

# About You: How Music Affects Your Moods

**Music can change how you feel. Learn the keys to how music connects with your mind and body.**

It had been a hard week for Jack. His parents had to cancel the family's spring vacation to Disney World. He studied the wrong chapter for his science test. And his basketball team almost lost a game when Jack missed an easy shot.

Jack, age 11, slammed his bedroom door. He pressed the play button on his CD player and plopped onto his bed. As his favorite song played, Jack thought about the coming weekend. After a few minutes, he called to his sister in the next room. "Hey, how about shooting some hoops?"

Music can be just what you need when you're feeling down. The right song can make you smile as you daydream about that new girl or guy in class. It can make you feel like getting up and dancing. It also can calm you down when you're worried. In the movies, music sets the mood, whether it's a horror scene or a happy ending.

Besides changing how you feel, music may help make your brain work better. It may even help keep you healthy.

Why does music have these powers? It may be because people's bodies have natural rhythms, such as a heartbeat and pulse. Different kinds of music can affect you in different ways. Changing your mood can be as easy as pressing the "play" button.

## Music to Soothe and Relax

Soft music with long, gentle notes is what many people play to relax. At an exhibit at the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York City, visitors can lie down on the city's largest futon bed. They close their eyes, put on headphones, and listen to music by more than 60 "sound artists."

Most retail stores play "background" music. The longer shoppers stay in a store, the more likely they are to buy something. So, stores try to play music that their shoppers enjoy.

If you want to relax at home, try listening to nature sounds. Or look for

music with a single instrument you like, such as a piano, flute, or guitar. Maybe just hearing a single voice soothes you. Try different types of music to learn what helps you relax.

## Music to Heal

For people who are sick, music can do more than just help them relax. It may help make them well again. Doctors in ancient Greece believed that music was just as important as medicine in treating patients.

Today, some doctors believe music is a healer. It is sometimes used to help reduce pain after surgery or during difficult treatment. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York City uses music therapy to help cancer patients. Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, plays music to soothe irritable infants. Studies have even shown that music may help boost the body's immune system.

When you're sick, try listening to soft, relaxing music. Or if you're just feeling down, play a favorite song and tell someone how it makes you feel. A group of teens suffering from depression shared their favorite songs with each other. Each teen explained why he or she liked the song. After talking about it, the teens said they felt better.

## Music to Learn

Playing music while doing homework helps keep your brain in shape. When you listen to a sound, it travels from the ear to the brain by electrical signal. Listening involves learning, memory, and emotions.

Many recent studies have tried to explain how music and learning go together. Don Campbell, an expert on the powers of music, believes music can make people--even babies--more creative, smarter, healthier, and happier.

Campbell wrote the book *The Mozart Effect* in 1997. Since then, many people have exposed their children to music, especially classical music. Several hospitals across the country even offer parents of newborns free CDs of classical music. They can take the music home to play for their babies.

Not everyone is convinced about the Mozart effect. Many doctors say babies who haven't heard music are no worse off. Others believe more research is needed to prove that music has these effects.

Experts suggest playing slow music to help you concentrate while you study. It may even improve your memory. (Twelve-year-old Krista and her friend Kate, 13, have found that listening to Dave Matthews Band helps them study.) But if you find yourself singing along, try playing music without words. Also, try to match the type of music to the type of learning. For example, if you're reading about the Civil War, playing upbeat music may be distracting. You may not remember later what you read.

## Music for Energy

If you want more energy, however, upbeat music works. Say you have to clean your room from top to bottom. Turn on a fast song and you may find yourself working at a speedy pace. When exercising or playing sports, choose fun, fast music. Evelyn, age 12, points out that rock music "gets you moving faster." If you want to help yourself wake up in the morning, try playing music with a steady beat. For some people, soothing music is better than lively music early in the day.

## Finding the Right Music

Discovering new types of music and favorite artists can be fun. Try the Web site *AllMusic.com*. You can type in an artist and then ask for other, similar music that suits your mood. For example, the Backstreet Boys page describes the group's music as sweet, cheerful, and carefree. At the bottom of the page, you can ask for artists like the Backstreet Boys, but a bit different, such as brighter or quieter.

No matter what style of music you like, you can use it to help you. The right music can add to a good mood or turn around a bad day. Just ask Jack. After listening to his favorite song, he put his tough week behind him and played a great game of basketball with his sister.

### Take Action: Take a Mood Music Poll

Across the top of a sheet of paper, write the following as column headings: your name, age, and the names and ages of three other people you have chosen to survey. Choose people of various ages, including at least two people over age 25. Write the question and categories below down the left side of the paper. Ask people why they chose each type of music. Fill in the answers for yourself and for the others.

What type of music do you like best for:  
Relaxing?

Waking up?  
Studying or reading?  
Doing chores?  
Feeling happier?

Now compare the answers. Did age seem to affect what types of music people chose for each category? Did anyone give similar answers? If you're not familiar with a type of music mentioned, ask to hear an example. Do you agree that it sets a certain mood?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why is music able to change the way we feel and make your brain work better?

- A because people's bodies have natural rhythms, such as a heartbeat and pulse
- B because people can't help but react to the music they are listening to
- C because music controls the way we think
- D because people have weak nervous systems

2. Which sentence best describes the structure of the passage?

- A The passage starts by explaining a problem and then provides several ways to solve it.
- B The passage lists the ways that music is helpful for improving your mood.
- C The passage starts with a story, later it explains the different ways music can help affect your mood, and then suggests an activity for you to try.
- D The passage suggests an activity for you to try, explains the different ways music can help affect your mood, and then finishes with a story.

3. One can infer from the passage that

- A scientists all agree about the way music affects how we feel and think
- B scientists are still trying to figure out how music is able to affect us the way it does
- C music is not as powerful as once believed
- D doctors will start replacing medicine with music when treating a patient

4. "Studies have even shown that music may help boost the body's immune system."

In the sentence, the word **boost** most nearly means

- A weaken
- B decrease
- C attack
- D improve

5. The main idea of the passage is that

- A music can connect with your mind and body
- B music should be used to help those that are sick
- C people should not listen to music if they need to concentrate
- D people should learn more about music before they use it to change their mood

6. What are some of the ways certain kinds of music can affect your mood?

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7. What type of music would someone who runs a café want to play inside the café? Why?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

When some people listen to upbeat music \_\_\_\_\_ they go to bed, they have a hard time falling asleep.

- A although
- B because
- C so
- D before

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Music helps people by changing their moods.

What? music

(does) What? \_\_\_\_\_

How? \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: **irritable** (ir·ri·ta·ble): to be easily annoyed or grumpy.

**10a.** Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word **irritable**.

1. Tina was always irritable after she lost a tennis match.
2. The teacher was so irritable that any noise in the classroom made him go crazy.
3. Whenever you are irritable, people are worried you might get mad about the smallest things.
4. The mother brought food for her kids during the trip so that they wouldn't become hungry and irritable.
5. Unlike her friend Sarah, Lily was never irritable and was a cheery person.

**10b.** Which photo below shows someone who seems irritable?



**11.** If someone does something nice for you, is that likely to make you irritable? Why or why not?

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**Teacher Guide and Answers**

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 830

**Featured Text Structure:** Enumerative – the writer includes a list, giving examples of something. This text structure is often combined with cause/effect or problem/solution.

**Passage Summary:** Music can affect people’s moods in different ways depending on the kind of music being listened to.

1. Why is music able to change the way we feel and make your brain work better?

- A because people's bodies have natural rhythms, such as a heartbeat and pulse**
- B** because people can't help but react to the music they are listening to
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4. “Studies have even shown that music may help boost the body's immune system.”

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- B** music should be used to help those that are sick
- C** people should not listen to music if they need to concentrate
- D** people should learn more about music before they use it to change their mood

6. What are some of the ways certain kinds of music can affect your mood?

**Suggested answer:** Soft music with long, gentle notes helps people relax whereas upbeat music will be more effective in boosting your energy. [paragraphs 6 & 17]



7. What type of music would someone who runs a café want to play inside the café? Why?

**Suggested answer:** They would most likely like to play soft, relaxing music which allows customers to read, study and/or have conversations. They would not want anything that is too loud with heavy beats because chances are it would be distracting. [paragraphs 6, 16 & 17]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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- A although
- B because
- C so
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9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Music helps people by changing their moods.

What? music

(does) What? **helps people**

How? **by changing their moods**

**To the Teacher:** ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

Vocabulary Word: **irritable** (ir·ri·ta·ble): to be easily annoyed or grumpy.

**Step 1:** Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (ir·ri·ta·ble)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is irritable. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "irritable."]

**Step 2:** Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Irritable means to be easily annoyed or grumpy."
- b. Teacher says: "The word irritable is usually used to talk about someone who is in a bad mood. In this passage, it is explained that music is used to soothe irritable infants at the Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "irritable."]

**Step 3:** Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the first sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

**Directions:** Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

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5. Unlike her friend Sarah, Lily was never irritable and was a cheery person.

**Step 4:** Check for student understanding

**To the Teacher:** This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

**10b.** Which photo below shows someone who seems irritable?



**11.** If someone does something nice for you, is that likely to make you irritable? Why or why not?

**Suggested answer:** No because when someone does something nice for you, it does not put you in a bad mood or annoy you. Instead, it makes you happy and appreciative.

*Suggested Additional Vocabulary:* boost, depression