

A child's interests are

# Windows of Opportunity

to fun and enjoyable learning

Experiencing and playing with **sound** is a powerful learning activity for many young children



## Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AT HOME**

### Indoors

- Speak to your little one in a warm and animated voice as you go about everyday activities. Describe things that you're doing ("Daddy is putting our clothes in the washing machine. Now in goes the soap! Whoosh!"). Ask and answer questions ("Does Amy love mashed bananas? Yes! What yummy bananas!"). Imitate her sounds (Mommy says, "Bah-bah-bah!" Baby says, "Bah!"). Read stories aloud, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes and poems, and hum simple tunes. Your young child will look to the sound of your voice for comfort, information, and fun, and maybe try to hum or "sing" along!
- Expose your child to many different sounds at home and watch to see which ones he especially likes—ones that bring smiles, coos, excited movements, and laughter. Help him learn to make favorite sounds on his own by operating a music-making toy, pushing a CD player's "on" button, patting rhythmically on the end of an empty oatmeal carton, shaking a dried gourd, reaching to touch the keys of a piano, etc. Give him easy access to the toys and other materials or equipment that he can use to make his favorite sounds.



### In the yard

- Help your child discover and enjoy ways to produce pleasant sounds in the yard. Hold him up to brush his hands through a wind chime hanging from a tree, for example. Let him ring a dinner bell or doorbell, or help him sound a door knocker. Let him splash his hands or feet in a puddle, pond, stream, wading pool, or other water source. Make crunchy sounds walking together through crisp fall leaves.
- Talk about and try to imitate the sounds that capture your child's interest when you're in the yard together. "Do you hear that bird's call? She must be up in our tree. Tooree! Tooree! Do you want to make a sound like a little bird?" or "I hear the garbage truck backing up. Beep! Beep! That sound means 'watch out!'"
- Talk about the things your child does in the yard, and give praise for her efforts. "What's that? A big pine cone! You are so good at finding interesting things in our yard, Lorrie!"

**I love honking the noisy horn on my toy school bus!**

# Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AWAY FROM HOME**

## Taking a walk

- Choose places to walk that offer a world of interesting sounds to notice, talk about, and imitate together. "Did you hear that? Let's see what's making that sound!" A few examples:
  - Walking on a **beach** you can hear the sounds of surf, listen to the "ocean sounds" inside a seashell, hear gulls and other water birds calling, enjoy the sound of people laughing and playing, and much more.
  - Strolling through a **park** you might hear someone calling their dog, the splashes of a waterfall or fountain, a band playing an outdoor concert, children playing ball games, joggers' feet pounding on a path, squirrels scurrying and chattering, and much more.
  - Walking in a **city** you can listen together to the sounds of car and truck motors, sirens, horns honking, music from shop doorways, voices calling everything from greetings to offers of items for sale, a traffic officer's whistle, and much more.

## On a shopping trip

- If your child has a special interest in music, plan shopping trips for times when you can both enjoy free performances as part of your outing. During holidays and at other times of year, many indoor shopping centers host choirs, bands, and school music groups who perform in common areas outside the stores. Subway stations and sidewalks in some parts of cities are known for street musicians who entertain passersby for a few coins tossed in their instrument cases.
- When your young child notices recorded background music playing in stores, take a moment to say, "I hear music!" Together you can bounce or clap your hands to the beat, and even sing along quietly.
- Talk about the interesting sounds you hear at the supermarket, such as noises a price scanner makes at the checkout counter, the sound of dried pasta being scooped into a bag, and the roar of a big coffee grinder. Together you can find a world of interesting sounds at the market.



## At a playground or park

- Make a game of finding ways to produce interesting sounds. For example, encourage your child when he explores the different sounds he can make using his hands (pushing on a chain-link fence, pounding rocks together, etc.) You could also try to find a particular kind of sound together. For example, you could search for things that squeak on the playground—listening for squeaky swing chains or seesaw hinges, seeing if there's a squeak when you open and close a gate, etc.
- Sing children's songs you already know—or new ones you make up—while your child enjoys the rhythmic motions of playground equipment such as swings, seesaws, and spring-mounted riding toys.
- Enjoy making funny sounds for your little one to imitate as you play—"Whoosh!" as he swings or "Wheee!" as he goes down a slide, for instance.

## At a zoo or nature center

- A world of interesting animal sounds will reward your young listener at a zoo or nature center. Ask an attendant how to encourage the animals to "speak" so that you can hear the sounds they make. Invite your child to try to imitate the sounds she hears.
- Sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm" (or another children's song with animal sounds) together, imitating the sounds made by different animals as you go through each verse. You might also have fun making up your own songs or, for older toddlers, guessing games about animal noises. For example, you could say to your child: "When I'm hungry I say, 'Meow, meow, meow!' Who am I? Praise his guesses.
- Make a game of finding interesting sounds that are NOT made by animals at a zoo or nature center. You might be surprised by all the different things you'll find. Some examples: A voice making announcements over a loudspeaker, recorded music at a snack-vending area, or the splash of food being thrown to water animals. Don't forget to enjoy and imitate the animals' sounds as well!

