

DANCE FIT

TOTS

Dance Fit Tots is a parent and toddler resource full of singing, listening and of course, dancing. It has everything you need to enable parents and children to interact, dance and worship together.



**Family
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**Music and
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MUSIC AND CREATIVE ARTS
CREATED WITH FAMILY MINISTRIES UNIT

DANCE FIT TOTS



DANCE LIKE NO ONE IS WATCHING

Do you sometimes wish you could close your eyes and dance around the room as though no one was watching? Well, *Dance Fit Tots* allows just that. It encourages both parents and children to dance around to songs that are specifically written to stimulate movement within the under 5s, along with videos that help encourage adults to move and stretch their bodies using basic aerobic routines.

Dance is one of the most natural ways for under 5s to express themselves. *Dance Fit Tots* encourages exercise, improves balance and stimulates the brain all whilst having fun. The songs have memorable tunes and lyrics, each with a simple Christian message about God's love for each of us.

Dance Fit Tots is interactive. It encourages both the parent and child to move and sing, sharing in important active time together. Although the moves are simple, there may be times when you finish the song out of breath!

“
START CHILDREN OFF
ON THE WAY THEY
SHOULD GO, AND EVEN
WHEN THEY ARE OLD
THEY WILL NOT TURN
FROM IT.

Proverbs 22:6

WHAT IS DANCE FIT TOTS?

Dance Fit Tots is part of the Music and Creative Arts Dance Fit brand and sits alongside *Dance Fit FM* and *Dance Fit and Fellowship*. *Dance Fit Tots* comes with a selection of songs that have been composed and recorded especially for this resource. There is a video that accompanies each song with a routine that has been choreographed specifically for adults to dance along to and exercise, whilst allowing the children to do more basic child-friendly dancing and be interactive.

You can use the *Dance Fit Tots* resource in your Parent and Toddler group, Sunday School or on its own. You can use the resource to start your own group or to simply breathe life into an existing one. The resource covers everything under 5s like to do to stimulate their minds, including singing, listening to stories, exploring textures and dancing. There is also time for parents to chat to each other and share in adult conversation.



“LET THEM PRAISE HIS NAME WITH DANCING.

Psalm 149

A DANCE FIT TOTS SESSION

A time to say hello – Sit in a circle on the floor and take it in turns to welcome each other. This helps to make sure that everyone gets to know each other's names. Use the welcome song provided.

A time to sing – It's great to sing together and share in traditional nursery rhymes. Here is a list of some of the most loved. You don't need to do this with a backing track, just sing it *a capella*. If you have parents in your group from other cultures why not ask them to teach the group a traditional song that they are familiar with?

Traditional nursery rhymes and songs:

- Wind the bobbin up
- The grand old Duke of York
- The wheels on the bus
- Row, row, row your boat
- Incy, wincy spider
- Twinkle, twinkle little star
- Baa, baa black sheep
- Head, shoulders, knees and toes

Singing is a great way to stimulate children, helping them to develop. Check out the appendix on singing for more tips and information about singing with under-fives.

A time to listen – Read a story to the group; you could ask other members in the group to choose their favourite children's story and then share it. Bring a picture book that you can share with the group – make sure you're familiar with it so that you can read it whilst holding the pages open for the children to see the pictures. If you are using an online platform you may want to let the parents know the book in advance so they can use their own copy.

A time to move – If you are running a 'live' session, play the video clips on a large screen. If you are using an online platform, screen share and choose the songs that you would like to use. On the video Steph will lead the actions which are specifically designed to stretch and move adult bodies whilst being attractive to young children too. It is important for everyone to benefit from exercise. We advise that you use at least three songs in one session.

A time to chat – What better way to settle in for a chat than with refreshments? A glass of juice or water after dancing will be welcome and helps create a natural space for conversation. Ask everyone how they are doing and let them have a time to ask questions and chat with the other parents. Be prepared to talk about your own experiences (if you have them), of raising a baby/toddler. Encourage parents to journey with each other and try to have information to point them to if needed.

It might be helpful at this stage to have some time for the children to 'free play' whilst the parents are talking. Maybe have some toys and books for children to play with, but don't feel the need to set up a large provision.

Dancing for the under 5s encourages expression and uses their imagination exploring the shapes they can make with their body. This stimulation brings enjoyment to both parents and child.

A time to feel – This is a sensory time when children and parents can explore and feel different textures. Try to have lots of objects available so that everyone has one each, or be ready to pass the object around the circle. Gentle music in the background can help to create a relaxed atmosphere during this time. If you are meeting online then let the parents know in advance so they can have the same objects ready. Examples of texture objects include: egg carton, scarf, clean paintbrush, wooden spoon.

Sensory play is a great way for children to explore the world around them, encouraging discovery, independent thinking, imagination and creativity. Check out the sensory play appendix for more information and tips on sensory play with under-fives.



“TEACH ME TO DANCE
TO THE BEAT OF YOUR
HEART, TEACH ME TO
MOVE IN THE POWER
OF YOUR SPIRIT.

Graham Kendrick



A time to be calm – Blowing bubbles is a good way to introduce calm especially towards the end of the session when children and babies are tired. Play on the instrumental worship track from the *Dance Fit Tots* video file to enhance the calm feeling.

A time to say goodbye – Much like the start of the session it is good to mark the end with a song. A goodbye song is found on the *Dance Fit Tots* video file. You should also use the *Dance Fit Tots* prayer below. Try to finish with a calm atmosphere and give parents time to chat and prepare their children for leaving. Make sure that you are the last to leave in case anybody is hanging around to talk to you at the end.

Suggested prayer:

*Thank you God for our time together,
For singing, dancing and a chance to play.
Keep us in your arms, joyful and safe,
Until we meet together again. Amen.*

WHAT NEXT?

For more information on Dance Fit resources or help and advice with starting your own group in your local community look at the appendix, contact: stephanie.lamplough@salvationarmy.org.uk or contact: family.ministries@salvationarmy.org.uk for how this resource can be used within your Parent and Toddler group.

Keep an eye out on the MACA Facebook page for further resource releases including updated tracks to sing along to.

APPENDIX

WHY SING?

Music is part of our everyday lives and something which touches us all. The youngest babies can be startled, excited or transfixed by music. In fact, scientists tell us babies can hear music in the womb. If we think back, there are often songs which trigger a memory or an occasion in our mind.

Singing is fun

- Most children really enjoy singing and often make up their own songs and tunes as well as singing along to music in the car or at home.

Singing develops skills

- Singing helps the development of aural skills as children learn to listen to sounds as well as words. In addition, they also learn how to listen and repeat which is a key factor in language development.
- Singing and making music can help develop physical coordination and basic motor skills. By clapping rhythms or tapping drums, children use their hands and arms and this assists learning.
- Learning even the simplest of songs can help develop a young child's ability to concentrate and can also give them a sense of success and satisfaction essential for development.
- Singing in a group brings a sense of unity and purpose to all participants – that's why people of all ages choose to belong to bands, orchestras and choirs.

Hints for teaching new songs

1. Teach the actions first as they are particularly good for early learners and non-verbal children. Actions provide a physical stimulus as well as an aural one and are very inclusive.
2. Move on to adding the words to the actions, teaching them line by line and then gradually speaking the words and doing the actions to fit the rhythm of the song. Some children may struggle to learn the words but the actions alone can help them understand more difficult concepts.
3. Sing or play the complete song through while they continue to do the actions.
4. New songs are best taught over a number of weeks. When you return to a newly-learned song remember, as a general rule, 50 per cent of it will have been forgotten, so it often helps to repeat stages 2 and 3 again.

WHY SENSORY?

From birth, children explore and use the five senses to process new information and to begin to make sense of the world around them. Sensory play is about much more than touch and includes any activity that stimulates a child's senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as anything that engages movement and balance. Sensory play encourages discovery, independent thinking, imagination and creativity and is a valuable way of engaging them in activities that will heighten their senses and enrich their learning.

- **Brain development** – Sensory play helps strengthen brain development for learning and enhances memory and the ability to complete more complex learning tasks.
- **Language development** – Sensory play helps children learn new ways of talking about the world and supports their language development and encourages them to communicate effectively with others whilst playing.
- **Fine and gross motor skills** – By identifying objects through touch, sensory play helps them develop their fine and gross motor skills – such as squeezing, pulling, pushing and throwing.
- **Problem solving skills** – During sensory play children are able to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills as they begin to find solutions to obstacles they come across, such as ‘how does this work?’.
- **Cognitive growth** – Sensory play supports a child’s cognitive growth in enhancing their thought process, understanding and reasoning. It can also help develop a child’s cognitive hand-eye coordination.
- **Social interaction** – As children share with others in sensory play, they learn the ability to interact and work with others effectively.
- **Spatial Awareness** – Active sensory play can help children to become more self-aware which then helps them develop a better sense of space around them.

- **Comforting** – Using light up toys or therapy balls can help calm an anxious or restless child.

The simplest way to help children engage their senses is by playing outside with nature, which is full of colours, movement, textures, sounds and smells.

Some examples of indoor sensory play are:

Babies

- Bubbles – watching them float and feeling them land on their skin.
- Scrunching coloured paper or material to hear the noise, feel the contours and see the shapes change.

Toddlers

- Torch – observing light and shadow created on objects of different shapes or sizes.
- Finger painting – watching the colours mix and the patterns form.

Pre-school aged children

- Sand or water play.
- Musical instruments – listening to tone and pitch as they strike or blow instruments.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Nursery rhyme backing tracks:

www.kidsmusic.co.uk/my-singalong-nursery-rhymes-it385-digital-album

www.kidsmusic.co.uk/lets-sing-nursery-rhymes-it297-digital-album

Suggested books for story time:

The Play Along Bible: Imagining God's Story through Motion and Play (Bob Hartman)

Lift the Flap Bible (Sally Lloyd Jones)

Stories Jesus Told (Nick Butterworth)

The Tiger who came to Tea (Judith Kerr)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle)

Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes (Mem Fox)

We're Going on a Bear Hunt (Michael Rosen)

Not now Bernard (David McKee)

Giraffes Can't Dance (Giles Andreae)

I Love You to the Moon and Back (Tim Warnes)

Guess How Much I Love You (Sam McBratney)

A Squash and a Squeeze (Julia Donaldson)

Rumble in the Jungle (Giles Andreae)



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