

# Hosting a Playdate House Concert

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*A Guide to Delighting and Enriching the Kids in Your Social Circles*



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## Introduction

Congratulations! You've chosen to be a leader among your social circles and host a memorable experience for parents, caregivers and, of course, the kids. This guide will provide you the keys to hosting a Playdate House Concert that helps the kids in your life to connect with each other, get moving, feel rhythm, get a song in their young hearts and learn fascinating things about the world around them.



## What Do I Need to Get Started?



To host a Playdate House Concert, you just need a private space like your house or backyard. A reserved space in a restaurant, school, community center, church or synagogue could also work. The reason we can't use a completely public space like a park is that there would be many families there who weren't planning on attending this event. This would alter the group dynamic you and I are working to create.

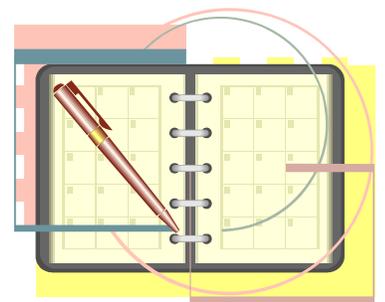
You'll need at least five families (I define "family" as at least one adult and at least one child who come together) to create the proper group dynamic for the kids to get the full benefit of the experience. If you'd like to expand your network of families, consider joining one of the many local parenting groups where you live (examples: Moms Club or Mommies 24/7) or a church/temple group.

The space where I will perform needs to be clear for dancing; the use of a table is helpful for the show, as I will place puppets and musical instruments for young volunteers to use while engaging with the moments I offer. I'll also use this table to display souvenirs I will offer for sale at the end of the performance.

**Note:** There's *no charge to you* to host the concert. There is a "*pay-what-you-want*" donation that all concert attendees, *including you*, have the opportunity to contribute after the show.

## Scheduling

You have many options to schedule your Playdate House Concert depending on the best times for the kids in your life. If your child and your friends' children are all babies and toddlers and haven't yet started school, a morning playdate would fit in neatly before the mid-day nap and help use that pent-up energy the little ones have in this prime time of their day. A 10:00 AM slot is popular for a morning show for a baby/toddler "mommy-and-me" Playdate House Concert.



If you have preschoolers and Kindergarteners who shouldn't miss out on the fun, an after-school Playdate House Concert is an excellent option as well. A 4:00 or 4:30 PM start works well when combining students with babies/toddlers, as this time slot is often after the littlest ones are up from their naps and looking for stimulation.

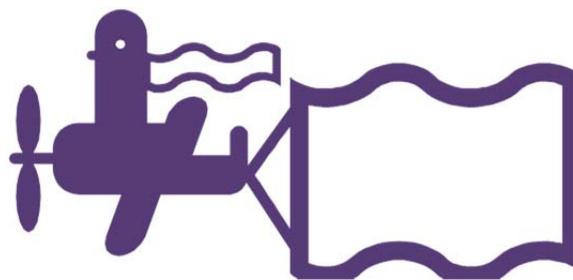
A sweet alternative that can involve entire families is the evening family-time Playdate House Concert. You might host a 6:00 dinner followed by a concert at 7:00 or 7:30 if that doesn't conflict with bedtimes. This time slot makes for a great break from family TV time.

Weekend Playdate/House Concert events may be available as well; you can always ask. While I offer birthday party entertainment as well, these Playdate House Concerts are a different experience from a birthday party, as the focus is on all the children engaging with the musical moments.

I typically need at least two weeks of lead time to set up a Playdate House Concert (three weeks is better) on a weekday and a month lead time for a weekend date (if available). It's a good idea to run the date by a few families you'd like to invite before we commit the date to the calendar.

**Note:** I'm located in northern New Jersey, close to New York City. Potential hosts in my area will have the most selection and spontaneity in choosing dates. For people wishing to host Playdate House Concerts outside this area, I want to come through for you; it will require coordination with performance dates along a route to and from your location in order to effectively plan a tour that includes your event. This will require your flexibility and patience as I work through the process of proposing dates that could work for all involved.

## Promoting the Playdate House Concert



The Playdate House Concerts I've given so far have been well planned by their hosts and well attended by their friends and family. I haven't seen a poor turnout yet because the hosts have remained actively in communication both with me and the families they wanted to invite. I can provide you with some very personalized promotional tools you can share with the people you invite to keep them interested and involved. For instance, once we book a date I'll create a private YouTube video of myself talking about the concert and how happy I am that you (mentioned by name) chose to present this Playdate House Concert. I'll also give a short sampling of a song that will be performed in the concert. I can also create a "digital flyer" that you can share by e-mail, a Facebook event, an e-vite, Meetup or however you prefer to share events with your friends and family.

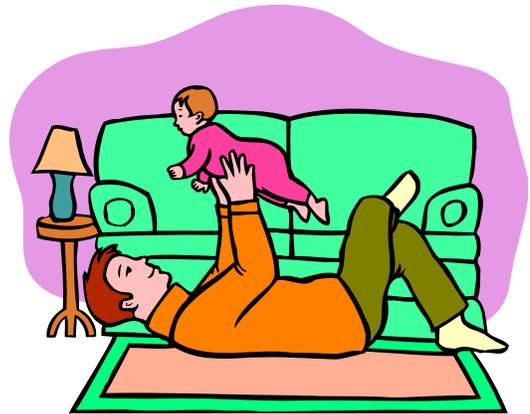
Once you have scheduled the show, it's advisable to get your RSVP's at least a week before the concert (two weeks before is better). Confirm with your expected attendees 2 days before the show for best results. Let your friends/family know you're looking forward to sharing this experience with them and their children.

Let your guests know in advance that they get to "pay what they want" after experiencing a professional live concert with their kids and that autographed souvenirs of the concert will also be made available for purchase.

**Note:** It's important not to refer to this donation for a professional concert as a "tip jar," as that conjures up images of a college kid developing his craft in a coffeehouse. Instead, let families know you will be collecting "pay-what-you-want" donations at the conclusion of the concert.

## Preparing the Performance Space

Will I be performing in your living room? Out on the deck? In the backyard? In a reserved room at your church? The most important consideration in choosing a performance space is the safety of the children who will participate in the event. The space should be cleared of objects that can accidentally injure children who are dancing and playing in the space, like coffee tables with sharp corners or glass end tables that can tip over. Consideration should be given to surfaces that can get slippery if a drink is spilled.



If the plan is for me to perform outdoors, will we move indoors if weather is an issue or will we reschedule the event? Is the performance space safe after a rainfall or too slippery for the kids? If we're performing poolside, it is imperative that there is an adult supervising the pool area at all times. I cannot provide that kind of supervision while also entertaining.

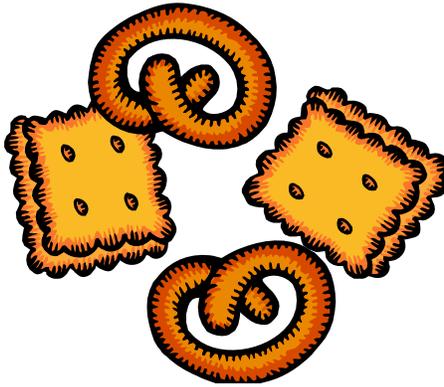
Usually if we're accommodating 12 or fewer families, I can perform without amplification or microphones, which makes for the most intimate family-oriented experience. This also affords me the greatest freedom to move about the space, leading the kids in a variety of movements. Therefore, electricity is not a consideration with attendance of this size.

If and when we get up above 12 families attending, it's time to consider having me bring a sound system so I can be heard above the noise in the room without anyone having to strain. Of course, my volume will be controlled if using a sound system. In order to keep me free to move around with the kids, I can use a wireless headset microphone and guitar transmitter. This takes about 30-40 minutes to set up before I perform and requires access to one electrical outlet within about 10 feet of where I'll set up the speakers. I can place the two speakers on the floor and will need a chair on which to place the wireless receivers that plug into the PA system. This typically takes up a 2-foot by 6-foot space behind me. If we're setting up outdoors with a PA system, we'll need to take reasonable precautions where weather is concerned, having a backup plan to move indoors or reschedule.

It is best to offer comfortable seating to the adults and optional seating for the kids who may not want to dance the entire time. This can be lawn/deck chairs, space on couches and arm chairs and even folding chairs if needed for larger audiences.

Some consideration should also be given to designating a convenient space for strollers, car seats and the many other accessories that travel with our little ones, as well as a "changing room," which could be needed at any moment, including during the performance.

## Food and Drink Considerations



There has been food and drink at most of the Playdate House Concerts where I've performed, but not all. Depending on the time of day/duration of the event, we've held successful events either way, so it's really a matter of your preference and knowing the preferences of the families you're inviting.

If you are serving food, it is advisable to know in advance about any families attending where a specific allergy may be an issue. If you're not 100% sure that everyone is free of peanut allergies, you're better off refraining from serving peanut butter.

One way to add to the community feel of a Playdate House Concert is for various attendees to bring various food/drink items.

The best practices I've seen involved having refreshments laid out on the table in the next room at least 30 minutes before showtime. Another family served up snacks immediately after the show; that worked well. I would refrain from first introducing the food during the show, as that will divide the kids' attention.

## Day of the Concert: Arrival and Showtime

Your friends and relatives are arriving with the little ones in tow. Everyone's excited for the Playdate House Concert. This is a good time to greet everyone and lead them to where they'll be seated. I typically arrive 15-30 minutes before an unamplified performance and 30-45 minutes before an amplified performance (using microphone/speaker system) and will say my hellos while setting up. If the kids know each other, this is a good opportunity for them to get re-acclimated to their surroundings and each other's company. If not, this is a wonderful opportunity to get the kids acquainted with one another, laying the groundwork for the sense of community the concert will develop.



Let your guests know where they can put strollers and accessories, where the designated changing room is and whether any refreshments are there. I'll set the mood by playing the music of other "kindie"

artists on my iPod and speaker. I'll show the kids the puppets, shakers and tambourines they can borrow during the show and explain that they go back on the table/in the basket at the end of the show (The shakers and tambourines are available for purchase and come with free music download cards).

I run a little giveaway during a house concert. Guests may fill out entry cards which will be stacked on tables and distributed in the audience area with clipboards and pens. They'll drop these entry cards into a fishbowl just before the start of the show.

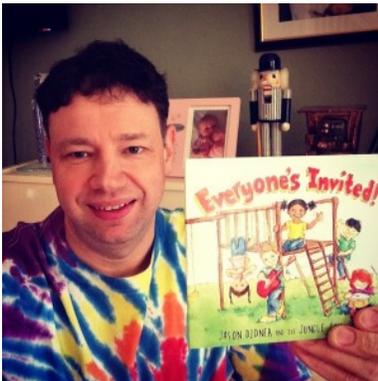
Just before the show begins I'll turn off the background music and turn on an audio recorder. I offer all attendees a sound recording of the complete concert in exchange for their e-mail addresses. I've gotten rave reviews from some parents for this service which provides entertainment in the car and offers a nice, free souvenir of the concert.

When it's time to start the show, you as the host may want to get up in front of your guests, thank them for attending and making the event a success. Then you get to introduce me. Say a few brief words about what my music means to your family and what you hope your guests will get out of the experience. Ask guests to silence their cell phones but encourage them to take and share pictures. Then let them know the show's getting started!

During the show I'll encourage lots of child participation. When I sing "Five Sea Lions," one young volunteer can bring my sea lion puppet to life, making her dance, swim and roll. Other kids can play with the other puppets while this is going on. When we can't get a child volunteer (usually happens early in the show), I love getting parents involved in the show. A mom recently did a wonderful job getting all the kids into a game of "Peek-a-boo Moon" with her work on the moon puppet.

After about the 2<sup>nd</sup> song I'll pick a lucky winner out of the fishbowl to award either a CD or a youth-sized T-shirt.

## Immediately Following the Show



I've played my last note of a roughly-35-minute set. If everyone's satisfied with the amount of music they've gotten, we're on to next steps. But you can always persuade me to give an "encore" if the families want a little more music.

It's not uncommon for the bigger kids to start asking me questions during and immediately after the show. I encourage this and we can designate a time for it, just as soon as you've made your closing announcements.

As I'm leaving the "stage" area and putting my guitar away, now's the time for you to address the audience, get a sense of what they thought of the show (adults and kids) and announce that you're passing around a pail in which to collect "pay-what-you-want" donations for the professional concert they just experienced.

**Important:** This is not a "tip jar" or "gas money." These terms tend to dampen the audience's perception of the value of what we just presented to them.

When the donation pail has gone around, I'll do a brief presentation of the souvenirs, much of which the kids have already had a chance to interact with. I'll explain that every item comes with free music downloads. I'll state that I accept cash and credit/debit cards (including for the pay-what-you-want donation if people are short on cash). Nobody has to buy anything but I present it as an option.

After I've made my presentation, I can do question-and-answer time with the kids and let them play my guitar under my supervision. This is particularly a hit with the big kids. This is also a good time to pass around refreshments or call everyone to the table.

## Follow-up Messaging

I will send an e-mail message containing a link to the live audio recording of the performance. If a recipient clicks (or taps) on the link while connected to the Internet, the music will usually either begin to play or show a play button. A right-click (or option-click on mac) generally provides the option to download the music to your computer for repeated listening, copy to CD or transfer to MP3 players or other devices.

This message will thank attendees for their participation in the concert and set the expectation of weekly e-mails containing free music and videos as well as concert announcements and special offers. I'll also encourage the sharing of pictures to my Facebook page:

<http://facebook.com/junglegymjam>

You may wish to send your own thank-you notes (either physical or by e-mail) to attendees as well, as a way to strengthen your social circle of people who share a common bond of raising or caring for children.

Would you like to repeat the Playdate House Concert at your place or a friend's place? I can offer both variety and familiarity each time we continue our series of Playdate House Concerts so there's always a good reason to bring the families back together again. A good rule of thumb is to space the events apart by about 2 months so there's a sense of occasion to it.

## Conclusion

Thank you for considering hosting a Playdate House Concert! Now you know what it takes to make it a success; I know you will host the kind of event that will give kids an amazing early experience with music, get your fellow parents, relatives and caregivers raving and even bring out the big kid in you! Please know I'm your partner in making this work for all involved and that your success is my success. I look forward to making this happen with you!



## Contact Information

You may contact me any of these 3 ways:

- Call (201) 838-1205
- E-mail [booking@junglegymjam.com](mailto:booking@junglegymjam.com)
- Fill out my short questionnaire at [junglegymjam.com/playdate-houseconcert](http://junglegymjam.com/playdate-houseconcert)