

Writing Applications: From idea to implementation

This module will guide you through the process of writing an application plan, starting from a goal/objective starting point and from a song/material starting point. At the conclusion of this module, you will have two application plans with adaptations and extensions. You will also compose an original song for one of the applications.

The AMTA competencies that are addressed in this module include:

2.1 Compose songs with simple accompaniment.

2.2 Adapt, arrange, transpose, and simplify music compositions for small vocal and nonsymphonic instrumental ensembles.

14.5 Demonstrate basic knowledge of the psychological and physiological aspects of musical behavior and experience (i.e. music and affect; influence of music on behavior; physiological responses to music; perception and cognition of music; psychomotor components of music behavior; music learning and development; preference; creativity).

16.1 Select or create music therapy experiences that meet the client's objectives.

16.5 Select and adapt music consistent with the strengths and needs of the client.

16.6 Formulate music therapy strategies for individuals and groups based upon the goals and objectives adopted.

17.2 Provide music therapy experiences to change nonmusical behavior.

One of the first questions that music therapy students ask is, "Where do you find your ideas? Do you develop all of your applications from goals and objectives, or do you start with the music and then make the music fit the goal and objective?" The answer is often unsatisfactory. Most therapists will tell you that ideas come from all over the place - from books, from toys, from music listening, from music making, from many sources. This answer does not assist you in finding new things to do with your clients, but it starts you off in the right direction.

Basically, an application bank for music therapists does not exist. Music therapists have to create most of the applications that they use in sessions with clients. Ideas come from many places. We will focus on two situations - the first is a song or material that already exists that you will adapt or use as a framework for an original application, and the second is a goal and objective based application using a preexisting objective.

The following pages will take you through a application development decision tree.



Here is a sample song. Listen to the song and answer the following questions.

1. Does the song have lyrics? Yes - go to step 2. No - go to step 6.
2. Do the lyrics contain directions for movements? Yes - go to step 3. No - go to step 4.
3. What movements are contained in the song? List them on a piece of paper. Go to step 4.
4. Do the lyrics contain the framework for a story? Yes - go to step 5. No - go to step 6.
5. What is the outline of the story? Write the outline on a piece of paper. Go to step 6.
6. What is the tempo of the song? Write the metronome marking on a piece of paper. Go to step 7.
7. What is the duration of the song? Time the song and write the duration on a piece of paper. Go to step 8.
8. What is the form of the song? Diagram the song's components on a piece of paper. Go to step 9.

Repeat as needed for all songs involved in your session planning.

Write all answers to the following steps on a piece of paper.

9. How can you use this song with your clientele for movement? Brainstorm two uses. Go to step 10.

10. How can you use this song with your clientele for social interaction? Brainstorm two uses. Go to step 11.

11. How can you use this song with your clientele for reminiscence or memory development? Brainstorm two uses. Go to step 12.

12. How can you use this song with your clientele for learning new skills? Brainstorm two uses. Go to step 13.

13. How can you use this song with your clientele for Activities of Daily Living? Brainstorm two uses. Go to step 14.

14. Any other ways you can use this song with your clientele? Go to step 15.

15. What ways will you need to adapt or change the lyrics to use the song for any of the uses in steps 9 through 14? List all adaptations that you will need to make to the preexisting song for use in a music therapy session.

Last step - you have general ideas of how to use this song in a session, but how will it work with the goals and objectives that you have for your clientele? Look at the uses that you brainstormed for each of the domains of functioning - motor, social, cognitive/academic, independent functioning, and other domains not specified?

You now have a variety of ways to use this song in a session. If you did not like all of the uses that you brainstormed, do not worry. Not all ideas have to be used, and you will probably never use this song as a part of a session in all of the ways that you thought of, but now you have several uses for one song. With those several uses, you can develop several application plans for your clientele.

If you are thinking about using the same song for a different clientele, go through the decision tree again focusing on the specific characteristics of the new clientele. You can often use the same music for several populations.

It is time to leave this portion of the module, but you will come back to this application plan towards the end of the unit. Do not throw anything away - keep it handy for later.

It is now time to address application development from an established goal/objective. The first step is to examine the goal and objective for information about the client and the direction that the application should go.

This objective will be repeated on other pages, so read it for information at this point.

Objective: During an echo drum improvisation, the client will initiate 2, different, four-beat patterns alternating hands, in two consecutive sessions by March 15, 2005. (Current baseline: R L R L, 4-beat pattern client initiated).

Let's begin parsing the objective into its relevant parts.

Objective: During an echo drum improvisation, the client will initiate 2, different, four-beat patterns alternating hands, in two consecutive sessions by March 15, 2005. (Current baseline: R L R L, 4-beat pattern client initiated).

The acronym SMART will help you to remember the elements of an objective.

SPECIFIC - The "S" value is the "what" aspect of the objective.

MEASURABLE - The "M" value is the "when" and the "how many" aspect of the objective.

ATTAINABLE - Then you get to the "A" value. This value tells you whether the client may reach the criteria for the objective.

RELEVANT - The "R" element addresses the "why" aspect of the objective.

TIME-FRAMED - The "T" value is the "how long" aspect of the objective.

Now you have the what, when, why, and how aspects of the objective lined out. This will help you develop a musical intervention for this goal/objective.

Objective: During an echo drum improvisation, the client will initiate 2, different, four-beat patterns alternating hands, in two consecutive sessions by March 15, 2005. (Current baseline: R L R L, 4-beat pattern client initiated).

It is time to make some assumptions about this client from the information that you already have. This is a difficult step of the process because you are dealing with a hypothetical client rather than one you have a therapeutic relationship with already.

Assumption #1 - The client is able to use both hands when playing the drum.

Assumption #2 - The client has engaged with you in an echo drumming improvisation prior to this point.

Assumption #3 - The client understands and can replicate a four-beat pattern.

Assumption #4 - The client can sustain upper extremity motion for long periods of time without fatigue.

There are any number of other assumptions that you can make about this client, but these are the standard assumptions for this project.

Now, you will progress into the application development decision tree.

Step 1 - How will music be used in this application? Will you (therapist and/or client) sing? - go to step 2. Will the therapist play recorded music? - go to step 4. Will you only use the drum? - go to songwriting decision tree (page 18).

Step 2 - What song? Will the song be precomposed? Yes - go to step 3. No - go to songwriting decision tree (page 18).

Step 3 - How will the song be presented to the client? Therapist singing? - finished. Recorded music? - go to step 4.

Step 4 - What recording(s) will be used? List all recordings on a piece of paper, including artist name, title of recording, and track title and number. Move to step 5.

Step 5 - What materials/equipment will you need to play the recorded music? List all materials/equipment on a piece of paper.

Now you have information for the musical aspect of the application, including what musical format you will use in the application.

Now, let's leave the previous goal and objective for one that is more conducive to an accompanying song.

Goal: Client will increase verbal production of //ch// and //sh// letter blends.

Objective: When cued through a familiar song, the client will produce an audible approximation of the directed letter blends (//ch// and //sh//) two out of four trials for seven consecutive sessions by May 21, 2006.

If you need to, go through the process outlined on page 11 and continuing through this page.

There are many different ways to write a song, and all of them are appropriate in music therapy application development. Find a style that feels comfortable for you. In the following decision tree, you will be prompted to start at one location (writing lyrics), but this may not be the most appropriate place to start. Think of the tree as a circle - all aspects of the decision tree will have to be visited at one time, but nobody cares where you start on the circle.

Songwriting Decision Tree

Lyric development

Step 1 - Look at the objective, does the application need to have lyrics for the client to participate? Yes - move to step 2. No - move to Rhythm development section.

Step 2 - What directives/directions do you need to give the client to increase participation. Write these directives on a sheet of paper, using short sentences (4-6 words), and incorporating the client's name often. The more simple, the better. Be prepared to repeat the directives more than once for the client to respond.

Step 3 - Arrange the directives in order for the application. What does the client need to do first? Write this directive first. Repeat until all directives are in order.

Step 4 - Chant the directives several times, getting a feel for the rhythm of the words and the flow of the lyrics. How do the directives sound when chanted together? Do you need to reword the directives to increase their flow? Is rhyming important to you? Tweak the lyrics until you feel comfortable with the words.

Step 5 - move to Rhythm development section.

Rhythm development

Step 1 - If you have developed lyrics and/or a melody for the song, chant or play the lyrics/melody until they/it fall(s) into a rhythmic pattern. Notate the rhythm on a piece of paper. If you do not have lyrics or a melody, start at step 4.

Step 2 - Determine the meter of the chant/song. Locate the macrobeat pattern and notate on a piece of paper.

Step 3 - Move to Melody development section.

Step 4 - Determine a meter. Do you want the song to be in 4/4 time? 3/4 time? 6/8 time? Know that your decision may change at a later time.

Step 5 - Establish a steady beat through body percussion or a metronome. Start to think about what kinds of rhythmic figures you match with the steady beat and the meter. Notate any rhythmic figures that you brainstorm for use with lyric and melody development.

Step 6 - Move to Melody development section.

Melody development

Step 1 - If you have developed other forms of this song, chant the words or beat the rhythm of what has been developed. Start to improvise a melody by singing the words/rhythms repeatedly. Notate any improvisations that

you like. Know that these may change as you get more into the development stage. Move to step 2.

Step 2 - Once a melody has been established, determine the tonal center of the song. Develop the accompanying chords for use in a session with any of the functional instruments (guitar, keyboard, autoharp, xylophone).

Step 3 - Either move to the other areas of the songwriting decision tree, or notate the song and PRACTICE! The key to developing good original music is your mastery of the new patterns!

We have now completed the decision tree for songwriting.

Use the notes that you have taken to write two applications - one based on the song provided on page 4, and the other with an original song for the person working on letter blends. You may choose the population for each application. Please include your original song, melody, lyrics, and chords/accompaniment in musical manuscript (either handwritten or written with music software).

You are finished!