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Music Ed

QUARTERLY MAG FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS

Feature Student Story

Meet Connor from
Botswana

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6 Components
of a Balanced
Homeschool Music
Curriculum

What is the Easiest
Instrument for
Kids to Learn?

What is Music
Appreciation?

And How To Teach It

gentleguitar.com



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Connor Stokes-Grist
Gentle Guitar™ student
Botswana (Southern Africa)

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A GENTLE GUITAR™ PUBLICATION

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Connor Learns Guitar on Skype in Botswana

BY: INGA HOPE

How often, as a teacher, do you get to work with a kid who has elephants in his backyard? Elephants are obviously not the main attraction of this story. The Stokes-Grist family is. Why? If you know the struggle to juggle homeschooling and parenting, you'll appreciate the lengths the Stokes-Grist family has gone through to provide for Connor's needs amidst the African bush. This is a story of a boy growing up in the African wilderness and his amazing parents who go out of the way to make sure that all of Connor's education requirements are ticked!



Originally from Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Stokes-Grist family settled in Botswana to give Connor a natural upbringing away from the trappings of a big city. In this interview Gentle Guitar™ chat with Tanya Stokes (Connor's mom), about his childhood and schooling.



Gentle Guitar™ (GG): What is it like living in Botswana?

Tanya Stokes (TS): Our verandah overlooks the Chobe River, and we see the occasional warthog and legavaan when they stroll past. Mongooses forage for bugs and grubs, twittering and darting about, and every day we have a troupe of baboons passing through. As we're close to the river, our garden is full to the brim with wild birds, sparking a riot of colour and sound at this time of year.

Hippos grazing on lodge lawns at night and early in the morning are not uncommon. One will always see warthogs walking up and down the main road as if they were running important errands, and depending on the season they'll often have little warthogs in tow. Elephants and buffalo wander through the residential areas at night, looking for a tasty bite...not always welcomed by residents!

It's not only at night that the elephants and buffalo appear, they can also be found casually roaming the main road when one is out cycling. Sunsets are breathtaking too, we're often left totally mesmerized as the deep red sun slowly extinguishes its persistent and overwhelming heat in the cool of the Chobe River. We love the freedom.

Recently, Connor helped his father try to rescue an elephant which was stuck in the mud... unfortunately





has a half hour break, just as he would at school. He's supposed to have a proper lunch break but usually swims and then eats his lunch back in class...just to annoy me, I'm sure! After the lunch break, we have about 40 minutes of guitar, English and so on.

Then, that which can not be avoided - the Xbox! He's allowed an hour a day (yes, it's usually about 2), but not after six o'clock at night. Swimming almost every afternoon, and a couple of afternoons a week Connor gets a visit from a friend who attends school in Zimbabwe. Music at 5pm on Tuesdays, and if it's cool enough a friend of mine takes him for golf lessons once a week or so (mainly in winter).

GG: How is Connor's day different from most other kids?

TS: One of the biggest downfalls for us is the lack of sport. There are no clubs for him and very few children of his age. So after school, unlike his peers, he doesn't have a busy afternoon and is often lonely. However, living such a remote life, he isn't caught in a trap of feeling he needs to have the same clothes or toys as his friends. We don't have cinemas and malls, and no one has incredibly glamorous cars as we all live in the bush.

Our children have a great awareness of their surroundings, it's important for their survival that they understand the cycle of life and death in the wild. If you're told not to run or remain quiet when walking or in

they were too late to save her. Completely exhausted, she'd walked into a water hole and collapsed.... They tried for hours to free her - Connor, his dad, the retired wildlife vet and our JCB. The long drought claimed yet another victim. Then, shortly after and on a different day, Connor bottle fed an orphaned elephant....victory!

GG: What does Connor's day look like?

TS: We're like any normal family. In the mornings it's a bit of a struggle trying to get Connor out of bed, teeth brushed, breakfast, dogs fed.... but we manage to start classwork at 8 and carry on until about 9.30. Connor then



a vehicle, you need to respond immediately as it usually indicates that something with big teeth or a low tolerance for noise is about. Connor also needs to know how to react to snakes and scorpions as we have the two most venomous scorpions, and most of Africa's poisonous snakes, all found within our area. So, absolutely key is understanding bird behaviour (as they often attack snakes) and noticing unusual holes in the ground and movements in the plants.

GG: *How is his upbringing in a remote location helping him shape his value system and moral compass?*

TS: I'm hoping that the time he has spent with Tony (dad) and I, being homeschooled, driving around with wildlife surrounding us, witnessing both the positive and negative impact we have on our natural environment – I'm hoping that all this will help him with decision making later in life. Already, local children get him to remove chameleons from their gardens instead of them killing the creatures. No mean feat as an angry chameleon turns almost black, hisses and scratches, and terrifies him no end, but he's still determined to save them nonetheless. So ... determination in the face of fear... being honest and true to what you believe in... enjoying time spent with family and appreciating the small uncomplicated moments in life.



GG: *Do you have a fear that when Connor grows up he will have a culture shock? How are you preparing Connor for the 'real world' he will later encounter?*

TS: Connor has traveled to England and South Africa, been to malls and to the movies... but there is no way we can fully prepare him for what's coming. We can only reinforce our values, and hope that he can carry those principles through no matter where life takes him. I think to a certain degree, regardless of where we all live, none of us are equipped to prepare our children for what they



might encounter, mainly because none of us know what's coming or what path their lives will take.

GG: Do you use a particular system to homeschool, and how do you ensure that Connor is meeting all the requirements?

TS: Homeschooling was never something I really thought about, more that we felt we had no choice but to do it. The alternative would be for Connor and I to move away to an area where there is a school with English as first language. There is a school in Zimbabwe which has an education and sporting structure on a par with the European or South African system, but we felt the distance was too great to commute daily. We have bought into a homeschool scheme which meets the South African education system requirements, as ultimately he will have to finish high school there.

GG: Why did you choose Gentle Guitar™ lessons for Connor?

TS: If Connor wasn't taking music with Gentle Guitar™ he wouldn't be doing anything musical...not only are there no sports clubs, there are no music teachers!

Here's why Gentle Guitar™ is our favorite choice: All the

work is available to print and the recordings are there to download immediately. I have never played guitar before either, so we can hear exactly how it's supposed to sound, and play in time with each recording. We ended up buying a second guitar so that I could play along with Connor. This has helped keep his interest up as it's not just "Mom's telling me what to do again". Now that we play together, he often has to show me what to do. This is teaching him to be patient!

Connor has been taught by both Inga and Lance, and both have shown a huge amount of compassion, patience and interest in Connor's music. In each lesson, bad habits are corrected, homework is revised and something new is introduced. This could be a different technique or a new note, but it keeps Connor interested and excited. Lance has listened patiently to Connor's excited outbursts about LEGO or his dogs, then gently but firmly steered him back to the lesson. He even let Connor jump to a level ahead and play a song about a snake after seeing that we had one in class.

I've loved the journey with Connor. It doesn't feel as though the pressure is solely on me for him to learn, that's because we're learning together. Connor has already surpassed my ability and loves playing for his dad or friends when he learns a new song.

I would definitely recommend Gentle Guitar™ to other



homeschooled children in rural areas. I'd also say if you don't already play yourself, then if you have the means to do so get a second instrument and practice with your son or daughter. Get them to show you how to play as they've been told. This helps to reinforce what they've learnt in their lesson. Also, it's the one time in a day you don't have to second guess your ability to teach... because you're not teaching. You're exploring a skill together. Music is such a wonderful gift to give a child!

GG: What about Connor's future and high school?

TS: Tony and I have just made a decision for Connor and I to leave Kasane in northern Botswana, so that Connor can attend school. I will move with him for a year, after which Connor will board and come home on holidays. He's going to attend Southern Cross Schools in a small town called Hoedspruit, on the edge of Kruger National Park. So he'll still be in the bush, but with other children, real teachers and sport. Our intention is to maintain our Skype music lessons for as long as we can afford to - guitar isn't offered at school, and Connor loves his lessons. School will bring about so many changes, it'll be a comfort to have something familiar by keeping up the guitar lessons.

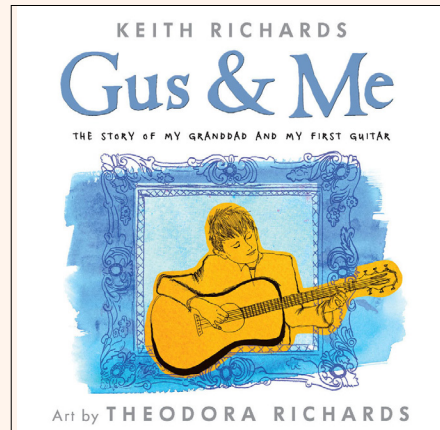
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Staff Picks

Something Different!



Gus & Me: The Story of My Granddad and My First Guitar - by Keith Richards

A children's book by one of rock's greatest guitar players, Keith Richards, with illustration by his daughter. It's a story about the relationship between a grandfather and his grandchild, and how this grandfather was the main inspiration in Mr. Richards learning and mastering the guitar.

We love it because it reminds us that behind many a successful individual there is a kind and inspiring mentor. Who is your child's mentor or role model? [Get the book on Amazon.com!](https://www.amazon.com/Gus-Me-Keith-Richards/dp/1444714444)



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What's Missing - Free Listening Game to Play in Small Groups

We love this listening game which can be played in a small group of 4-6 participants. Perfect for homeschool or private music teachers who teach groups. You'll need simple percussion instruments and some kids!

Link: <https://www.letsplaykidsmusic.com/whats-missing-listening-game/>

Falling Asleep to Classical Music - Staff Playlist

What parents go through to encourage their kiddos to fall asleep...! We've prepared a helpful article and a selection of relaxing classical pieces guaranteed to calm and soothe your little one(s) at bedtime.

<https://www.gentleguitar.com/classical-sleep-playlist>

Win!
amazon
\$50 Gift Card

Enter a music instrument drawing contest!

To win a \$50 Amazon gift card, your child has to get creative by drawing and designing an "Instrument House". See Fun Fact on page 59 for the contest details. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be published in the Spring 2020 issue. The 1st place winner will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card. 2nd and 3rd place winners will each receive a \$25 gift card. The contest is open for ages 6 - 14.

The purpose of this contest is to encourage children to think creatively. The contest judges will be looking for **attention to detail**, how much **effort** the child has put into the drawing, and the use of **creative thinking** and imagination.

The contest judges are the Gentle Guitar team and a professional artist that we are bringing onboard. We'll also ask for YOUR help on our social media pages!



See details on page 59

Great Deal !

Music Appreciation
eBooks for Kids



~~\$24.00~~

\$12 for both!
**(50% off. Buy
1 get 1 free)**

The sale will expire soon. Grab your eBooks while the sale is on!

Explore Music Instruments - by Inga Hope

Two interactive eBooks written for kids **ages 5 to 8**. The eBooks introduce the three main instrument groups: Stringed instruments, percussion instruments and wind and brass instruments.

These books are a great way to introduce kids to music before you even think about starting music lessons. Or if you're already studying a musical instrument, these will broaden your child's knowledge of the musical instrument families.

These PDF books will make a great addition to your homeschool or private music studio. Kids can work through the books independently or you can make a study out of them. The Reading Cards is the 'textbook', kids practice reading and hear a melody played by each instrument. The Spelling Cards is the 'workbook'. Kids get to practice their spelling and knowledge of the instruments they read about and listen to.

Great for music teachers and for homeschool!

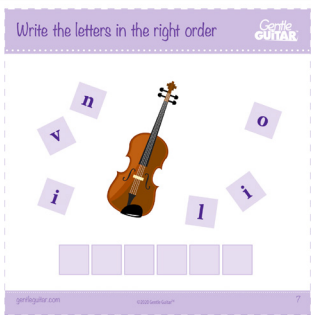
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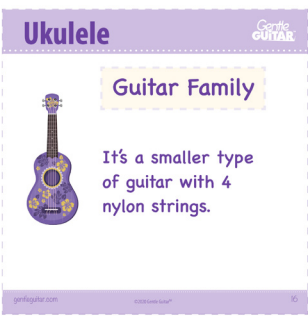
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Music Instruments Spelling Cards (eBook)



Music Instruments Reading Cards (eBook)





6 Components of a Balanced Homeschool Music Curriculum

BY: INGA HOPE

My personal exposure to music began as a young child. In the evening my mother would light candles and put on relaxing classical music for me to fall asleep to. In the morning I would wake up to fresh air pouring-in from an open window and the cheerful chirping of flutes. My mother loved to put on Mozart's Flute Concerto in D to make our mornings lively and bright!

Music in my childhood created many fond memories.

I also believe that my moral compass, my ethics and my sense of aesthetics, all come from this early exposure to classical music. It's never too early to start exposing children to fine music and good books!

Nevertheless, it's worth noting that there is a difference between exposure to music and music education.

It's a great idea to listen to music and attend live concerts as part of homeschooling. Exposure to music is particularly



beneficial to kids under the age of 5. However, after the age of 5-6 the child enters a stage of development where exposure to music alone is not enough. Simple exposure can't stimulate the brain in the same way that a well-balanced musical curriculum can.

So in this article I explain the 6 essential components of a balanced music education.

The 6 Components of a Balanced Music Education for Kids

1. Music Exposure

Music exposure begins in the womb and hopefully continues for a lifetime. It's not only the act of listening to good music, it's getting kids involved in all kinds of musical activities. These activities include singing along to songs, playing music games and regularly attending live concerts. Also falling into this category are most music toys, apps and music classes for kids under the age of 5.

2. Music Appreciation

Many parents confuse music appreciation with music exposure. Appreciation and exposure can go hand-in-hand, but music appreciation takes music exposure a step further. It is the process of analysing and reflecting upon the music. If, for example, you take a child to a classical concert, you are exposing him or her to music. However, if during the performance you ask them to listen for the viola solo, and then get them to identify the tempo (such as andante or allegretto), then you are engaging your child in music appreciation.





In educational terms, music appreciation is the act of studying music-related concepts, and then learning to spot them in the music that the child is being exposed to. In addition to broadening the child's cultural horizon, music appreciation hones awareness, concentration and listening skills.

3. Music History

Music history is a purely academic study. It doesn't require motor skills, nor does it engage the entire brain like playing an instrument does, but it is a great way to start learning about music if you are not a musician!

Studying music history is a good precursor to music appreciation. You don't need to be in any way musical to teach music history, and it's an excellent opportunity for you and your child to learn and explore things together.

You could create a time capsule in your

wardrobe then travel through the different time periods. If you start with ancient history you'll be broadening your homeschool curriculum by exploring how music and civilisations have evolved.

Music is a universal language that dates as far back as the hieroglyphs. In Ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle believed that music had the power to affect people's thoughts and actions. The more advanced a civilisation became, the more music played a role in that society.

Other ancient philosophers, as well as classical composers, also knew about the special power of music – they used it to uplift, enlighten and affect society in a positive way. Do you think we have the same degree of music awareness today?

Studying music history provides opportunities to consider this question. In addition we can reflect upon whether music has become reduced to a commercial product that kids are exposed to, regardless of the consequences it has on their psyche and emotions.

Bonus: Music & Bible Study

If you have bible studies in your homeschool, you could engage kids by having them write their own music history book using the bible as a reference. Encourage them to identify and illustrate the key times when music is mentioned in the bible, along with its effects and importance.



4. Music Theory

Music theory can be a fascinating addition to any homeschool curriculum. It is an analytical study of music harmony. For younger ages this may include 'music math' and 'listening games', or the tracing of notes, the building of triads and learning the A-B-Cs of music.

For higher grades it can get more complex. The student can dissect chords and identify the harmonic relationship between the various degrees of the musical scale. It can be fun but it also stretches the mind in a way that pure science or math can't. Other benefits of music theory include engaging the auditory system while developing strong analytical skills.

5. Music Lessons

Music (or instrument) lessons are a key component of a balanced music education. Learning an instrument takes the music student from being a reflective observer to a pro-active creator. Learning to read music and then translate the symbols into fine physical movements is a whole-brain workout!

Effective and well-designed music lessons build confidence and develop a valuable work-ethic. Music lessons are a stable platform from which to develop life-skills such as: patience, diligence, perseverance and self-awareness.

The good news is that there are many options for making music lessons available within a homeschooling environment. From free videos on YouTube, to premium one-on-one tuition with an expert teacher right in your living room!

A great deal goes into starting music lessons for a child. Please refer to our online music lessons for homeschool.

6. Music Performance

No music education is complete without giving children the opportunity to create music to share with the world, either by performing solo or with others. Music can be a self-contained and introspective study, but it can also be a social activity, similar to a team sport.

The difference is there are no competitors, only team players! If you have more than one child in your homeschool, you already have all it takes to start a music ensemble!

You can put on shows for family, friends, and maybe even your community. Giving kids an opportunity to perform is like icing a cake. After all the work that your kids will put into learning





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about music and developing musical skills, sharing their music with others will bring joy and fulfilment.

Training for a performance will also help your kids to gain self-confidence, learn to cope with nerves and stage fright, and prepare them for greater things ahead.

Summary

Ideally, all of the above components will form a varied and balanced music education. If you're feeling overwhelmed, please don't! You don't have to teach all these components at once, and no-one expects you to get it perfect right from the start. You can begin by taking small, manageable steps that conform to your time and budget. The great thing about homeschooling is that you are free to experiment. Even established music schools and professional music educators don't always teach the entire package!

Here's a suggestion. Try music history for one term. For the next term give music theory a go. Then opt for music appreciation coupled with instrument lessons taught by a private teacher. Or if you can't afford private lessons, try an online video course that teaches beginner piano or guitar. You have many options!

Our Teaching Music In Your Homeschool - Starter Kit is a free guide designed to help you get going. It contains useful resources and a sample music curriculum outline. With this kit, you have no excuses – you can start teaching music in your homeschool right away!

5 Reasons to Learn an Instrument With Your Child

BY BONNIE PANTELY
<https://www.musicditties.com>

Are you searching for worthwhile things that you can do with your child? Going to the library, park or your back yard to play are a lot of fun, but how about learning a skill that you and your child can share for life? Learning to play an instrument together can help you make time for your child, bond with your child, relieve stress, and also make someone else's day.

1. Time for you and your Child

There is always lots to do in the house, especially when raising children. Cooking, cleaning, and laundry all consume valuable hours each day. By bedtime, you may realize that you haven't enjoyed enough moments together with your child.

When I came home from school, my mom would sit at the piano with me while I practiced. I cherished this time together, and felt her approval and enjoyment of hearing me play. It also helped me not to be nervous when playing in front of other people. My mom also benefited from sitting with me, as through the years she learned how to play the piano herself.



Given the increasing use of computers, iPads and smart phones, fewer kids these days develop skills that they can be proud of.

2. Bond with your Child

Learning an instrument together can build a unique bond between you and your child. Not only can you both enjoy hearing beautiful music, you can also understand the struggles of learning the instrument by helping and supporting each other through the process. I have an adult student and her child who learned to play piano together. Now they not only help each other, they play duets with one another and perform for family and friends.

3. Stress Reliever for Life

To help cope with the inevitable stresses and anxieties that each day brings, sitting and playing an instrument is a useful tool and a refreshing outlet. Studies show that playing a musical instrument a little bit every day helps reduce anxiety and improve your mood. My father was a physician. I remember enjoying him coming home from

work and playing piano. Thinking back, he was using it as a form of stress relief. Learning to play a musical instrument will also give you and your child this gift, and it will last for life!

4. Feel Proud Together

Given the increasing use of computers, iPads and smart phones, fewer kids these days develop skills that they can be proud of. Working together with you, they will master the art of learning a great and valuable skill. Hearing your child play will make you both proud of your achievements. The confidence that your child gains by learning a skill is a reward that they earn, and an accomplishment that will empower them for years to come.

5. Make Someone's Day

Music is a gift that everyone can benefit from. It soothes the soul and speaks to the heart and mind. Your child will develop a special gift, an ability to bring joy to others and make them feel good. Whether your child is performing for family and friends, or for your local community, music brings people together! Before you know it, your child will be touching someone's heart with music and making their day! Songs and melodies are like prayers without words, and sometimes just by being near good music we instantly feel better. With your support and guidance your child will be able to use the power of music to deliver joy and soothing to others.

PRAISE

Why We Need To Praise our Students

By Inga Hope

1 We Don't Do it Enough: As teachers we often forget to give enough praise to our students. Praise is the art of timeful and accurate expression of warm approval and admiration. As parents and teachers we don't always remember to do it, and sometimes miss valuable opportunities to build the child's confidence and desire to learn and achieve.

2 Everyone Needs Validation: All living creatures thrive on validation. When I walk my dog and he walks beside me performing a "heel" command, I remember to praise him. When I do, the dog responds, the tail starts to wag and he is even more eager to please. He tries to perform the command even better... He starts improving his behaviour! When I teach a child, I remember to give praise at least 5-10 times in a 30min lesson. Unlike with my dog, with a child I point out specifically what I think is admirable. My student's face lights up in a warm genuine smile! He feels good about himself. He feels worthy and accomplished. He is eager to work even harder, not for my sake but for his own. Doing great work makes him feel amazing, and there's a scientific reason for that!

3 You Earn Their Respect: Singling out when a child has made an effort to improve himself, and praising him specifically for that effort, will earn his respect. He will feel respect not only towards you, but also towards the skill or task. If genuine praise is something that kids have to earn, they will truly appreciate both the work that they have to do and the mentor who is guiding them. By contrast if a child doodles something, false praise will not be as validating to them as when they've put effort and concentration into improving a skill or task. However, if we miss the opportunity to recognise their efforts, it could demotivate them from investing further effort, and they could lose trust in your guidance. Validation is like a beacon or a milestone, it's something that any good guide must provide to show the way - frequently and at appropriate points.

4 It's the #1 Motivator: In general everyone is motivated by success and demotivated by failure. If a child is performing poorly, and there is the possibility that he will give up on music, I ensure that his efforts are praised and validated. Immediately he'll improve his engagement and try to do better! Failure makes us want to quit, but success is enjoyable for everyone! That's why praise has to be genuine. The child needs to believe it! We mustn't layer false praise if the child hasn't earned it. So it's important to pick out those special moments when we can praise the child's efforts and accomplishments – big or small. This kind of personal success produces the 'feel good' neurotransmitters in the brain! We all thrive on love, acceptance and validation. Consistent praise is a powerful way to increase dopamine in the child's brain and motivate him to exceed his own expectations!



What is the easiest instrument for kids to learn?

BY: INGA HOPE

Before committing to the guitar, I explored many different instruments, including the drums, piano, flute, the violin, my exploration even included having classical voice lessons.

Help your child find what they enjoy

I don't think there's one "best" music instrument for kids, or one that's the most easy to play. The best and easiest instrument is the one that your child will actually LOVE playing! It's my belief that kids should have the opportunity to try and explore different instruments, then choose the one that they enjoy the most. However, I also believe that as responsible parents and teachers we can (and should) guide kids, and help them make a choice that they can commit to for years to come. Given my background and that I love traveling, the

At Gentle Guitar™ school we don't just love the guitar, we love all instruments. Each one is unique and special in its own way. Growing up, and through my teen years, I developed a love for music which lasts to this day!



guitar just happens to be the best and easiest instrument for me. But for someone else, that might be the cello, recorder, or the xylophone! The best instrument soon develops into the easiest instrument - the one that kids commit to and the one that we as adults help them to learn.

Explore, then commit

Whilst it's a good idea to try different instruments, learning to play too many at the same time should be avoided. There's a time to explore, but there's also a time to commit. As an important part of their education we should teach kids how to stand by their choice, to persevere through the challenges in order to achieve musical skills and results that they can be proud of. It can be frustrating and demotivating if they are struggling to learn several instruments at once! It's good to give a child the opportunity to explore, but it's far better to help them make a good decision and commit to it.

Some instruments are easier for kids than others

Also, it's worth noting that some instruments are just not suitable for very young kids aged between 5 and 8. For example most 5-year-olds will probably struggle to handle a large and heavy instrument such as the cello. For them it will be much easier learning to play a small and light instrument such as

the ukulele, or a child-sized guitar. As another example, a small child will almost certainly find the flute too hard and will become discouraged – a similar but simpler instrument such as the recorder is a much better option for beginners. So it's important that while you explore, you don't (unknowingly) set your child up for failure and frustration.

Find the right teacher before you begin exploring an instrument

Unless you already know of a very talented teacher - someone who has experience, empathy, and the right teaching tools to work with kids - you should be careful about starting music lessons for kids under age 9. Some teachers just don't have what it takes to work with very young beginners.

It's a special skill and a particular talent. Before you begin exploring different instruments, check that you can find a good teacher who is prepared to give a few lessons to you and your child. It doesn't matter if the lessons are in person or live on Skype.



As an important part of their education we should teach kids how to stand by their choice, to persevere through the challenges in order to achieve musical skills and results that they can be proud of.

You should be careful about starting music lessons for kids under age 9. Some teachers just don't have what it takes to work with young beginners.

Not sure how to start music lessons? Try our free guitar lesson designed for kids in the age-group 5 to 8!

Try a free guitar lesson at home on Skype!

Book now on: gentleguitar.com

A good kids' music teacher will know how to work with you and your child. Look for testimonials from other parents, and see if you can find examples of student performances on the teacher's website before booking the first lesson.

Now that we've got all that out of the way, on the next pages we can share our general guidelines for the various instruments that you can explore with your child. Hopefully these guidelines will help you find the easiest and best instrument for your family!

5 Easy Instruments for Young Kids

1. Guitar

The guitar comes in 4 sizes. The smallest guitar is 1/4th of the full-sized guitar. It's just as small as a ukulele! This means that kids as young as 5 can comfortably hold the guitar and reach all the frets and strings easily.

The guitar is fun, popular and easy for young beginners of all ages.

Book a free trial lesson to have a specialist kids guitar teacher give you and your child a no cost, no obligation introductory lesson and to answer all your questions. We are enrolling from ages 5 to 16+

[Try it now at gentleguitar.com](https://gentleguitar.com)



2. Ukulele

If you have a ukulele or can borrow one, it's a great instrument for very young kids to explore.

It's easy to learn a few basic chords and strum along to popular songs. Keep in mind that the ukulele is not a small guitar. The guitar and the ukulele have different fingering, notes and chords. If a child later wants to learn the guitar he or she would have to relearn the fingering.



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Fun & easy **guitar tuition enhances development!**
lessons for children ages 5 -12

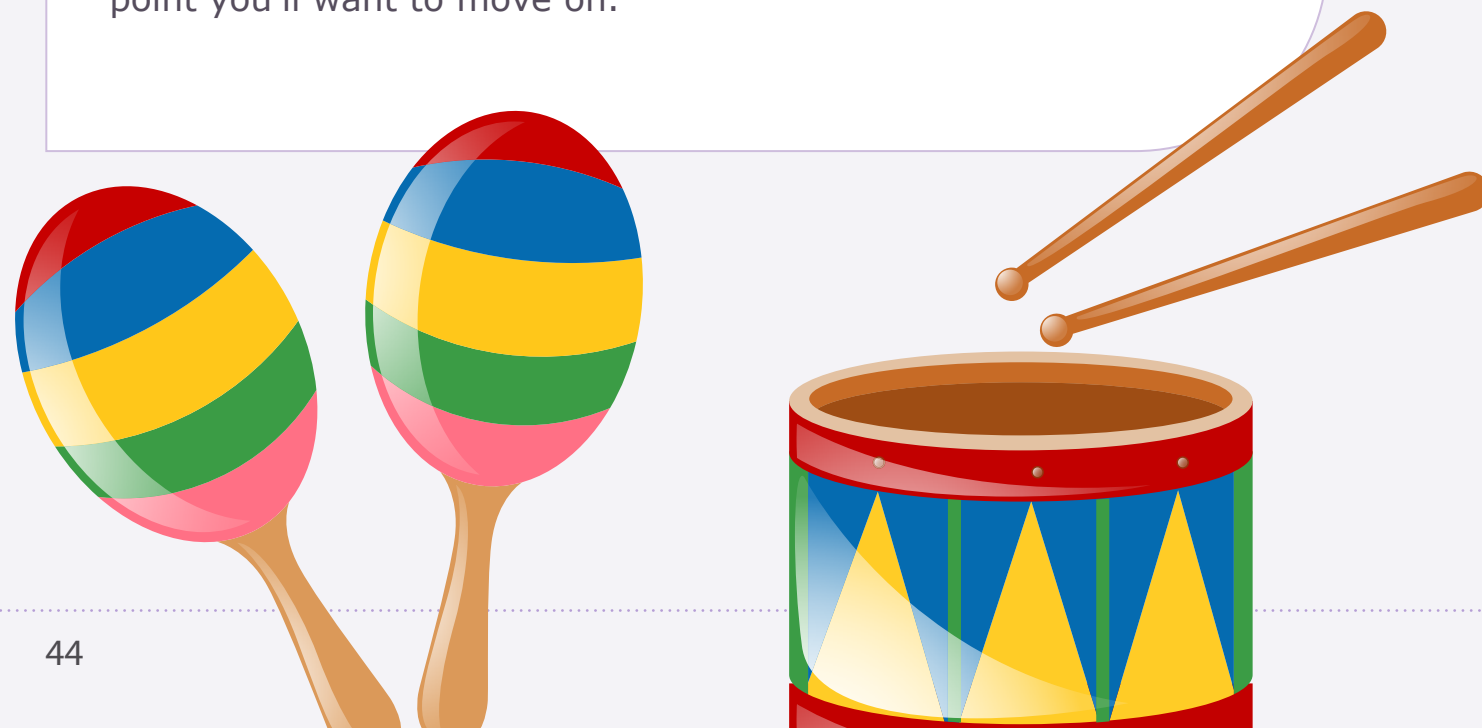
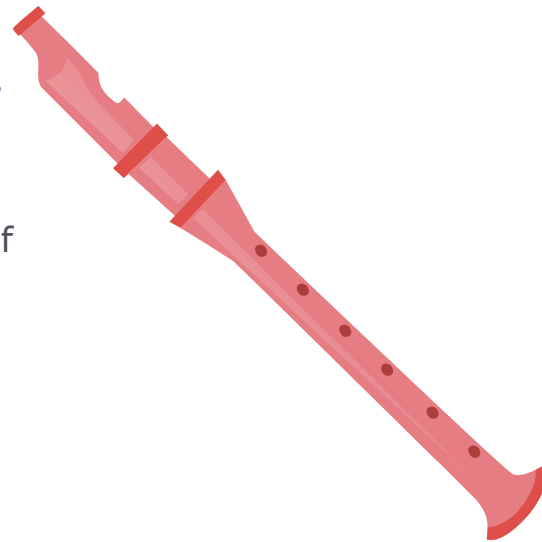
- ✓ Children learn to read and write music notes, play songs on the guitar and compose their own tunes.
- ✓ Friendly nurturing environment builds confidence and encourages the love of learning.
- ✓ Children discover musicianship through fun guitar games and educational activities.



3. Recorder

While not the most sophisticated instrument, if you don't mind a bit of noise, the recorder is an easy wind instrument to explore with any 5 to 8 year old. The recorder is the most affordable instrument, you can get one for just under \$20!

You can find many free videos on YouTube that will teach you and your child how to play a recorder. Because it's such a simple instrument, it's easy and affordable to get started. Unlike learning the guitar, where working with the right teacher and learning good technique is important, the recorder is something you can learn at home on your own. But don't expect to get further than a few basic tunes. While the recorder is super easy, it's a fun beginner instrument, but not much more. At some point you'll want to move on.

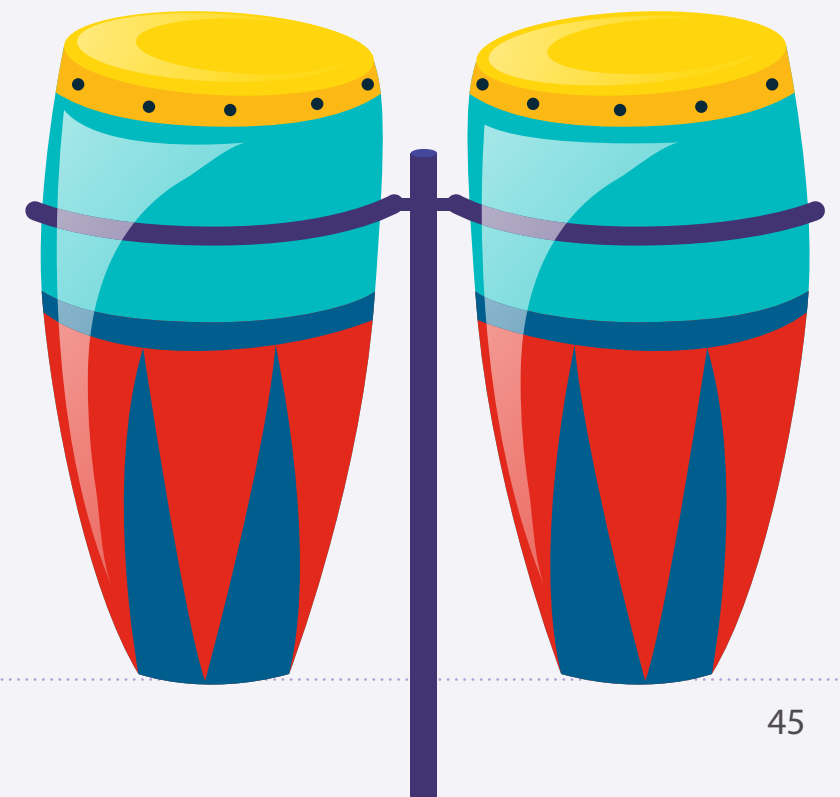


4. Percussion

The full drum kit might be too big (and too expensive) for very young beginners, but shakers, bells, marimba and other percussive instruments are great for kids under 8.

Rhythm is the foundation of all music study for all instruments. It can be a good idea to start with a simple percussive instrument and learn rhythm first, undistracted by notes and chords.

A child as young as 3 or 4 can begin to read simple rhythm notation. The best part is that you can make your own percussion instrument with your young musician!



5. Piano

Provided that you have found a teacher who has the methodology, patience and experience to work with young kids, the piano can be an excellent choice.

Like learning the guitar, playing the piano while young will provide many musical benefits and opportunities for life. Before booking a piano lesson for a child under 9 years old, please be sure that you see other parent testimonials and child performances on the teacher's website.

There's nothing worse than bringing a young child to a teacher who is not experienced in teaching small kids. It's a sure way to turn an experience that is meant to be wonderful into a disappointment. This is true for all instruments, but especially for piano because at first the piano will be too big for a 5-6 year old. But a good teacher will know how to make learning fun and easy even for a small child! We have discovered one such teacher who even created her own fun kids piano method by hand! Her method works wonders to engage the very young ones and is a true gem.



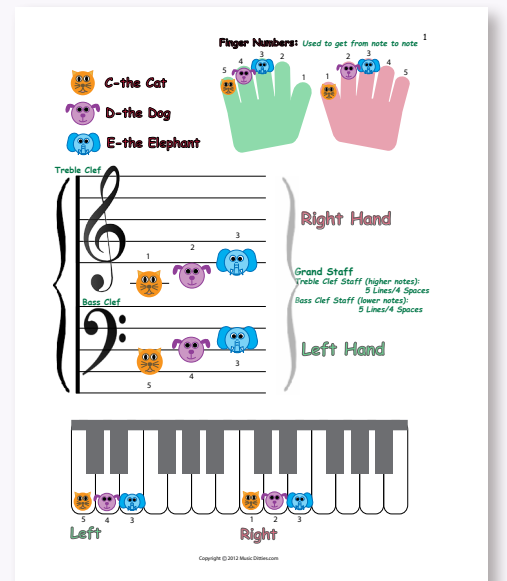
Meet Mrs. Bonnie Pantely, a piano teacher from Florida. Bonnie created the Music Ditties piano method to help her young learners have more fun learning to sight-read the treble and bass clefs. The method uses storytelling and animals to get kids engaged and motivated.



We love that the method is hand-drawn to allow for extra large staff and notation. It's perfect for ages 4+. After the introduction to the 'animal-notes', the student moves on to gradually learn standard notation. See how fun this looks... It even has animal stickers to put on the keys!

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<https://www.musicditties.com/>

Classical Music to Encourage Sleep

BY: JOHN BRIGHT

We all know there are occasions at bedtime when kids find it difficult to relax and doze off. Is there anything you can do to help them? Yes, there is.

There's a wealth of advice available about how to encourage and facilitate a restful state of sleep. Some advice is based on scientific research, some on simple common sense. I'd like to offer you advice based on personal experience – based upon memories of what helped me slide into peaceful slumber when I was a child.

We began listening to classical music at bedtime. After tooth brushing and slipping under the bedcovers, one of my parents would select something suitable for us to listen to. With the right music it didn't take long before I drifted off - happy, relaxed and contented.

But what is the "right" music? Mozart, Brahms, Chopin? Which classical pieces encourage a good night's sleep? How long should the music be played for?

These are all good questions, but there are no "right" answers!

Choosing Appropriate Music

Although there's a lack of "right" answers, there are lots of recommendations (based on academic studies) that should help with choosing music that is relaxing and encourages good quality sleep.

The most common recommendation is that the tempo should be around 60 to 80 beats per minute. This helps to slow the heart rate, which prepares our bodies for slumber. Another recommendation is that the music shouldn't have any significant crescendos or sudden diminuendos – these would provide unwanted stimulation to the brain and therefore disturb its relaxation process.

As regards the best pieces to play, research simply points us towards music that gives a "happy" feeling. This encourages production and release of the chemical serotonin, which ultimately gives a sense of calm and wellbeing. Finally, the optimum duration is around 45 minutes – if your child hasn't dropped off after that length of time, then maybe a rethink is needed!



In summary, recommendations from studies hint at the best results being achieved by listening to gentle music which:

- has a steady tempo of around 60 - 80 beats per minute
- avoids significant changes of volume
- makes your child feel happy and comfortable
- lasts for up to 45 minutes

Putting Together a Playlist

Based on these recommendations, why not try putting together a suitable bedtime playlist? Easy! Well, I thought so too, but after writing down as many pieces that I could think of which fitted this criteria, my playlist consisted of 23 tracks which collectively lasted an hour and forty minutes! Oh how I wanted to include them all, but there were far too many tracks, and the whole thing lasted for too long.

If you also struggle with keeping it down to 45 minutes, here's a suggestion. Try limiting your list to pieces with simple, kid-friendly titles. Names that your child will be able to understand and remember. At bedtime, how much easier will it be for them to ask you to play "The

Humming Chorus", rather than "Piano Concerto No 21 in C, the 3rd Movement"?

Or, there is another suggestion one that could make it even easier for you! Try this special "sleep playlist" that we created for you!

<https://www.gentleguitar.com/classical-sleep-playlist>

Ten quiet and relaxing pieces with mostly simple names, lasting a total of forty-five minutes. Some are arrangements for instruments which you may not expect to hear. For example, the Canon in D is a delightful composition, but most versions aren't as relaxing as the one you'll hear on this playlist, which is a truly exquisite arrangement for classical guitar. I hope you'll like it, along with all the other pieces, and my fingers are crossed that this playlist will help your child to drift off to sleep with a nice smile on their face.

A Few Words of Caution

Personal experience confirms that listening to suitable classical music at bedtime does encourage sleep, but we should also be aware that some studies say it shouldn't be repeated every single night. This is because some kids



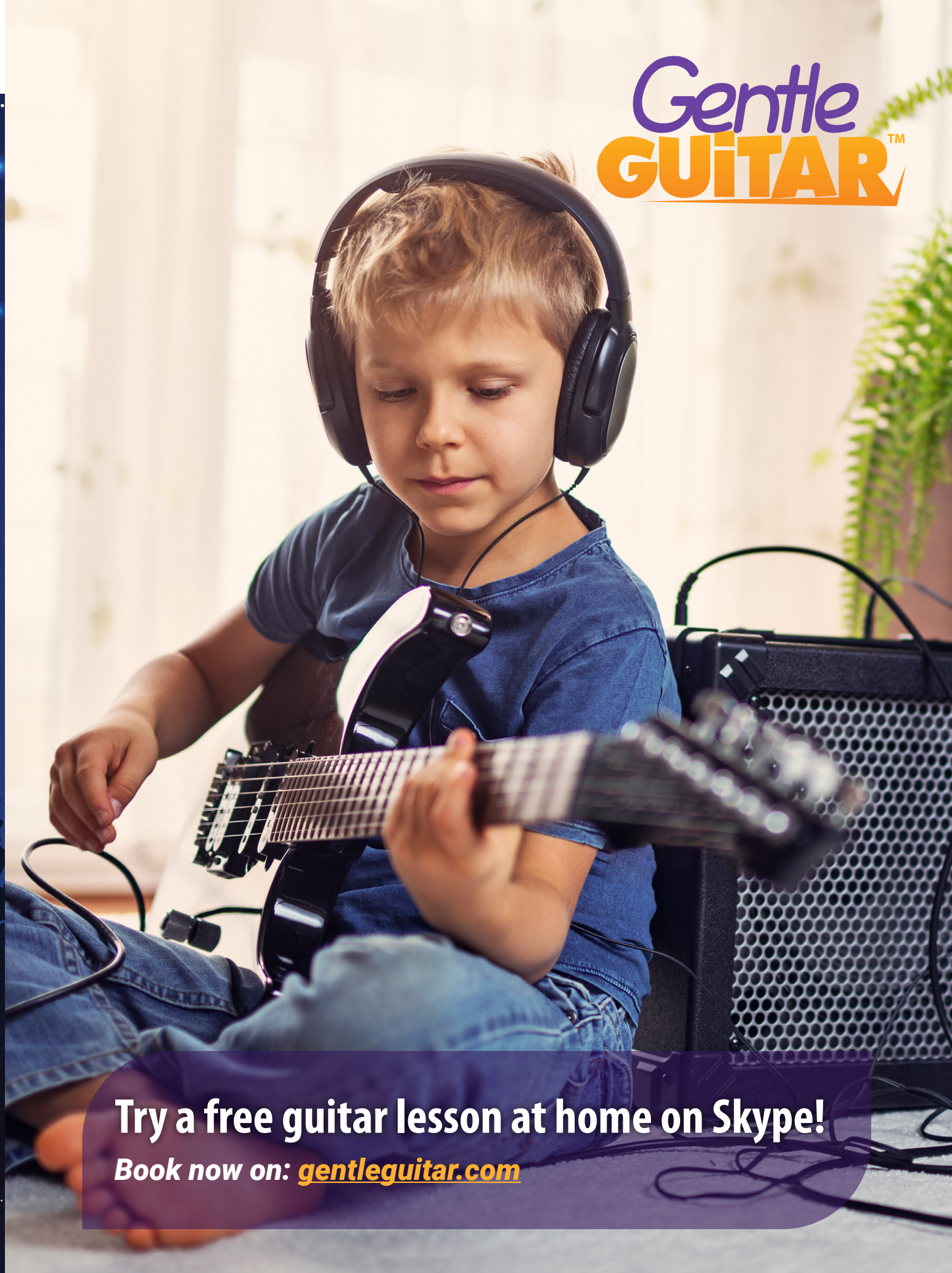
may become too reliant on having music before going to sleep, and it could become a habit that's hard to break in later life.

There's also the consideration of how the music will be played. With today's technology, it might seem easiest to use an electronic device near the child's bed, but beware of anything that has a display screen. Any light that the screen emits is an unwanted stimulant, and therefore not conducive to encouraging quality sleep. Consider warm ambient lighting or the soft glow of a candle at a safe distance.

Beware of YouTube playlists because most YouTube channels have advertising. A sudden loud commercial will not only risk waking your child, but even scaring them. We recommend Spotify, iTunes, or your favorite stream service to make your playlist.

Finally, remember that it should be music that your child finds pleasing – please don't force them to listen! It should be something that gives a "happy" feeling.

I do hope that you share my love of classical music, and that its use at bedtime helps your child to fall asleep relaxed and content.



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What is Music Appreciation?

And Why It's Important for the Homeschool Family

BY: GENA MAYO

My name is Gena Mayo, and I'm a homeschooling mom of eight children and a music teacher for more than 25 years. I have always believed that music is a vital part of a balanced education for children. As homeschoolers, we often get to choose exactly what our children will study. Is music appreciation part of your offerings?

What is music appreciation? It begins with music exposure. Students learn that there is more music out there than what they simply hear on the radio or through their earbuds. But, it goes so much further than that. Wikipedia defines music appreciation as, "teaching people what to listen for and how to understand what they are hearing in different types of music." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_appreciation).



At Chegg.com, music appreciation is described as “learning to stop...focus...and really listen, if only for just a minute or two. Someone took the time to write everything we listen to; what was it that they were trying to say? How does the music communicate that? What else does it say to you?” (<https://www.chegg.com/tutors/what-is-Music-Appreciation/>)

When I realized that it wasn’t possible for every single child to take private instrument or voice lessons, I knew that every student should take a music appreciation course. So, I began to write them specifically for homeschool families. I started with short 15-minute music lessons so that all homeschool moms could easily fit music appreciation into their day. Young students listen to the music and either talk about what they’re hearing, draw what they heard, or describe it on a notebooking page. Older students are often guided to listen for something specific in the music.

For example, students may be listening for the instrumentation in a piece of music. What instruments are playing it? They may be listening for tempo or dynamic changes. Does the music get faster or slow down? How loud or soft are the musicians playing? Does it change throughout the piece? Or, they may be guided to listening for how a particular style, like jazz or opera, changed through the years. Sometimes, students are to listen for a particular artistic technique, like Wagner’s use of leitmotifs or John Williams’ use of themes to

represent certain Star Wars characters in the movies. There are so many different things to listen for in music, and my goal is always to make it exciting for the students!

I now have music appreciation courses written for all grade levels: preschool through high school. At the preschool level, the kids are being exposed to songs that are part of our culture, and they learn to sing them. As students progress in age, they begin listening to a larger variety of music and learning about the composers, why the music was written, and about certain musical aspects of it. And, at the high school level, students are ready to dig in deeper and get a fine arts credit as they learn about music from the middle ages all the way through the modern era.

I hope you will consider including music appreciation in your homeschool. It definitely rounds out a student’s education. And, now you know that it’s not as difficult to include as you might have once thought!



Music Appreciation Freebie!

"Music of Star Wars"

15-Minute Music Appreciation Lesson

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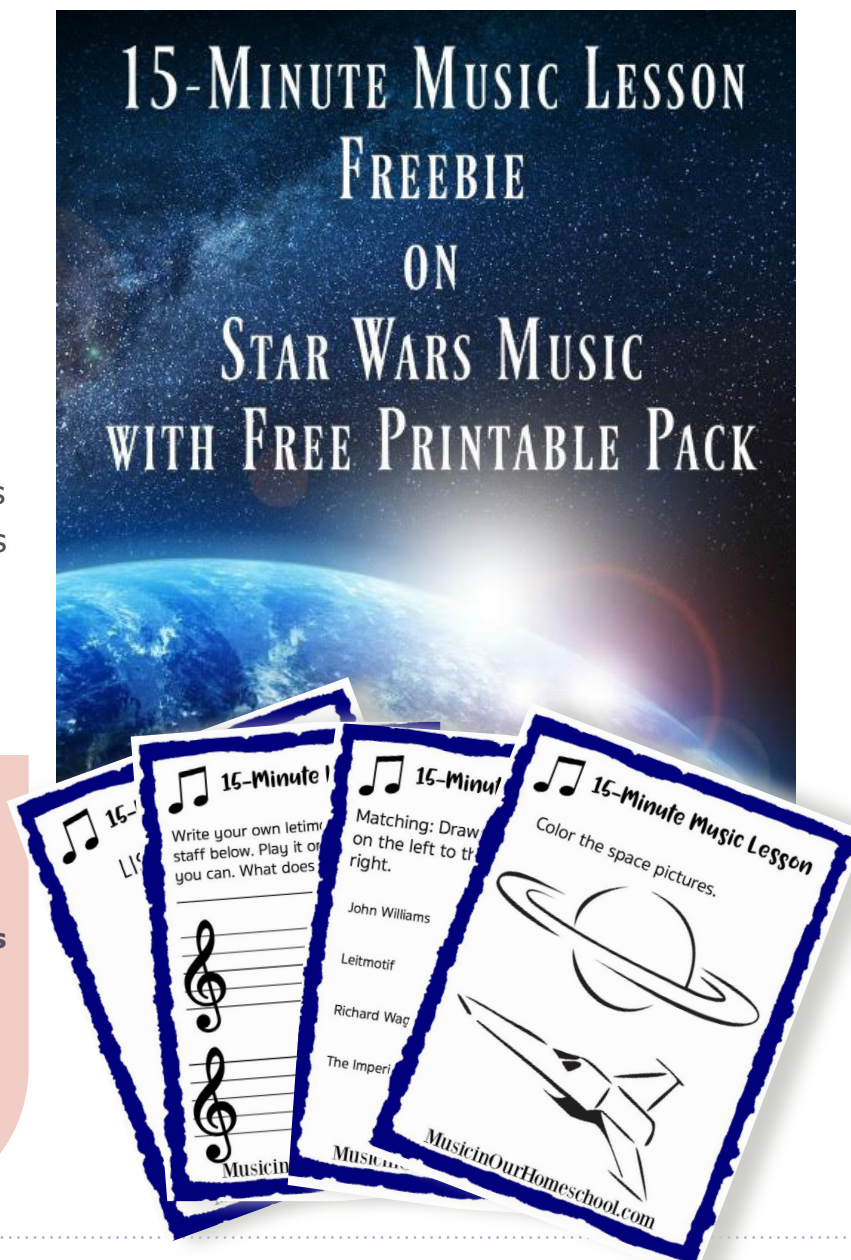
What's inside?

This music appreciation lesson for elementary students will introduce you to film score composer John Williams, show you a bit about how a movie score writer records the music for a movie, and teach you about the themes that Williams incorporated into the Star Wars movies. It includes the videos, an online quiz, and a 4-page printable pack.

Get the Entire Course!

Get 40% off the full 36-lesson course that includes the "Music of Star Wars" lesson. **Music Lessons for Holidays & Special Days** online course. Use coupon code GENTLEGUITAR to get it for only \$40.20. Offer expires on 2/29/20. (lifetime access).

[GET THE FULL COURSE](#)



Fun Fact

The Piano Building in China



Design your own instrument house! **Win!**

Think of the instruments in an orchestra. If they were big enough, which ones would make the best houses?

Flute? Too thin. Not enough room. Trumpet? Too many fiddly little corridors. Easy to get lost! Cello? Plenty of room in there.

Timpani (kettle drum)? Lots of room. Enough to play football!

It's the instruments with sound boxes that would make the best houses. What are sound boxes? Space for the sound to be amplified.

Why not design your own instrument house and submit it to our contest!

Email your final drawing to ingahope@gmail.com with the subject "Instrument House Contest". Include child's name, age and state or city. 1st place winner will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

In China there's a building built in the shape of a piano and violin. It is reproduced on a 50:1 scale. That means it's 50 times bigger than the actual instruments.

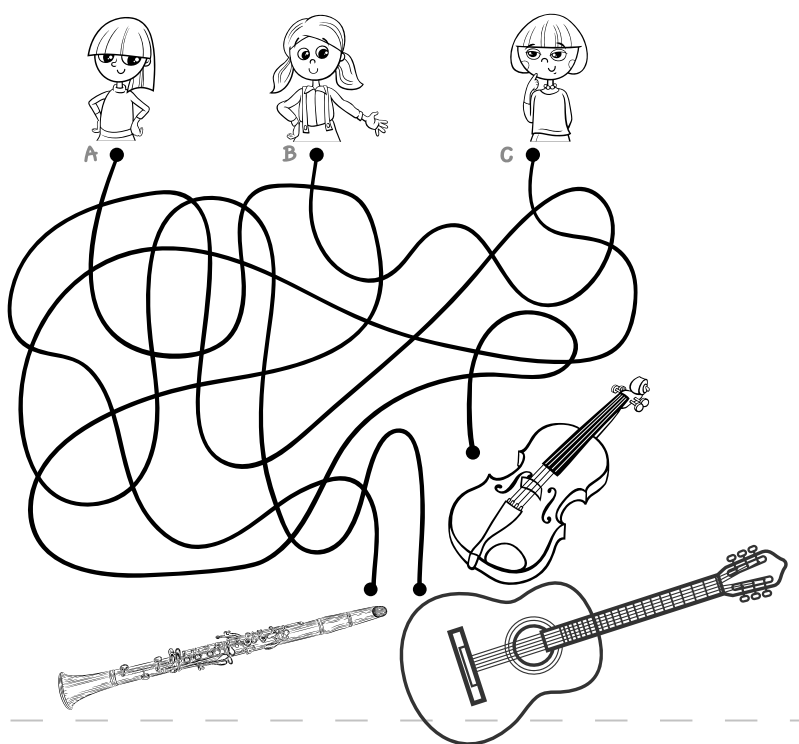
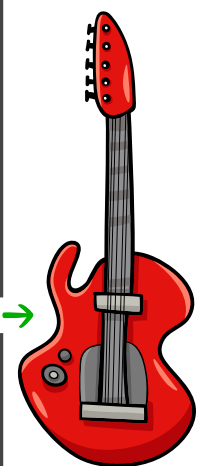
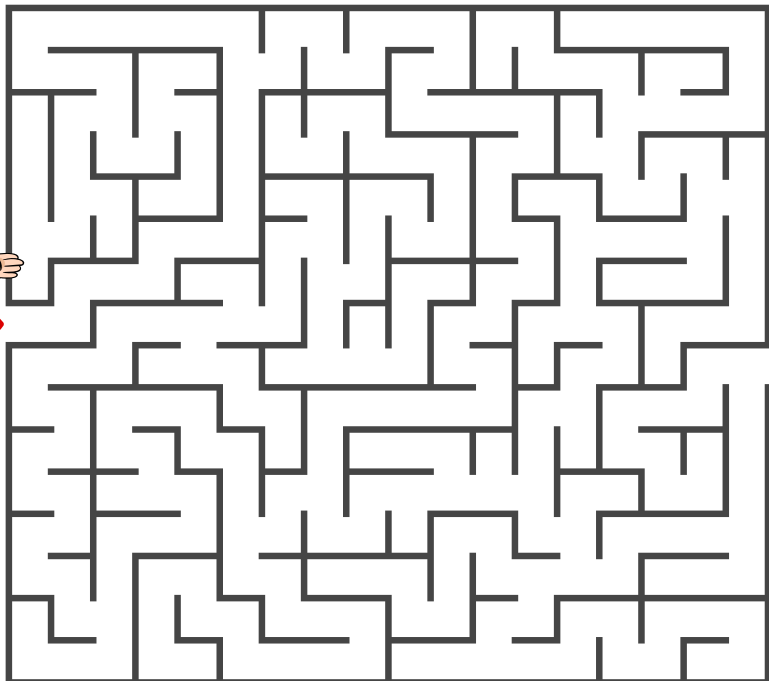
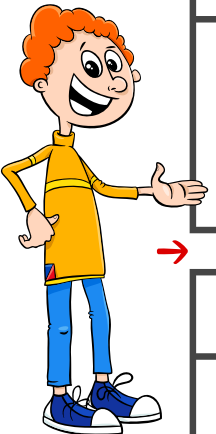
The building is used to host events of all kinds, from corporate meetings to weddings. It also serves as a practice space for musicians that attend the local colleges in the area.

The bottom portion of the piano is comprised of two concert halls. The stairs and escalator, to access the rest of the building, are contained within the shape of a transparent violin.

The building is open to the public and attracts lots of tourists. If you visit Huainan City, remember to explore the piano building!

Kids Corner

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Music Math

Add up the value of the notes in each bar. Write your number on the line. Circle T for "true" if the value adds up to 4 counts and F for "false" if it doesn't.

1 _____ T F

2 _____ T F

3 _____ T F

4 _____ T F

5 _____ T F

6 _____ T F

Your Score:...../6
How many did you get right?



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Music is fun!



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