

Basic tips for Teaching Music to Children

BE PREPARED

1. Plan ahead and have your songs picked out. Make sure the pianist has the songs ahead so they are also ready. Give the pianist a clear cue each time you begin and end so you are together.
2. Break your singing time into 4 or 5 short segments with different songs and activities that allow children movement and keep their interest. See handouts on movement activities
3. Choose your transition method to use to keep children's attention between songs and activities. For example you instruct the children that between songs:
 - A. Each time you raise your hand, they are to quietly raise their hands and you will tell them what you are going to do next.
 - B. Count Down: 5-4-3-2-1-(whisper)Listen
 - C. Echo movements- point to your nose and children point to their nose or wiggle your fingers out in front of you and children wiggle their fingers in front of their bodies or pat your head slowly or roll their hands.

To End Singing time, a testimony of the theme that you are sharing is appropriate and the following songs in the LDS Children's Song Book are great to bring the children back to reverence.

Roll Your Hands on Page 274

To Get Quiet Page 275

I Wiggle page 271

4. Give clear directions how to respond to a question before you ask!
Asking questions to a group of children will bring a chaotic response unless you direct how the children are to answer before you ask the question! For example on a snowy day if you ask who likes snow, all the children may give an answer at once making it hard to regain class control enough so you can speak and be heard; instead say "raise your hand if you like snow", or call on a particular child to answer. (Taking a Turn hand out for many ideas to choose children to take a turn participating.
5. Activity Songs; are a good way to start. Be prepared to sing out and do whatever actions you are asking the children to, but remember to have your transition method ready to use at the conclusion of the song.
6. Have your visual aids ready and easy to set up, if you can set up before do it. Make sure you have magnets, tape anything you may need to pin up pictures or charts. If you're disorganized, you will lose the children's attention and it may be hard to get it back.
7. If you teach a new song or part of a new song, know it yourself and make sure you repeat it four or five times. It takes 25 times (many more for the little ones) singing most new songs for the children to really know them. You may use several methods to repeat the song once you have introduced it. See handouts for visual aids, games, movement activities, review activities and super singer ideas.
8. Go ahead and use rhythm instruments, but give clear instructions how to use each instrument and what kind of rhythm to use(with the beat, on the offbeat, to the rhythm of the song with a rhythm pattern chart, just make sure you have a calm down song ready to do next. Also have a helper or two to help hand out instruments or pick them up. Or have them lying on a table and have the children return them if they are taking turns.