

# Music *in the* Home

Singing out *together* with your kids



# *Why cellists score higher on the SAT*

Yes, I've seen the headlines too. Music makes kids smarter.

**They read better.**

**Talk better.**

**They add and subtract better.**

**And overall they just look better (ok ...**

**I made that last part up).**

We all know that. But, why exactly does music make kids smarter? Harvard says this, Northwestern University says that, who's to know?

As a parent, music can be something of a conundrum.

Do I play music to the kid when he's in the womb?

Do I buy my child a bunch of baby einstein toys to play with?



Do we need to go to the “mommy and me” music class together next week?

Let's take a trip down memory lane (fill in your own sounds effects here).

Remember high school, and all those tests that you didn't really study for? Yeah, don't lie to yourself, I know you didn't study for some of them until the night before. What do we call that again? Cramming, anyone?

So, what are we doing when we prepare for a test at the last minute?

Essentially, we're trying to stuff a lot of information into our head over a short a period of time, and this is usually reinforced by repetition.

Works every time, right?

Now, compare that to actual studying. If you thought what I just described was actual studying, then this might be new.

Alright, so let's say you have a math test every Friday. Each day you're in school learning some new concepts, and so your brain is working. But where the magic really happens is in study hall ... wait, no one actually studies in study hall (best waste

of time...ever!), so the magic actually happens at home, when your friends aren't passing notes about who's got a crush on who. That's the time when you sit down and review what you just learned, and then you practice it. You repeat that process of reviewing and practicing it every day until the test.

What does that do other than keeping you inside your room and not bothering your parents? It strengthens your memory. And what does school emphasize in testing more than anything?

Drum roll ... MEMORY!

What year was the Declaration of Independence signed?

Hmm ... let me remember.

What was the dog's name in the story you just read?

Can't remember? Then it sounds like you need some practice.

I'll bring it back to music. What's one thing that musicians do more of than probably anyone else?

They (musicians) memorize the music they're playing.

You've probably had to memorize things like famous speeches, poems, Bible verses, and grocery lists (give me the actual list,

mom!). Imagine if someone asked you to memorize, word for word, the first few chapters of a book. If you could do that, you would probably think that you were amazing. And you would be, because that's hard...but let me bring you back to earth for a moment.

Most advanced string players are doing the equivalent of this by the time they're in their early teens (or elementary school for the great ones). My friends and I were memorizing 20-30 pages of music when we were this age (not braggin', just sayin').

The only way you can do it though, is through consistency and repetition (cramming won't work here). You've got to exercise your brain. And just like any other muscle, when you work it out, you make it stronger, and so it becomes easier and easier to remember things ... like all the questions from the SAT or ACT.

So then, do all musicians score better on tests?

No.

However, there is a direct relationship between academic success in school and memorization, and from where I'm sitting, music is one of the best ways to do it.

“ You've got to exercise your brain. ”

