



## Ten Ways to Make and Enjoy Music at Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic

October 2020

It's October and autumn is officially in the air. School has started (virtually or in-person) in the United States, and families are dealing with a challenging assignment; they are helping their children learn, thrive, and play during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents are stretched to the limit as many are supervising schoolwork while they attempt to stay productive at their own jobs. Schools are cutting many arts and music programs due to a drop in tax revenue and other funding streams. Choirs and bands around the country are canceled due to fear of coronavirus spread. How do we ensure that our children continue to create music and express themselves artistically during a world-wide health crisis?

One way is to make sure that music making and appreciation happens at home. Do you have concerns that you cannot be a good music teacher? Are you worried that you are not "musical enough?" Don't have a music degree? Do not fret! Honestly, a formal music education is not a prerequisite for initiating musical activities in your home. Here are some tips that can help you include music in your day-to-day lives.

### 1. **Play music at home**

This is a fairly simple and accessible way to add some music at home. During meals, homework, or free time, turn on the radio or tune in to a playlist on Pandora, Spotify, YouTube, or similar platform. Feel free to play whatever genre you want. Whether you listen to rock, classical, musical theater, or country, there are some musical gems in each style. A good start may be to introduce your child to your favorite artists.

### 2. **Carpool karaoke**

Families that are learning remotely may be able to find more pockets of music time than families who have to commute to and from school or extracurricular activities. For commuting families, incorporate some music into your drives. You may even attempt to recreate James Corden's segment on the Late Late Show, Carpool Karaoke!



### 3. **Music podcasts**

Podcasts are immensely popular these days, and you can find some great kid-friendly programs that play and discuss music. Best of all, these podcasts feature non-cheesy music that Mom and Dad can enjoy as well. Check out the Saturday Morning Cereal Bowl, Noodle Loaf, and Spare the Rock, Spoil the Child. Spanish speaking families will thoroughly enjoy *Allegro Mágico*, a delightful series that discusses history's most beloved classical music composers and their masterpieces.

### 4. **Start asking questions**

Introduce the idea of active and critical listening to your child. While you are listening to music try to ask some questions about the piece: "Does this piece sound happy or sad?" "Does this song make you want to march or run?" You can also spark a conversation by adding some of your own observations: "This song makes me want to dance like a ballerina." "This song makes me think of a big rainstorm!" You can talk about ideas like tempo (the speed of song), instrumentation, dynamics (how loudly or softly a piece is played), and emotion/mood.

### 5. **Sing to your child**

I loved making up little songs when my kids were younger. I would sing these songs as they got dressed, played, ate, and went to bed. My husband sings to them the songs he learned as a child. You don't have to have an operatically trained voice to share your gifts. Hearing your voice will calm them and help them feel loved. Also, there is a theory in the field of music therapy that singing may help young children process and comprehend instructions better than spoken directions alone (no wonder the song "clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere" is so successful!).

### 6. **Sing with your child**

This should progress naturally if you sing regularly to your child. They will surely start singing along with you. The next step would be to include some sing-alongs in your family traditions. If you celebrate Christmas, schedule a night of Christmas carols. If you are Jewish (and don't do this already) consider singing *Shalom Aleichem* and other traditional songs around the dinner table on Shabbat or at bedtime. If you don't subscribe to a religious tradition, maybe you can start your own customs. For instance, if you go on camping trips sing some family favorites by the campfire. Regardless of your religious or cultural background, music making can become a beautiful family habit.



### 7. **Have instruments on hand**

Keep some instruments such as rhythm sticks, tambourines, maracas, and xylophones at home. Encourage free play with the instruments, with or without music playing in the background. Handling instruments helps a child develop their fine and gross motor skills, their sense of rhythm as well as their ear. Plus, having instruments at home is a great way for a child to learn how to properly care for them.

8. **Dance like nobody's watching**

One of my favorite activities with my children is dancing with them. I turn on some fast-paced Latin music while we do chores to motivate them and to drown out their groans and complaints. When a beloved Merengue comes on, the kids drop their broom or dust rag and they sway and step to the beat. I am willing to drop the cleaning momentarily to get some moves in myself.



9. **Lead by example**

If you play an instrument or sing, be sure to practice and play in front of your child as regularly as possible. Show them the importance of music in your own life. My children have heard me vocalize and sing through my art songs, choral excerpts, and arias so often that they can sing several exercises and large segments of pieces by heart. Also, encourage collaborations. Maybe you can accompany your child's original composition on the piano or guitar.

10. **Become an audience member**

These days, most concerts and shows have been canceled to live audiences. Thankfully, many arts organizations have been creatively resilient and are now offering performances online. Look up favorite musical groups and organizations and see what virtual performances are available. You may also look into organizations that you would not normally have access to. Don't know where to start? Look up offerings by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera, and BroadwayHD.

I hope that you find these suggestions helpful in developing a rich musical life in your home. You may even find that musical activities ease anxiety and help your family cope with the uncertainty of the times. Also, they may have the added benefit of bringing your family closer. Happy music making!

**About Magaly Cordero-Dietz**

Magaly is the founder and lead instructor of Pop-Up Music School. An active performer, she is a church musician and a member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. She holds a Master's degree in Vocal Performance. She lives just outside Chicago with her husband Nicholas, their two beautiful children, and their two crazy cats.

FOLLOW ME:

[www.popupmusicschool.com](http://www.popupmusicschool.com)

[Pop-Up-Music-School on Facebook](#)

Pop-Up Music School © 2020

All suggestions are property of Pop-Up Music School and cannot be used or distributed without the permission of Pop-Up Music School.