

Shake It Up

Cost: Less than \$5

Mess factor: None

Suggested location: Any comfortable space

Experiences your children will have

- Responding to sounds
- Creating sounds and music

Materials

Make several homemade shakers (see how-to instructions below).

Beginning

Bring your infant to a safe space, and tell them that you are going to explore sounds and shakers. Shake the shakers near your infant so they can see and hear them. If your child can hold objects, offer a shaker for them to use. Be sure to have a few shakers prepared, as your child may want to hold one in each hand.

Middle

Comment on your infant's reaction about the noise produced by the shaker. If your child can't yet hold items, describe the noise the shaker is making when you move it and repeat the sounds that he or she seems to enjoy (e.g., "Your eyes got really big when I shook the shaker"). If your child can hold items, describe how he or she is moving the shaker and the noise that is produced (e.g., "You're holding one shaker in each hand; one shaker makes a very loud noise and one makes a softer noise"). Your infant may enjoy mouthing the shaker, passing the shaker back and forth between hands, shaking one in each hand, and repeating these actions to continue to produce the same noises over and over.

Homemade Shakers

Choose a variety of different containers (that are empty and cleaned) for size, weight, and sound:

- Plastic eggs
- Plastic spice jars
- Formula bottles
- Plastic baby food containers
- Travel shampoo containers
- Water bottles (8 oz. size)

Fill each container with one of the following contents (choose one per container):

- Pea gravel
- Fish tank gravel
- Pennies
- Sand
- Beads
- Rice
- Dried beans
- Screws or nails

Securely seal the container with glue and/or tape.

End

As your infant begins to lose interest or you need to move on, let them know the activity is nearly over. If possible, allow your child to continue holding on to one of the shakers as you transition to the next part of your day.

Cleanup

Gather all the shakers into a basket or bag for use at another time.

Older children

Older children will enjoy “making music” with these shakers as well. Toddlers may enjoy walking, bouncing, or dancing while they use the shakers. Preschool children may enjoy helping you choose containers from around the house that could be made into shakers and filling them up before using them with your infant.

Hints

- To avoid the risk of choking hazards, be sure the shakers are securely sealed before offering them to your infant, and always be sure to use them with close supervision.

More!

Pay close attention to other sounds in the environment that your infant responds to with excitement and enjoyment. Older infants who are able to sit and manipulate objects may also enjoy banging on pots and pans with spoons or pounding their hands on upside-down laundry baskets, small storage containers, and empty coffee canisters.

Special needs accommodations

Infants vary in their ability to hold and manipulate objects. Before creating the shakers, determine what sizes, shapes, and weights of containers your infant can comfortably hold. Offer your child empty containers and observe which ones seem easiest to grasp and transfer between hands. For infants who cannot yet comfortably hold and manipulate objects, use the shakers where they can see and hear them.