

Song notes

The slow and fast song (a song about tempo)



What mathematics learning is in this song?

- Recognising and maintaining a steady beat
- Comparing speeds (slow, medium, fast)
- Using comparative words like faster and slower
- Coordinating movement with rhythmic patterns



Key mathematical language

- Tempo: how fast or slow a piece of music is
- Steady: keeping something at the same, regular pace
- Faster: increasing the speed
- Slower: decreasing the speed
- Speed: how fast (or slow) something is
- Rhythm: the regular, repeated pattern of beats we hear, clap or move to

Useful questions to ask

- Can you tap out a steady beat to the music?
 - How does your movement change when the tempo gets faster?
 - How does your movement change when the tempo gets slower?
 - Can we all keep the same beat together?
 - Which was easier to follow: fast or slow? Why?
-

Follow-up hands-on activities

Activity	Notes
Tortoise and Rabbit Tempo Walks	<p>Invite children to move around the room using different tempos inspired by animals.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● a slow tortoise walk● a steady walking pace like a trotting horse● a fast rabbit hop or run● freezing when the beat stops <p>Encourage children to notice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● How did your body move differently?● Which tempo took the biggest steps?● Which tempo used the most energy?
Draw the Beat	<p>Invite children to represent different tempos visually on a blank page. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● spaced-out dots or gentle marks for slow beats● closer or more scribbled marks for fast beats● repeating equal marks for a steady beat <p>Talk together about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● What do you notice about the patterns?● Which marks show faster movement?● How can drawings help us remember the beat?

This song was developed as part of the Tappy Math(s) project, a research-informed collaboration to co-design songs to support the teaching and learning of early mathematical concepts for children aged 3–6. The project draws on current research in early mathematics education and was supported through funding from CREATEd, a project of the Center for Research Use in Education (CRUE) at the University of Delaware (USA). For further information on the research that informed this song you can read:

[Dogani, K., & Papadopoulou, E. \(2024\). Preschool children's understanding of the musical concept of tempo by engaging in strategies from mathematical generalisation. *Early Years*, 44\(2\), 386–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2022.2155623>](https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2022.2155623)

Created by the Tappy Math(s) co-design team:

Maureen Donnelly | Tilly Flint | Sam Hartburn | Willow Marler | Belle Rycroft-Smith | Lucy Rycroft-Smith | Daniel Sullivan