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Activities to help children explore music, rhythm & sound.

① Fast and slow

Ideal for:

- Exploring the speed or 'tempo' of music.
- Recognising and reproducing different kinds of sounds.
- Noticing signals and responding to them.

What to do:

- Introduce the children to a game of 'Follow my Leader' where you are the leader.
- Form a 'crocodile' and walk the children around the room slowly.
- Repeat the walk briskly with the children following. Talk about fast and slow movements.
- Sit in a circle and encourage the children to sing a nursery rhyme or song slowly.
- Have fun by then speeding up the singing.
- Place an instrument in front of each child, keep one for yourself, and ask them to play sounds slowly.
- Gradually speed up the way you are playing up your

instrument and ask the children to do the same.

- Play 'Follow my Leader' with the sounds of the instruments: ask the children to follow you as you slow down and speed up the music you are playing.
- Let each of the children take turns as the leader.

Extended learning:

- Talk about the different sounds the instruments make when they are played fast and slowly.
- Listen to some pieces of music which have different tempos. Encourage the children to accompany the music with their instruments.
- Talk to the children about the ways in which they could know whether you wanted them to play their instruments fast or slowly.
- Together with the children, make up different signals which mean 'fast', 'slow' or 'stop'.
- When the children have practised following your signals, encourage them to take turns acting as the 'conductor' of the band.

2 Copycats

Ideal for:

- Looking and listening carefully.
- Learning to copy sounds.
- Trying out different ways of making sounds.
- Remembering and repeating a sequence of sounds.

What to do:

- Form a circle on the floor with the children and place the instruments in the centre of the circle.
- Act as the music leader in the group to begin with. Pick up one of the instruments, make a sound with it and replace it in the centre.
- Ask each child in turn to pick up the same musical instrument and try to make the same sound with it.
- Do this with each of the musical instruments so that each child has the opportunity to experience the sounds made by

each of the instruments. They will notice how you play the instruments to make the sounds and copy your actions.

- Give each of the children the opportunity to act as the music leader, choosing and playing the instrument for the others in the group to copy.

Extended learning:

- Repeat the activity with you as music leader but this time play two instruments in succession.
- Encourage the children to repeat the pattern of sounds which you play.
- As the children become familiar with the game, try linking three or four sounds together with different instruments.
- Divide the children into pairs with an instrument each. Encourage them to take turns being the music leader who makes the sounds and the 'follower' who copies them.
- Leave three or four instruments out in your room so that children can continue to explore the sounds they make after the group activity has finished.

3 Loud and quiet

Ideal for:

- Listening carefully and being quiet.
- Trying out different ways of making quiet sounds.
- Experiencing loud sounds.
- Discovering how to make loud sounds, using instruments safely at the same time.

What to do:

- Spend time with the children playing games involving being quiet and practising quiet sounds.
- Lay out the percussion instruments and ask the children which ones they think will make quiet sounds and which ones will not.
- Ask the children to sit quietly on the floor in a circle. Quietly place an instrument in front of each child.
- Encourage them to stay very quiet and listen carefully.
- Invite each child in turn to make a quiet sound with their instrument.
- Change the instruments around until the children have tried to make quiet sounds with instrument.
- Talk about which instruments made quiet sounds easily and which ones did not.

- Repeat the process with making loud sounds. Remind the children that they must take care with the instruments when they are trying to make loud sounds.

Extended learning:

- Go round the circle, with the children making quiet and loud sounds alternately using their instruments.
- Talk about creatures which move quietly - mice, snakes, butterflies, fish - and ask the children to make quiet sounds which make them think of these creatures.
- Do the same thing with creatures which make a noise - dogs barking, birds singing, horses neighing - and encourage the children to make sounds which remind them of these noises.
- Talk about quiet times during the children's day - when they are sleeping, when they are thinking or when they are listening to a story - and ask them to create some quiet background sounds for these times.
- Talk about the noisy times in the day - playing outdoors, dancing to loud music or hearing a baby crying - and ask the children to make loud sounds with the instruments which make them think of noisy times.

Based on our original guide by education advisors Linda Thornton & Pat Brunton.