

How to Help Your Child Enjoy Concerts

Strategies for a Good Concert Experience for Your Child and the Performers!

Groundwork Preparation

- Sit with your child and listen to a three-minute piece. Before the piece starts, ask the child to listen for three things. Is it a happy or sad piece? Was it quiet or loud? Was it fast or slow? It is important that you convey that while listening they are not to talk but to listen fully. After you listen with them, maybe share a snack and discuss what they thought.
- A week later try a longer piece. Same questions, same discussion afterwards.
- Once your child can listen to longer pieces of music, start to ask them to use their imagination more. What did the piece remind them of? Did the work make them think up a story? Perhaps they could paint a picture of the images that came to mind. Painting, discussing, and the shared snack now become a thing, your bonding tradition. You are sharing a very powerful experience that is fun and meaningful.
- Bonus discussions may pop up such as what instrument is making what sounds. Use Google to find out what you don't know, and you might learn something fun, too!

Pre-Concert Preparation

- After you feel your child can sit through some longer works thoughtfully, they may be ready for some live music. Check out the schedule of local concerts and see what events might be a good fit. If the program is announced ahead of time, have a listen yourself to recordings of works on the program you picked, and see if the music is something that will engage your child or not.
- Sit with your child and play portions of the recordings to be performed on the concert program. Ask the questions listed above, draw some pictures, or tell some stories. Tell them you are proud of how they can sit quietly, and you'd like to reward them by taking them to see the music in person!
- Explain what will happen from picking the tickets up, to finding a seat and sitting quietly while the musicians play the music they have come to know. Explain that there will be a time to talk after the concert.

Strategies for a Good Concert Experience for Your Child and the Performer

- Have your child use the restroom before the concert.
- Try to take your seat about 5 minutes before the concert starts.
- Notice where the exits are in case your child gets fussy and you need to leave.
- Model the behavior you wish to see from your child.
- No kicking the seat in front, no talking during the performance, only quiet flipping through the program book, and if it falls, leave it on the ground.
- Place your hand on your child's shoulder if they are moving too much.
- Ask your child to tap your leg if they are done, and you will acknowledge the tap by holding their hand and you will leave at the end of a movement or at intermission if possible.

Post-Concert Follow-up

- Hopefully you and your child had a great time at the concert. Good preparation should help achieve that!
- Ask your child what the best part of the concert was and what they didn't care for. Make notes for future concerts you might consider.
- Start introducing some other music, keeping your tradition and special time going strong.