

## WHEN WILL I KNOW WHEN MY CHILD IS READY FOR INSTRUMENT LESSONS?

Suzuki Early Childhood education classes develop along with the participating children. Highly trained teachers add layers of skill and new activities to familiar tunes as children demonstrate readiness. This is how we can accommodate children from newborns through their 4th year in the same class, and gain the advantage of having the older children act as models for the younger ones. This multi level environment is excellent preparation for future musical activities.

Every child develops at their own pace, so there is no set moment when your child will “graduate” from the SECE class. Many Suzuki instrument programs incorporate SECE activities into their beginner classes, so there is no clear dividing line between SECE and instrument lessons.

How do we know if a child is ready to add an instrument to the SECE activities that you already do at home? Here is a handy checklist:

### IS YOUR CHILD:

- **Toilet trained?**

This is a strong indicator of childrens' ability to voluntarily control their body actions.

- **Able to keep a steady beat?**

In order of developing skill: with hands on lap, sounding a drum with a mallet, clapping hands, patting hands with a partner.

- **Aware of their effect on the group?**

During the drum circle, does your child change the drum beat and then check to see the reaction of the people in the circle?

- **Taking turns for solos readily?**

Does your child anticipate their turn, then wait for their cue? (Sing name or “here I am” in Cuckoo, play drum on “fall” in Humpty Dumpty, triangle on “one” in Hickory Dickory Dock)

- **Responding to prompts and instructions?**

If we show how to add a new action or activity to a known song, how quickly does your child add it in? Do they do it right away or wait to see what everyone else does first?

- **Exhibiting joint attention throughout classes?**

Joint attention is when children are being attentive to the same thing all the other people in the group: do they watch the ball as we roll it across the circle, do their eyes follow the toy around the circle as each child gets their turn, etc.?

- **Singing along with most of the words to the songs?**

If your child routinely exhibits most of these behaviours, you may want to start considering the next step. Don't decide you are ready to move on if it only happens once for twice. Often new skills make an appearance, only to disappear for weeks before coming back again as children grow and develop.

Attending an ***Every Child Can!*** class is another valuable way of preparing yourself to work with your youngster in music lessons. These classes are offered several times a year in the Edmonton area, and are a pre-requisite to starting lessons in many Suzuki music programs. Here's a link to find out when the next class will be happening: <https://fluteplayer.ca/teacher-trainer/every-child-can/>

## INDIVIDUAL LESSONS ON A INSTRUMENT WITH A SUZUKI TRAINED TEACHER

If your child:

- can keep a steady beat while singing or chanting a song (Hickety Pickety, Tommy Tucker, etc.) that demonstrates the kind of multiple level activity required for playing an instrument (two hands on piano, bow and violin, etc.)

If You, the Parent:

- play the games and listen to the recording together with your child at home then you have begun to develop the habit of regular practice, which is absolutely necessary for the success of instrument study

Then you are ready to start observing different instruments and teachers in various Suzuki programs, to discover which one will be the best fit for you.

## CREATIVE ENSEMBLE LAB

If you and your child haven't quite developed the skill set for individual lessons yet, or if you just want to take more time before deciding about lessons, the Creative Ensemble Lab, with its emphasis on improvisation, would be a good next step. Signs of readiness for this class include the the above list as well as:

- Does a lot of creative variations when playing the glockenspiel for high & low
- Invents different words for the "Rain, Rain" song
- Observes and responds to other students (imitates or takes an action one step further)

This class does not require starting to learn an instrument yet - we can continue developing creative, musical, and ensemble skills using the SECE instruments while you consider what instrument would best suit your child. We incorporate the new lesson instruments as the children begin their lessons for a seamless transition into group instrument instruction.

## Suzuki Music programs in Edmonton

All Suzuki programs require that you come and observe lessons to see the kids and teachers in action before making a commitment to participate. You may contact any of the following groups to make appointments to observe lessons or classes. We recommend beginning to observe other lessons while continuing to attend Suzuki Early Childhood Education classes.

### Violin, viola, cello, bass:

Society for Talent Education  
<http://ste-suzukistrings.org>

### Flute, recorder:

Edmonton Suzuki Flute & Recorder Society  
<https://suzuki-flute-recorder.ca>

### Piano:

Edmonton Suzuki Piano School  
<https://www.edmontonsuzukipiano.ca>

### Parent orientation class for Suzuki music instruction (recommended for all programs):

Every Child Can!  
<https://fluteplayer.ca/teacher-trainer/every-child-can/>