

# WISDOM TOP 10: ADAPTIVE MUSIC MAKING



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At its core, adaptive music experiences are about giving children the tools they need to be successful as they engage in music. This includes altering the environment, changing how we present information, and adapting an instrument or even the music itself. Music therapists need to think broadly about adaptive music making to support all who engage in music therapy. Here are 10 considerations that support adaptive music experiences.

1. **Educate yourself and others.** Educate yourself about how to best meet each child's needs by consulting with members of the IEP team. Communicate how adaptive music experiences can help children meet their goals and improve their learning outcomes.
2. **Set up the environment for success.** Design your space using the principles of Universal Design for Learning so that it supports the widest range of learning needs possible.
3. **Take a strengths-based approach.** Remember children "can" in music, so engaging in music should be viewed as a strength for all children.
4. **Collaborate.** Work with other professionals such as occupational or physical Therapists to adapt the music experience to ensure safe and successful music engagement.
5. **Focus on child-centered music experiences.** Integrate music that is age, developmentally, and culturally appropriate and responsive.
6. **Adapting does not have to be hard—or costly.** Simple, cost-effective strategies can have a big impact. Hair scrunchies, pool noodles, clamps, and other simple adaptive tools allow you to adapt in the moment.
7. **Make music with technology.** A wide range of apps, software, augmentative devices, and digital instruments exist that have made music making more accessible.
8. **Provide multiple means of engagement.** Vary music experiences so that students have opportunities to sing, chant, move to music, play instruments, and more. Music making does not (and should not) mean just one thing.
9. **Implement supportive strategies.** Prompts, cues, and praise support engagement. Modeling, visuals, and nonverbal forms of communication assist with the learning process. Structure musical strategies for success (e.g., use of repetition, call and response, modifying rhythms, color coding).
10. **Be patient.** Remember to allow for extra time, use positive language, and be encouraging. Recognize that even "proven" strategies may not always work. Don't be afraid to be flexible, adapt, and try something new to meet a child's needs!