

12 Let Them Sing



Music with Kids



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What puts a smile on your face, gets your toes tapping and head nodding, hands clapping, and attitude lifted? Music.

Music is a natural part of everyone – whether you can sing...or not, whether you can

creatively move...or not, and whether you know the song...or not.

Need to direct a group of rowdy kids' energy? Put on some music!

Need to add energy and excitement to a slowed-down day? Put on some music!

Want kids to learn Bible verses, repeat God's promises all week long, and capture God's word in their hearts? Bring on the music!

Music is a gift from God and it brings JOY to everyone.

"How good it is to sing praises to our God! How pleasant and right it is to praise him!"

(Psalm 147:1)

Remember: you're not performing or providing entertainment – you are using music to lead children in worship and guide biblical learning. Perfection is not the goal – enthusiasm and interest are!

Principles of Creating Excellence in Music for Kids

1. Talent vs Energy – Kids don't care how good we are musically, only that we care about them, listen to them, and relate to them. That's what will draw kids in and ultimately to

Christ - our relationship with them. We truly don't need to be talented or even coordinated to lead kids' music. We just need to have energy and passion.

2. Fast vs Slow Music – Use both fast and slow songs to create different moods in the worship. Fast, upbeat songs that get kids moving and pull them into the action. Slow songs are great to prepare kids for prayer time, help them focus in on God, and settle them in for teaching from the Word. Regardless of the speed, every song needs energy and passion. If you want the kids to get excited and join into the movement – you need to be twice as excited and when you want kids to be focused and worshipful you need to direct your energy clearly in that direction as well.
3. Style – Be sure to pick songs that kids will want to sing and enjoy listening to. Age appropriate music is important. Remember that the songs you are familiar with and comfortable leading, may not be the style of music kids will enjoy. Spend time listening to programming for kids today – The Disney Channel and Nickelodeon understand what kids like. Please know that there is a lot of great Christian music for today's kids. (For specific suggestions: see appendix)

A Quick Guide:

- Nursery: Play recorded background music, sing the babies songs from your youth that are soothing and comforting
- Toddlers: Choose simple songs with a lot of repetition. Let them play along with simple instruments and march around the room.
- Preschoolers: Introduce songs that teach Bible verses and speak of God's love, have them make their own instruments and experiment with different sounds, and encourage movement with simple motions.
- Elementary: Begin to introduce choreography and signing to the songs. Incorporate PowerPoint and DVDs to teach words and motions. Utilize a kid's

praise team to lead others and try different styles that will capture the attention of every child.

- Transitional Kids: 5th and 6th graders live in a musical world, give them access to songs and music they'll want to play on their ipods. Music they can feel, words that speak to them, and concepts that touch their hearts. Get their input on what they like and include older teens in leading them in worship.

4. Loud vs. Quiet – find a balance!

- a. Use the volume to draw their attention – quiet music they need to be still and listen closely to, louder music brings them into the circle and focuses their attention on the group dynamics.
- b. When speaking of the balance between loud and quiet, consider your possibilities for creating good acoustics. If you're able to have speakers 'surrounding' kids, or coming from multiple angles, rather than from one small boom box, you'll be better off.
- c. Note: Teenagers may say "the louder the better" but many children are sensitive to the loudness, and can become scared or even overwhelmed by it. This is especially true if you have special needs kids in your church.

5. Keep it Moving – This is true whether you're leading music for young or older kids. Kids need to move. It is a developmental fact and music is a wonderful outlet for that need. If you have kids who are fidgety, tend to randomly wander the room, or can't sit still on a chair – put on the music and allow them freedom to move. And kids build up a great deal of unspent energy in an hours worth of programming – give them a creative release through moving music. And remember: you can't expect the kids to be excited and do the motions if the leader isn't doing them enthusiastically. Kids LOVE seeing adults become "big kids", and do the motions big. So keep it moving!

Some movement ideas:

- Use simple and repetitive movements for younger kids
- Introduce sign language as a movement option - especially for slower paced songs
- Let the kids help you create choreography for the songs
- Keep the motions masculine whenever possible. Having “girly” motions will turn off the older boys, and ultimately distract everyone. But having cool motions will engage everybody
- Feel free to have kids move - get them down on the ground or jumping up, arms high in the sky and low, left and right
- Beware of repetition - if you use the same moves on every song they’ll get bored
- Practice the movement yourself before leading and teaching the kids

Remember, it’s not about talent or moves; it’s about energy focused on God.

6. And Keep it Moving – Pauses lead to chaos! If you don’t keep the music moving from one song to the next, the kids will invent their own movement. Having breaks in between songs to change the song and/or display is distracting and pulls your attention away from the kids. It is important to have somebody help with this other than the leader. It is the perfect job for older kids and young teens! Just like you plan your Bible story time, gather supplies and rehearse the lesson before class – do the same thing with the music. Choose songs that compliment your Bible point and build in a direction. Rehearse the songs ahead of time to be confident of the words and movement. Put together the PowerPoint or display, select the CD or DVD tracks and write out your plan. Before lesson time run through it all with your volunteers – rehearse!
7. Leaders – Leading music, the leader(s) should have practiced the music and the motions beforehand, so they’re not learning them “on the fly”. It’s good to have one person doing it, but even better if a couple of kids help lead. Remember that 4th- 6th grade kids and youth often make excellent leaders, and actually encourage participation better

because kids relate to them and are inspired more by the “big kids” than by adults.

Couple of leading options:

- Enlist the help of a musician from the church who isn’t a “regular” children’s volunteer
- Bring in “guest musicians” to play instruments and/or sing specials
- Use the older kids and teens to serve as the worship team – make sure you rehearse outside of church time together
- Use a music DVD to introduce a new song and teach motions
- Seek God’s guidance and blessing on your worship time

Options for Playing the Music

Audio

1. CD Player – This is the easiest option, but limits song choices to what you have on one CD. Be careful to make transitions between songs smooth – changing CD’s or finding the right track number will distract from the atmosphere of worship.
2. Computer playing the music – requires a little more equipment: a wire to connect your computer to a sound system, and also requires a little more technical expertise (though most 5th graders could run Windows Media Player). But the computer give the most flexibility to arrange songs.

Simply:

- Rip or copy the CD onto your computer as an MP3 file using one of many readily available CD rippers available.
- One tricky aspect of this is if you want to use Split-Track music, playing only the music. You will need special software to rip the left or right channel of the CD to your hard drive. That’s a little tougher, but certainly do-able. Play around with the MP3 ripping software that comes with your computer to see if that has the capability.
- Pick out the songs you want and play them with Windows Media Player. Save it as a “playlist” ahead of time to make it easy to pull up the list for that morning.

- Hook your computer up to a sound system from the speaker output jack.
3. Live music. This would be a “WOW” for kids. Older kids or adults providing live music presents a fantastic ministry opportunity, and creates a more exciting atmosphere for the kids. Just make sure the “band” has practiced and can follow the leader!

Visual

1. PowerPoint going to TV screens or a projector

Two options:

- Use a TV as a monitor to view from - most computers hook up to TV screens using S-video cables
 - Use a projector to “project” the images onto a screen or wall - connecting the computer to the projector
2. Overhead projector – overhead projectors are a way to display words to a screen fairly inexpensively and without the need of a computer. However, the old overhead projectors often have lighting issues, so be sure the screen is projected bright enough.

Audio and Visual Together

This is the best option! There are a variety of Kid’s music DVDs on the market which incorporate live kid’s worship, instructions for motions, and displays of the words.

To utilize a DVD consider:

- If it is a small group of children, play the DVD on a TV
- If it is a large group of children project the DVD images through a projector onto a screen or wall
- DVD’s can be complicated to use “live” because of the many options. Be familiar with the DVD options, review song selection and options for day, rehearse songs in worship order with volunteer/AV tech prior to service.

For those intimidated by technology and in need of help: visit the youth group. Teens want to be involved in ministry and they are “in the know” when it comes to the latest technology.

Great Resources

Want more resources? Check out some of these excellent resources for kids' worship:

1. "Move It Like This" by Willow Creek. A great teaching tool for learning the motions to several songs, but doesn't help with leading the worship.
www.willowcreek.com/children
2. "Shout Praises Kids" MPEG Video Library by Integrity. This DVD is a usable library of music for kids with 4 DVDROM discs and 2 MPEG file versions for each of the 38 songs, both split track and full version with lyrics. www.integritydirect.com
3. Hillsong Kids by Integrity has published several great music video DVDs. They have done a nice job, and have some amazing songs. They are also beginning to publish their music in an MPEG library (available January 2008). www.integritydirect.com
4. iTunes (www.itunes.com) is a great resource for buying individual tracks of music, so you don't have to buy an entire CD. But with iTunes, unless you're playing directly from iTunes or an iPod, you may have to burn a CD and then rip the CD into MP3 format.
5. Uncle Charlie has created a series of "worship kits" which provide a variety of resources at a low price. His most recent innovation is to offer mpeg library for download a-la-carte. The series is called "Made2Praise". There are 9 volumes available to date.
www.unclecharlie.com
6. Brentwood has a resource that comes with both mpeg files and a DVD which includes video backgrounds, worship songs, countdowns, birthday songs, and segment clips.
www.brentwoodbenson.com
7. Most VBS programs contain video driven music. It's not good just for the week of VBS, but all year long!
8. Websites for discounts on worship music:
 - www.worshipmusic.com
 - www.god4me.com

Keep your Church SAFE and LEGAL!

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) provides churches with simple, affordable solutions to complex copyright issues. Check out their information, FAQ on who needs a license and why, and their price breakdown dependent on church size at www.ccli.com

Church Video License provides the same solutions and security as it relates to churches and their use of videos. Their site is www.cvli.com

Software:

- www.deskshare.com (MyScreenRecorder) – if you create a PowerPoint, you can play the slideshow with music to create a music video. This software will record what's happening on the screen and the music into one digital video file. Cost is around \$30.
- www.movavi.com (Movavi Video Converter) – easy tool to take DVD files into MPEG, AVI, or any other format. Cost is around \$60. If you buy something like Hillsongs Kids, this will allow you to put it on your computer and play the video from your computer, or even burn your own custom DVD.
- CDEX music ripper to rip a CD into MP3 format. This is an easy to use tool, though it essentially serves only one function, but the price is right. FREE! You can download it from www.download.com (just search for CDEX).

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