

First, I'd like to share with you some basic concepts about your child's musical development.

The time to start thinking about your child's musical education is at birth. In fact, the most critical time in a child's musical development is from birth to age five. Scientific research has shown that parts of the brain that are not stimulated in the earliest years of life will atrophy. Nobel prize winning research by doctors David Hubel and Torsen Wiesel of the Harvard Medical School proved this point. They found that if an animal was raised from birth to three months of age with one eyelid sutured closed, the animal would be permanently blind in that eye. The portion of the brain that controls vision in that eye did not develop.

From what we know about the brain, this "use it or lose it" concept applies to music as well. Those children who have a deficient musical environment where their potential musical abilities are not stimulated will end up with a significantly lower music aptitude than might have been possible.

Another scientific study found a strong correlation between early musical study and the development of absolute pitch (also called perfect pitch - the ability to identify exact pitches without reference to an instrument). Six hundred musicians were surveyed. Forty percent of the musicians in this study who had begun training at four years of age reported absolute pitch, whereas only three percent of those who had started training at nine years of age did so.

Baby Maestro is proud to offer Music Pups®, an early childhood music education program developed by The Music Class, that is designed to unleash the music potential of every child. The songs are designed to expose your child not only to a large quantity of music, but also to a broad variety of music. You've heard that children who grow up in households where a large spoken vocabulary is used learn to speak with a large vocabulary. The same is true of music. Our songs include a wide variety of scales, rhythms, instruments and styles, to further stimulate your child's music development.

By enrolling your child in Baby Maestro, you are providing a rich musical environment for your child forty five minutes a week. Of course, that limited time is not enough. Young children learn throughout the week, mostly by imitating you. Our goal is that you will take the songs and activities you have learned in class home with you and model them for your child throughout the week.

Keep in mind that the most important things you can model for your child are the enjoyment of and enthusiasm for music. Children who see their parents having fun with music will naturally copy their behavior; that's how the learning takes place. Children learn through play.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions.

Q. What's the point of coming to class if my child is too shy to sing in class?

A. I'd like to encourage you to consider these wonderful first years of life as a time for musical development and musical fun. Please do not get confused between learning music and musical performance. A child's temperament may dictate whether he or she will want to sing out loud in class. A parent's pressure on a child to perform in class might only make the child uncomfortable, and may take away from the relaxed environment in which young children learn best. Children learn through exposure in a fun environment and need the freedom to experiment on their own. Instead of assessing your child's learning by how he or she "performs" in class, rest assured that if your child enjoys coming to class and enjoys doing the songs and activities with you at home that he or she is learning in as natural a way as possible. Remember, if your child sings at home and not in class - that's OK!

Q. When should my child start taking instrument lessons?

A. Before instrumental instruction can begin, a child must achieve "basic music competence." Basic music competence, which can be attained by all normal children, is defined as the ability to sing in tune and in rhythm, and to make rhythmically accurate movements. With proper musical stimulation, this usually occurs between the ages of four and six. Regardless of whether your child chooses to play an instrument at some point, the tonal and rhythm skills they are learning now will give them a lifelong understanding and enjoyment of music.

Q. What To Expect of Your Child in Class

A. All young children need time to get used to a new room, teacher, songs and situation. It typically takes about four weeks to become familiar with the class environment. There is a wide range of responses children will display during the first few weeks. You will see that as the weeks continue the children will become more and more focused in class. It's important to listen to the CD at home frequently, particularly during the first weeks. Children like what is familiar to them and need a lot of repetition. If they know the songs, they will have more fun in class and learn more.

According to age

Infant:

A baby's brain is still forming - more so than at any other time in its life. As babies are learning the sounds of language, they are adding the rhythms and tones of music. Just as children learn to speak by hearing their parents speak - learning many of the sounds necessary for communication before they ever utter their first word - children go through the same process of listening, decoding and then experimenting on their own with musical skills. Even if your child is too young to actively participate in class, rest assured that he or she is learning. Early exposure to music will payoff significantly later in life. It's never too early to start playing music and singing to your baby!

#### Toddler:

Toddlers learn through play; so class needs to be fun. They are watching and experimenting on their own, discovering what they like. They will enjoy playing instruments, singing and dancing. Though their efforts are not very accurate, they will begin to show improved musical skills as they grow older.

#### Two and Three-year olds:

These children have become more accurate in reproducing music, both tonally and rhythmically. They begin to interact less with their parents and more with their teacher and the other children. They are still busy observing and imitating. At this age they become more creative and develop their own ways of singing songs and doing activities. This should be supported and encouraged!

#### Four-year-olds:

Some at four will have already achieved basic music competence, but still benefit from being in a creative and musically stimulating environment. While some children at this age may feel too old to be in class with babies, most do not care as long as they are having fun. Parents should refrain from pointing out age differences to their child, but should talk with their child to see if they are enjoying class. If so, parents should relax and enjoy it, too.

#### All ages:

Some children want to march and run; others want to spend the class no more than a foot away from the teacher; some will sit in laps; while others want to observe from a cozy corner in the room. At Baby Maestro we recognize that there are many different learning styles, and we encourage parents to let the children be where they are comfortable. A typical class may have all of these different types of children, but all children have one thing in common: they are all watching, listening, and learning from us. So have fun and make music!