

Mini Music Makers

Early years music and singing celebration

The Circus: song, stories and rhyme

Music in the early years – enjoyment and creativity

Music's role is wide ranging in early years settings:

- Encouragement
- Help understand feelings
- Gain attention
- Enhance teaching & learning experiences
- Stimulate senses
- Be with difficult times
- Communicate
- Develop crucial listening skills and a way-in to language skills

The activities will focus on the excitement of exploring early language through music: rhyme and rhythm and how to use voices in different ways

Through music, we take away a need to be right or wrong in learning.
Music can be a means of communicating but it is a way to help learning and to actually process information too – therefore it can be used cross-curricular

And lastly, or maybe that should be firstly it is about enjoyment: taking part together, creating singing and being altogether.

This is our PSED/ wellbeing focus the *unique child* and *every child matters*.
We now have the science to back up what we have known all along, we feel good when we are creative and sing together – dopamine, the 'feel good' chemical is released, and we feel that sense of community.

Links to early years curriculum:

Expressive Arts:

- Make props for stories and rhymes – [use the 3 stories as a spring board](#)
- Sing a range of songs and make music – [songs listed below, some traditional some new](#)
- Experiment with ways of changing these (songs) – [write own lyrics / rhythms](#)
- Perform songs and rhymes – [use podium idea in a circus role-play area](#)
- Try to move in time with the music – cross over with Physical
- Being imaginative – [children represent their ideas and thoughts through music](#)

Communication and Language:

- Children listen attentively and respond with actions – [actions in songs help with learning and remembering new key words](#) e.g *I once saw an elephant* song
- Trying out new vocabulary from stories and rhymes

Literacy/physical

Early fine motor skills using Makaton / use the ribbons, twirling material. Move in time to the beat.

PSED

Wellbeing through music: regulating emotions/hearing your own voice/own sense of self in different ways/ experiment safely/repeating rhythms = reassuring

Focusing attention on what is going on

Having the confidence to try new things & Persevering – unlock children’s creativity using music and see this confidence build in children

Music to listen to

1. Circus theme: <https://youtu.be/pct1uEhAqBQ>

March around and/or play percussion instruments to the strong beat; use the books to find a picture that this music goes with for each child – what did they choose and why e.g the clown because the music goes up and down in a funny way like a clown – then move around like a...

2. Mexican circus music: Musica paracirco <https://youtu.be/ls1gnCHr14Q>

Have cartoons or use pictures from the books with the circus acts and show the word next to the picture. Use the music to mime one of the circus acts, can they guess what their friends are acting out?

3. The flying theme from ‘How to train your dragon’ film: https://youtu.be/2C4lFUpl_4U

Let their imaginations go – if they were flying what would it be like? Would they grow wings, be on a dragon or a flying horse or a big bird? Use their imagined flying experience to tap into their emotions – how would they feel if they were a dragon...listen to instruments to encourage this speaking...”the drums made me feel big and powerful”

Wellbeing: Try a visualisation – each time you play this piece of music, close your eyes and picture a scene in nature, maybe flying over a beautiful place, sea, mountains...Each time you do this add in more detail – use all senses, what you see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Always make this a positive place – the theory is that if you create this safe and beautiful place where you feel good, you can return to it in your head as if you were really there and can call on this when you are having a difficult time. By linking it to music you are making a positive association which you will feel each time you hear the music.

4. Watch and respond to this video clip of Gifford’s circus:

This clip shows the colour and costume and range of acts. <https://giffordscircus.com/>

Maybe take 3 words that the children respond with and repeat them and make into a repeating rhythm or your own class circus song. Think back to our candy-floss warm up: just by using repeating words we create a rhythm.

Books

Nell and the Circus of Dreams by Nell Gifford and Briony May Smith

The wordiest of the three books; however it has the most beautiful illustrations that can lead their imaginations and creativity.

If the story seems too long or complex, then take an image from each page, use the pictures ask the children what they see then respond with a colour/rhythm song or rhyme.

You see a circus by Mike Downs and Anik McGrory

Rhyming story

- use the rhythm of the rhyme to speak altogether; count each other in to start
- choose your favourite lines to learn off by heart – the children may then start to use these in their own play
- set a beat first, by all tapping on own lap, then speak the phrase and repeat it: e.g “from platforms high above the ground they leap...then flip and spin around”

The Greatest Show-penguin by Lucy Freegard

Shorter story so easier for children to listen to whole thing. Has great PSED messages: working hard helps you to achieve your dreams for example.

Basic circus skills!

Try spinning a plastic plate with a garden cane; balance by walking on a piece of string on floor pretending it's a tight rope; juggle with pom poms

Art:

Print harlequin patterns using potato printing and 3 colours in diamond shapes onto paper or cereal packets

Make sad/happy clown faces on paper plates/paper and stick back to back on wooden skewer – link to PSED, use a range of expressions, can they do these with their own face? Other expressions? Which songs can you use this with?

Make a ‘wibbly wobbly’ clown using paper folded in concertina for legs and arms - or make jelly to see the movement to help know how to move in the *Wibble wobble* song!

Make small drums using any round recycled packaging/pot, decorate with harlequin patterns – use for a composition

Put ribbon/wool/material on sticks/wooden spoons etc to make for the *Round and round we go!* song – use these to practice formative pre-writing skills – the idea of ‘write-dance’ with large actions and gross motor to begin then smaller

Role play/creative area: make a mini circus!

Make a small podium in role-play corner with your parachute or large piece of material as your big top.

Find something for a small podium for children to ‘perform’ a song/poem/rhyme or pretend to be the ring master- large wooden palette would be good or a box, paint it red or white or Harlequin patterns.

Encourage repeated phrases “roll up roll up, the circus show is about to begin” “ladies and gentleman please take your seats” – use a different style/tone of voice when they are on the podium, deep voice etc.

Get a second-hand long tailed jacket and a top hat or make one for the ring master
Make tickets for the show from odd bits of paper – put numbers on.

Musical activities:

Making your own music (composing/creating)

Choose a circus sound. Maybe one from the books or your own ideas.

e.g the horses tail went swish / boing on trampoline / gasp as the acrobats leap / hee hee hee of the clown / clip clop of horses' hooves

Choose an action and a vocal sound to go with each word

Make it into a piece of music by repeating the sounds.

This is another way of using their voice and exploring the range of their voice: this also links with helping children express a wider range of feelings as they have more choice in how they respond and 'sound'

Extend by adding instruments: and making a Graphic score = 'read' and play music by using drawn symbols which they follow. Choose a symbol for an instrument linked to a circus themed word e.g the maracas are like the whoosh of the acrobat.

Draw a simplified version of the instrument. Choose 2 or 3 other instruments, either home-made or that you have then decide how many times it will sound and draw this on paper.

Children can play instruments individually, in pairs/teams or they could be the conductor.

Follow along the drawn symbols/pictures like a musical score – link to early reading/tracking

Spoken rhymes

Try out different voices – do games as a warm-up

Warm-up:

Candy floss rhyme – (set the beat first)

Heat, heat, heat up the big tub (repeat) *arms around imaginary tub*

Pour, pour, pour in the sugar (repeat) *arms up and over as if pouring*

Spin, spin, spin the candy (repeat) *hands spin around each other*

We've got sticky candy floss (repeat) *hold up, imagine eating!*

Funny clown (like Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear)

Funny clown, funny clown,

Turn around.

Funny clown funny clown,

Touch the ground.

Funny clown funny clown

Touch your toes

Funny clown funny clown

Touch your nose.

Act out the rhyme as you speak it. Learn it by call and response.

Once you know it, start it with a beat and speak in rhythm.

Wellbeing: Speaking in a rhythm to a beat is 'reassuring' for us – it helps to regulate our emotions.

Silly Clowns

Five Silly Clowns jumping all around
Jumped so high then touched the ground
One silly clown said: "I can't stay"
So he turned around and jumped away.

Four silly clowns jumping all around
Jumped so high then touched the ground
One silly clown said: "I can't stay"
So he turned around and jumped away. [*Three, then 2 then 1*]

One silly clown jumping all around
Jumped so high then touched the ground
That silly clown said: "I can't stay"
So he turned around and jumped away!!

Use voice in different ways when they speak, encourage experimentation and link to musical 'pitch' - high and low sounds

One little Elephant balancing

One little elephant balancing, step by step on a piece of string
He was having such enormous fun that he called on another elephant to come

Two little elephants balancing, step by step on a piece of string
She was having such enormous fun that she called on another elephant to come

Three little elephants... (up to 5 children balancing along a piece of string)

Be like a tight-rope walker balancing: lay piece of wool, string on floor and walk back and forth, adding a new child each time

Songs:

1. Funny Little Clown

Wibble wobble wibble wobble funny little clown
Wibble wobble wibble wobble turning upside down
Wibble wobble wibble wobble falls to the ground
Wibble wobble wibble wobble ready to astound.

A good song for movement: wibble wobble with bodies – make jelly, observe and notice movement.

Make mini people with a pipe cleaner, then do the actions to the pipe cleaner.

Make a wobble board using a large piece of card, listen to the sound

How to use voice differently – listen to the cello, I use trills and glissando slides when I play, can they hear it? How can you use your voices to wibble and wobble? Can we turn our voices 'upside down' or 'fall' to the ground? Slide up and down with voice – draw a line picture and sing it.

2. Round And Round We Go!

Round and round and round we go,
round and round and round (repeat)
"Oo...oo...1,2,3,4"

Round and round and round we go,
round and round and round (repeat)
In-to the middle and, say "hello"
and back out a-gain...-ain..."1,2,3,4"

Round and round and round we go,
(*slower the last time*) round and round ...we ...go!

Movement, make streamers using sticks and ribbons. Walk around in a circle swirling your streamer then move into the middle of circle as the words say.

3. Big Big Clown

It's a big, big, big, big clown,
Yes, it's a big, big, big, big clown...
Let's walk like him/her (*Move around to music e.g big, small, fast, slow*)
We walked so...big (*small, fast, slow*)

Say each verse with a different voice: a deep loud voice for the big clown, small clown in squeaky voice etc. move around the room and match how your body moves to the word you are singing about.

What other opposites can you think of to add to this song?

4. I Once Saw An Elephant

Go through the refrain first with key words and Makaton signs and any other actions
Dressed in his best/bow tie
elephant/ acrobat/ juggler/clown

I once saw an elephant, he was elegant
Dressed in his best
With a big bow tie
Going hammer hammer hammer...on the 'piana'
And the audience all went "oo"

I once saw an acrobat, she went like this and that
Dressed in her best
With a big bow tie
Going rumpy tumpty tum
on the drum
And the audience all went "oo"

I once saw a juggler, she was a giggler
Dressed in her best
With a big bow tie
going toot, toot, toot
on the trumpet
And the audience all went "oo"

I once saw a happy clown, he liked to sit down
Dressed in his best
With a big bow tie
going clackety clackety
on the maracas
And the audience all went “oo”

5. Animal Fayre

I went to the animal fayre,
the birds and the beasts were there
the big baboon by the light of the moon
was coming his auburn hair

The monkey fell out of his bunk (crash)
and slid down the elephant's trunk (woo)
the elephant sneezed (a-choo) and fell on his knees
and what became of the monkey, monkey, monkey...

Try singing it with half repeating the refrain: “monkey, monkey, monkey” throughout as a rhythm whilst the other half sing the tune. Use egg shakers to support the rhythm of ‘monkey, monkey’ or tap on knees

6. The Clown

When the circus comes to town I love to see the clown,
Racing round the great big top his trousers falling down.
A very lovely person, who makes me laugh and shout.

I always feel so happy when the funny clown's about.
Ha ha ha ha, ha ha ha ha, ho ho ho ho ho,
Ha ha ha ha, ha ha ha the funny circus clown.

Use the rhythm and sounds from *ha ha ha* etc – put a clap or tap to it with hands or use claves or wooden instrument. Try using a combination of speaking and singing because the melody is a bit more complex – it doesn't matter if you don't get all the notes.

7. An Elephant At The Circus

An elephant at the circus, was wondering what to do,
'Cause he was all on his own.

Another elephant came, who looked just the same,
they made friends and then there were two.

This song has a Calypso rhythm: 123, 123, 12. The 8 quick beats are grouped differently giving it a dance-like vibe.

Try two spoken rhythms and put them together slowly with one adult helping each team!

team 1: say numbers 1-8 out loud

team 2: “123, 123, 12” or “elephant, elephant, circus”. Stamp on beat 1, two claps on 2nd and 3rd beats.

PSHE focus – use music to add gesture to invite others to play when you act out the song: use a circle and children gradually join.

Someone standing ‘not knowing what to do and on their own’, someone else comes who is also on own and they make friends. Gesture and body language of ‘don't know what to do’.

Permissions for songs above:

I once saw an elephant, based on the song *I once saw an Elephant* from 'Sing Up' website. Music and words by Vo Fletcher. Used by permission of Early Birds Music for Sing Up www.Singup.org

An elephant at the circus, based on song 'Two by Two' by Pat Lloyd from her book *Let's All listen*
The Clown Taken from 'Apuuskidu' published A&C Black. Words by Ken Blakeson Music by Peter Canwell

Animal Fayre Taken from 'Okki-tokki-unga' published by A &C Black, songs chosen by Beatrice Harrop

Big, big, clown as seen online: Funny Steve the Clown in Baby songs ESL (Learn English through songs). 'Steve and Maggie'.

Round and round we go! as seen online: Taken from a song written by Debbie Doo.... Classroom circle song. 'Debbie Doo Kids TV'

Wobbly clown as seen online: 'Mosi and Moo Educational dance video'. *Wobbly Clown Dance Song for Kids*

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