

Welcome to Tonewood Family Music!

It is a different world inside a Music Together® classroom. Families begin to blend from individual households into communities, and the children see a world of different people who all come together to sing and dance, to play and make music. There are no video screens, or telephone calls. Mommies and Daddies (or Nannies, Grandmas/-pas, Aunts, etc.) have time to focus solely on those beautiful and strange creatures they call their children. Hugging, rocking, bouncing, jumping, flapping, roaring, tickling, and all the silliness an imagination can hold, are celebrated for 45 minutes each week. It's the class your children would design for themselves if they could. We hope that you will enjoy every moment of your time making music as a family — both in and out of the classroom.

In order to keep the classroom filled with joy, we don't ask the children to "sit still and pay attention." There are rules, of course, designed to keep everyone safe, but the idea of what is "fun" is different to each child — and we want to honor that. Therefore, we don't require the children to participate in the class, or even to sit still. That can cause confusion about what the boundaries are, so we'd like you to be aware of the rules we have. If any of these rules conflict with your parenting style, then please feel free to speak up. Mommies and Daddies are the highest authorities in class and we will do our best to reinforce your disciplinary teachings by letting your child know that you are always the boss.

Here's a quick breakdown of the classroom rules:

**1. We want you to have tons of fun in our class, but we don't want anyone to get hurt.**

We use the "yes, and" method when dealing with discipline. We don't label any behavior as "bad," and instead, we suggest a safer way to act. Running can become marching, hitting walls can become drumming, etc. If your children are up and moving, but not in any danger, then often there is nothing that needs to be done. They will be listening and watching from wherever they are. When they are done exploring, or when we begin an activity that looks fun to them, they will likely return to your side. If there is any danger, then the class can always stop for a moment and we'll regroup. We do ask them not to spin out of control, and not to strike, and not to run into or push down other children — or adults.

**2. We never throw anything except scarves.**

Many of the instruments that we use in class are small enough to be held, but hard enough to hurt if they impact someone in the head. We slide the shakers across the ground instead of throwing, and we ask that the sticks stay with the caregiver if the children want to get up and move during the stick activities. Also, even though we allow you to throw the scarves, we ask that you don't hit with them. It all goes back to Rule #1 — we want you to have fun, but don't want anybody to get hurt.

**3. We don't want you to stay home for a runny nose, but...**

If your child simply has a runny nose, then you can come to class. Though, please be prepared with tissues and hand sanitizer — we always have some for you, if you need. We ask you to be very vigilant about tracking your child's interactions with the instruments and to make sure that any contaminated ones get to our "wet bin" so that they can be sanitized between classes. Your pediatrician may want you to get exposed to germs, but your music teacher wants you to stay healthy. If your children are coughing, sneezing, or feverish, then it's best to keep them at home and attend a make-up class later.

**4. Affection protection.**

Your children may love each other, but strong hugs can be dangerous if they lead to falls or strangling. Many families attend classes with their friends and neighbors. Often the children want to play together in music class the way that they might play together on the neighborhood playground, or at a play date. It is difficult for some children to understand the difference in behavior that different situations require. We will remind them as much as they need to be reminded — repetition is the key to learning — but you can help by explaining that activities like wrestling and gymnastics are not for music class.

**5. Snacking: if necessary; breastfeeding: yes.**

Each child has different nutritional needs. Some children will not make it through a class without a snack to balance their metabolism. While we ask that you do your snacking before or after class — both to keep our space clean and to dissuade potential tantrums from other children who do not have a snack — we understand that your child may have other requirements. Please try to keep your snacking, if necessary, isolated to your own vicinity and clean up any pieces that may drop so that other children do not put something in their mouths that could potentially harm them (i.e. allergies, choking, germs.) Breastfeeding is always allowed, and even encouraged during the lullaby which is meant to be an intimate time for you and your child.

**6. Kids will play with anything. We try to keep them playing with music.**

Some of your children's toys may be security items that make them feel safe. If you have a special toy that cannot be left in the car during class, then bring it in. Just be aware that your child is likely not the only one who will want to play with it, and make sure that your child feels okay with sharing it. Please put all non-essential personal items (including shoes that should be removed before class) into the wall-mounted cubbies. Drinks, phones, purses, or keychains can be distracting, and potentially dangerous.

**7. No hazardous materials or weapons in class.**

If there is nothing dangerous brought into the classroom, then we minimize the possibility that catastrophe will happen. Therefore, we do not wish to have any chemicals or weapons brought into our classrooms. We respect your right to keep and bear arms, but we request that you only bring your bare arms and use them to hug and squeeze your child.

**8. Music class is a real classroom, even if it's a silly one.**

We work on skills such as listening, taking turns (and *giving* turns), being respectful of others' space, and raising hands when we want to be chosen. We understand that children are not inherently able to do all of these things and we work every class to help the children learn the behaviors that they will need to adopt when they get to school. You can help by encouraging and modeling this behavior, too. Our classroom is meant to be a musically immersive experience. Aside from the "Parent Education" moments and the explanations about how the activities work, we want there to only be tonal and rhythmic sounds for the children to hear. Certainly, if you have an emergency or something that is very important to discuss with one of the other adults in class, then take the time to work it out. Otherwise, we ask you to save your social conversations for before and/or after class. And this leads us to...

**9. Sing like no one is listening, dance like no one is watching — though, we hope that they are!**

In the early stages of childhood your child looks to you for information about the world. They need to know, "What is allowed and what is not?" "How should I feel about this thing or that?" "What is important for me to know?" If you know why music is important, (if you don't just google "Music and the developing brain") then the best way to get your child to understand and love music is for you to participate in the making of it. That is easily done just by joining in during the class. It doesn't matter how skilled you are; simply engaging with the class will lead your child to do the same. Also, keep playing at home. Play + Repetition = Practice. When you repeat the classroom games and activities between classes, you are actually doing everything you need to practice music with your child.

Thank you for choosing to spend a semester making music together with your family — and with all of the children in class. If you ever have any questions or concerns about your classroom environment, then please don't hesitate to call or email. We always strive to give you the best possible experience.