



Is My Child Ready for Music Lessons?



Music lessons can be wonderful opportunities for children to find their gifts, develop discipline, and establish appreciation for God's gift of music and those people He has gifted to perform it. Research studies point academic, social, and emotional benefits for children. But for believers, there is yet another dimension. When we give music to our children, we give them another way to praise God. We equip them to use and share their gifts. We stretch their opportunities for service and provide tools for their future. What a gift!

But is your child ready to take music lessons? Here are some things to consider as your family makes the decision.

1. **Does your child want to take lessons?** If this is merely Mom's idea, you might hold off a bit longer.
2. **Is your child gifted in music?** Does he sing on pitch? Does she do well on the recorder or xylophone in music class? Does he look forward to children's choir at church or music class at school? If so, private music lessons are a natural next step.
3. **Does your child read well?** Unless he or she is a true prodigy, wait until the child can read successfully to start private lessons. This keeps the child from struggling to learn notes and rhythms and words all at once.
4. **Can your child sit still?** If your son or daughter is not able to sit for 30 minutes, you may need to wait a bit longer for lessons and practice time.
5. **What other things is your child obligated to?** If there are sports practices and swimming lessons, then adding music lessons (and the practice associated with them) may be an overload for your child and your family schedule. Wisely limit those extra-curricular activities so that your child is not overstressed and overtired. Leave some margins (for your child and for yourself) for play and rest.
6. **What opportunities are available in your community and at your school?** Perhaps the school your child attends offers a music program as part of afterschool care. Perhaps your church sponsors a music school. Maybe there is a hand bell choir or a community children's choir your child could join. These oppor-



tunities might be a stepping stone to allow you to evaluate your child's sincere interest in voice or instrumental lessons.

- 7. Does your income allow for these costs?** Private lessons are not cheap! So before you invest in instruments, lesson books, gas money, and time, be sure your child is committed to doing his or her best in lessons and practice. You may need some way to reinforce the need for practice and reward your child for his or her diligence.
- 8. Is your child ready to perform?** Usually music lessons include recitals and sometimes festival competitions as well. The very shy child may not be ready for that pressure, but others will embrace it. Be sure you and your child are comfortable with the performance expectations of the lessons.
- 9. Be realistic and objective.** Not everyone is gifted the same way. Help your child discover his or her gifts by experimenting and encouraging him or her to pursue enjoyable interests.

There are not many gifts you can give your child that he or she will still be using twenty, thirty, or fifty years later. Music lessons, though, are one exception.