



lingoda

# Playing music makes you smarter ✨

READING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_1015R\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English



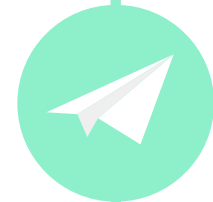


## Goals

- Can read and understand a technical text on the neurological effects of musical activity.
- Can present a sophisticated point of view on the topics of music, the brain and intelligence.



There are countless benefits to listening to music, from **triggering** lost memories among dementia patients, to simply helping people to relax. However, there is one benefit in particular that has **grabbed** a lot of attention in the media: the link between listening to music and intelligence.





## Warm-up

Why do *you* listen to music?





## Warm-up

**Do you think the following types of music are good to listen to while you study? Why (not)?**



classical

electronic

ambient

rap



## The brain

**Do you know  
anything  
interesting about  
the human brain?**



## The Mozart Effect

In 1993, scientist Frances Rauscher published a study which claimed to show that listening to just ten minutes of Mozart's classical music significantly improves **spatial reasoning skills**. In the study, Rauscher tested the spatial reasoning of three groups of people. He then made one group listen to Mozart's *Sonata for Two Pianos*, a second group to other sounds, and a third group to silence, before testing the groups again. The first group showed a **noticeable improvement**, while the other two did not. This **hypothesis** caught public attention, and **soon-to-be parents** even began to play Mozart to their unborn children; a range of mother-baby products emerged on the market to promote intelligence among unborn children!





## The Mozart Effect



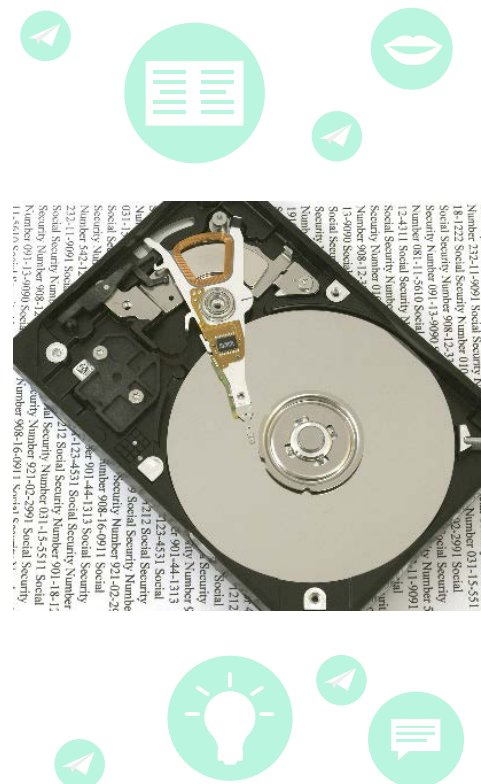
However, there were huge limitations to the findings of the study. It was later shown that the effects were only **short-lived**, lasting a mere ten to fifteen minutes. Listening to Mozart also only had an impact on spatial reasoning; the other forms of intelligence remained unaffected. It now seems a little exaggerated to claim that listening to music makes you smarter; **passive listening** is not enough to become more intelligent!





## Myth gone mad

The idea that listening to Mozart makes you clever has come to be known as one of the biggest myths in parenting. The governor of Georgia, US, **added fuel to the fire** by recommending that every parent have a free Mozart CD to help unborn babies learn faster. Sony even went as far as to offer to produce a range of CDs for free! This **craze** was despite the fact that Rauscher's study was carried out on college graduates and not babies. Nowadays, it is said to be far more constructive to read to unborn children, rather than simply play music, but the Mozart effect certainly **took the 90s parenting market by storm!**





## Vocabulary Review

**Spatial reasoning skills**

A type of intelligence which relates to how we perceive space and shapes.

**hypothesis**

\_\_\_\_\_?

**soon-to-be**

\_\_\_\_\_?

**noticeable**

\_\_\_\_\_?

**short-lived**

The opposite of \_\_\_\_\_?

**passive**

The opposite of \_\_\_\_\_?

**to add fuel to the fire**

**to take [something] by  
storm**

These two phrases are idiomatic expressions. Can you guess what they mean from the context of the text?



Don't add fuel to the fire!



## Complete the sentences

**Refer to the text to help you complete the sentences below.**

1. Rauscher's study showed that listening to music could improve \_\_\_\_\_ skills?
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ (control/ controlled) group sat in silence, while the other two listened to music and sounds.
3. One problem with the results was that ...
4. Other forms of intelligence besides spatial reasoning were \_\_\_\_\_ (also affected/ unaffected) by the experiment.
5. Today, the results of the experiment are considered \_\_\_\_\_ (more/less) problematic than at the time.



## The baby craze

**Discuss the following questions**



1

Why do you think the Mozart Effect was so influential among parents?



## The baby craze

**Discuss the following questions**



1

Why do you think the Mozart Effect was so influential among parents?

2

Would you start to develop your baby's learning from the womb?



## The baby craze

**Discuss the following questions**



1

Why do you think the Mozart effect was so influential among parents?

2

Would you start to develop your baby's learning from the womb?

3

What do you think causes a trend to take off?



## Lighting up the brain



Despite the **controversy** around Rauscher's research, neuroscientists continue to highlight the ways in which the brain is activated while listening to music. Increased activity can be seen through brain scans, which show the different areas of the brain lighting up when listening to music. The **consensus** now is that listening to music can enhance **cognitive functioning**, which can then facilitate people's active engagement with the activities that are required to improve intelligence (such as studying or playing an instrument).





## Lighting up the brain



There is a significant amount of evidence to suggest that playing an instrument can improve intelligence. The reason given is that learning to play an instrument requires cooperation between the rational **left hemisphere** of the brain and the more creative **right hemisphere**. The **corpus callosum** (the bridge between the two hemispheres of the brain) becomes thicker and stronger when musicians practise their instruments. Since **neural pathways** can easily cross the corpus callosum, musicians demonstrate higher capacities for the engagement of multiple areas of the brain at the same time.



## Vocabulary review

Can you use these words in a sentence?



1

controversy

2

consensus

3

cognitive functioning



What do you think?

**How might  
listening to music  
help improve  
intelligence?**

activity

facilitation

lighting up



## Can you match each function to the correct side of the brain?

Left Side

Right Side

Motor skills

Visual skills

Auditory skills

Linguistic  
skills

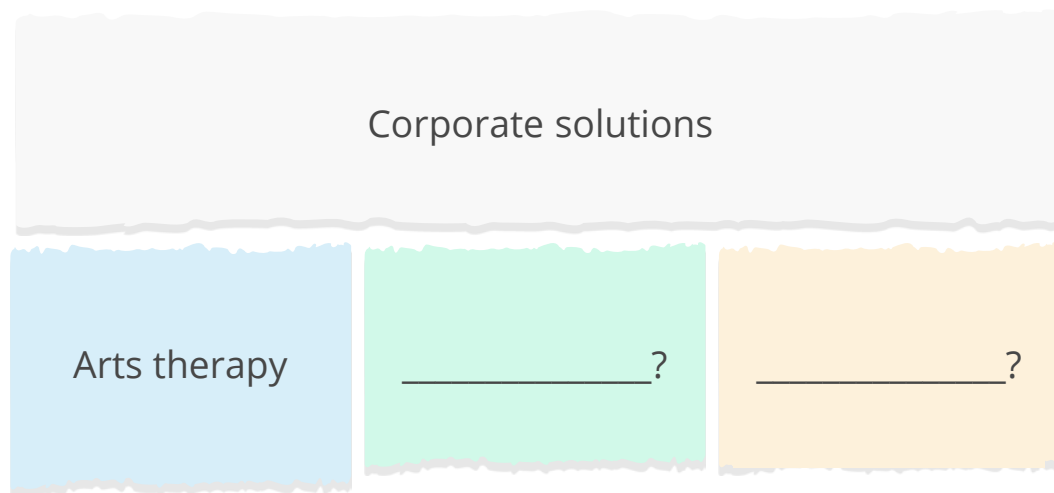
Mathematic  
precision

Creativity



## Discussion

**Given their ability to engage multiple areas of the brain at the same time, at which activities do you think musicians might excel?**





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Answer Key

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1. Spatial reasoning

2. Control

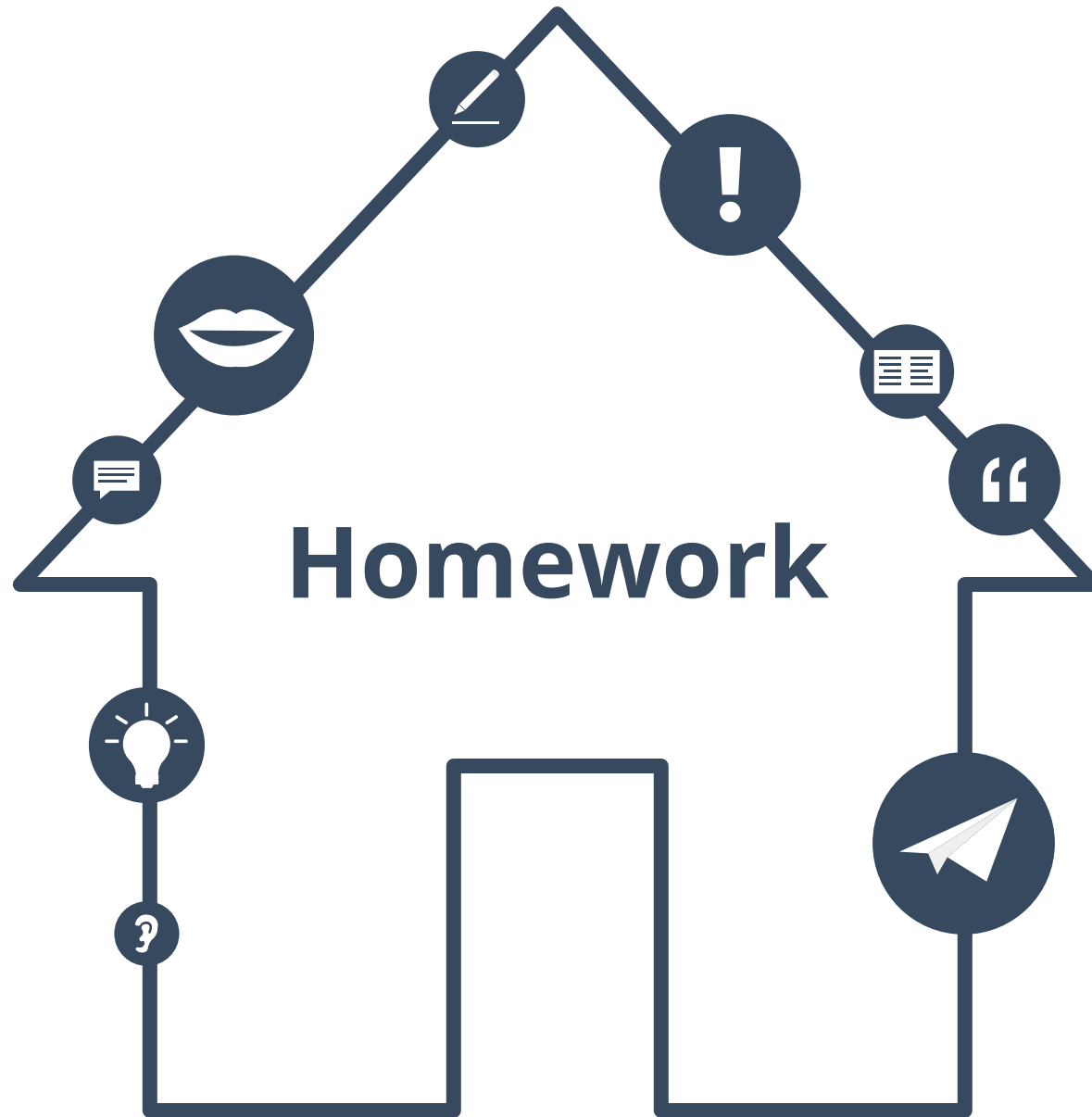
3. The effects were only short-lived and it affected only spatial reasoning skills.

4. Unaffected

5. More

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Left-motor skills, auditory skills, linguistic skills, mathematical precision,  
Right-visual skills, creativity

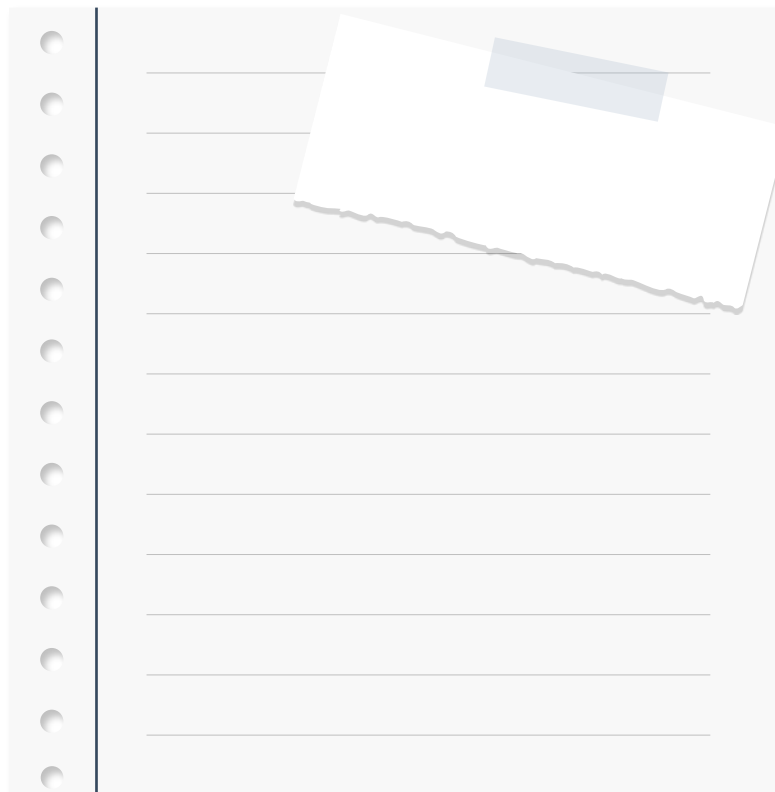






## Vocabulary diary

**Find your favourite words from this lesson and record them here along with your own definitions.**





## Written activity

**Write an email to a loved one to tell them all about the changes you are (not) noticing in your cognitive functioning while learning to play an instrument. Remember, keep an informal tone!**

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To:

Subject: Music is(n't) making me smarter!

Dear loved one,

I have started to play the \_\_\_\_\_ and, guess what, I'm (not) getting smarter! I have noticed several differences in...



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