate them.

Encourage older babies to form/sing the word 'cuckoo'

## **Up and Down**

This song encourages movement, association of words to movement and the meaning of words and concepts; balancing, stretching, singing.

Using scarves encourages your baby to stretch and reach and explore the different textures. With very young babies gently waft the scarf over the baby in an up and down and side to side movement. Support their heads and spines when rocking them from side to side or back to front - especially if the baby is at arm's length.

Older babies will start to recognise words with actions by copying you with the scarf. Up, down, side to side, round and round.



## **What Shall We Do?**

This song is a sea shanty from the 1830s, written about tasks undertaken on big ships. This is a great knee bouncing song! It encourages fun/liveliness and expectation.

Explore making up lots of different actions to the words eg. "clap their hands and tap their toes, stroke their hair and tap their nose, tap their back and blow on their neck". Lift baby up in the air for 'Hooray!'



## **Tap and Tap**

Babies often associate sound with movement. This song helps babies discover that silence is powerful and that rests in music are as important as the notes. It is also a good example of how changing the tempo (speed) and dynamic (louds and softs) of the song can be exciting.



## Open Shut

This song explores copying, movement, word association and peek-a-boo!



## Criss Cross

This song is calming, soothing, reassuring, tactile, exciting and bonding. It also explores anticipation.

Let your voice get louder as the spider crawls up the babies back and then a gentle breeze (blow) on the back of the neck and a reassuring tight squeeze at the end.



## Sleep Baby Sleep

This song is safe, soothing, calming, lulling and rocking.

Lullabies have been sung to babies and young children around the world for generations. Every has its own lullaby tradition. A lullaby can rock children to sleep, soothe them when they are upset and is a gentle form of movement and communication between parent/carer and child. A study from Nakata and Trehub states that, "babies at 6 months old preferred when the mothers sang to them than when they spoke to them."

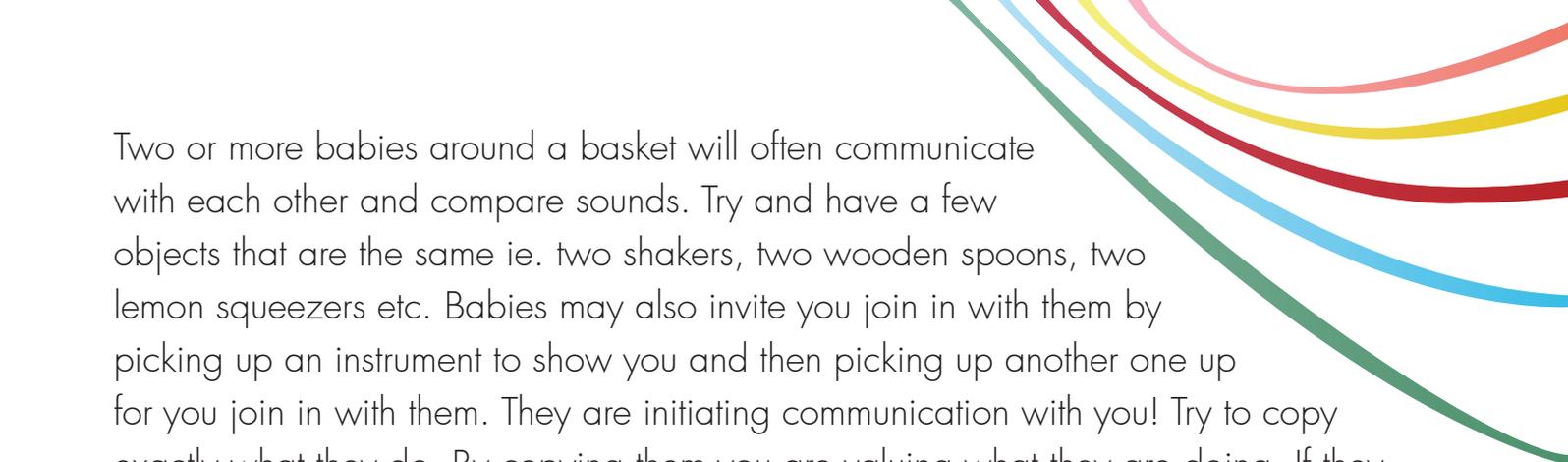


## Create

### Musical Treasure Basket

By arranging objects in a basket, babies are given the chance to choose and explore sounds and textures for themselves. Babies will explore the objects in a number of different ways - feeling, looking, shaking, tapping, sucking and often dropping them to see what sound they make. A musical treasure basket is designed contain lots of different objects which have been carefully chosen to stimulate different senses.

Try using everyday household objects to explore different sounds. Wood sounds (wooden spoons), metal sounds (bunch of keys), scrunchy sounds (paper or tin foil), or try making your own shaker (lentils in a container). Please ensure you have made the items baby-safe.



Two or more babies around a basket will often communicate with each other and compare sounds. Try and have a few objects that are the same ie. two shakers, two wooden spoons, two lemon squeezers etc. Babies may also invite you join in with them by picking up an instrument to show you and then picking up another one up for you join in with them. They are initiating communication with you! Try to copy exactly what they do. By copying them you are valuing what they are doing. If they tap an object twice, do the same thing with the same intensity. If they are playing loudly perhaps initiate a change to playing softly. Who is leading? Child or adult? These roles will alternate as the game progresses!

Often babies want to explore on their own. Sit nearby so that you can offer security and confidence.

Regularly change the objects around in the basket and discard items if they are no longer of any use. You could try a soft bag of fabrics or a basket of mainly wooden items or brightly coloured items.

Design an area that you will leave the baskets for the baby to play with. You could mark the area out with a soft rug and some cushions so that young babies can be propped up safely and securely.

### **A Musical Mobile**

Attach a rope like a washing line to something like a door handle. Tie objects like wooden spoons, bells etc onto the line. Choose objects that make interesting sounds when they bang together. You can alternate the objects for different experiences. This is also a good way for babies to use different parts of their body - stretching to choose what sounds they want to explore. As an adult you can try vocalising to the sounds of the different objects - gently encouraging baby to do the same.

