

ACE Nursery School Progression of Musical Skills

	Pulse	Tempo	Pitch	Dynamics	Rhythm	Exploring Instruments
Stage 1	Attempts to keep time with a regular pulse by clapping, stomping, or tapping. Enjoys simple rhythmic activities that emphasise pulse, such as group clapping games or marching to a steady beat.	Enjoys participating in musical games or action songs that include fast and slow sections (e.g. <i>Sleeping Bunnies</i>). Participates in group activities that involve following tempo changes (e.g., playing instruments faster or slower), with improved awareness of keeping pace.	Attempts to sing along to familiar songs, roughly following the melodic pattern. Enjoys playing with high and low sounds on tuned percussion (e.g. glockenspiel, chime bars).	Starts to deliberately vary the volume of their voice or movements, attempting to sing or play instruments louder or softer when encouraged. Enjoys activities or songs that involve dynamic contrasts, such as singing loud or quiet parts.	Moves in response to rhythms heard played on instruments (e.g. a drum.) Copies an adult's simple rhythmic patterns with increasing accuracy (e.g. by clapping or tapping).	Uses simple instruments more purposefully, such as tapping a drum or playing a xylophone with beaters. Enjoys experimenting with how different instruments produce sound, exploring volume and tone by hitting harder or softer, or by shaking an instrument faster or slower.
Stage 2	Can keep a steady pulse for longer periods, clapping or tapping in time with familiar music more accurately. Actively participates in group music-making activities that emphasise pulse, such as marching, dancing, or playing simple instruments to maintain a beat.	Can adjust clapping, tapping, or marching in time with music that changes tempo. Begins to understand that tempo influences the feel of music and shows awareness of how different tempos affect the mood (e.g., faster music feels exciting, slower music feels calming).	Can sing along with familiar songs, more accurately matching the pitch of the melody. Joins in with simple pitch games, e.g. recognising high and low sounds. Enjoys creating their own simple melodies.	Understands basic dynamic terms such as <i>loud</i> and <i>soft</i> and can follow instructions to adjust volume accordingly, e.g. 'play loudly/play more softly'. Enjoys playing simple instruments and experimenting with controlling dynamics.	Able to follow basic rhythmic patterns on instruments with more consistency. May create simple rhythms of their own.	Enjoys exploring dynamics (loud/soft) and tempo (fast/slow) while playing instruments, showing greater awareness of how to change sound quality by adjusting pressure, speed, or force when playing. Participates in more structured music-making activities, such as playing along with a group or song using instruments
Key Vocabulary (to include but not exhaustive)	Pulse, beat, steady.	Tempo, speed, fast, slow.	Pitch, sound, high, low.	Dynamics, volume, loud/er, soft/er.	Rhythm, pattern, copy, long, short.	Instrument names, shake, tap, scrape.