

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

# Fun Finger Games

 Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Traditional or made-up games that pair simple rhymes or songs with fun-to-do finger and hand motions are enjoyable ways to help children build language skills.

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## What is the practice?

Fingerplays bring rhymes to life as children sing while making hand motions with the words of the song. Parents can do fingerplays at home to help their children improve memory and language. Rhymes help children develop phonological awareness, the ability to hear the different sounds in language, an important pre-reading skill.



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## What does the practice look like?

During fingerplays, children sing to different tunes while moving their hands to match the words of the song. “Climbing” their fingers in the air while singing *Eensy-Weensy Spider* and clapping their hands to make pretend thunder are examples.

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## How do you do the practice?

There are lots of fingerplays that let young children improve their use of language. These include fingerplays that act out familiar nursery rhymes and fingerplays that tell a story. Parents can also use fingerplays as a fun way to introduce poetry. They can create chances for their children to follow directions and learn new ideas.

- Start by sitting someplace comfortable, facing your child. Sitting at a table provides a surface for making sounds and motions with your hands. Sitting on the floor creates space for making big gestures and movements in the air.
- Choose fingerplays on topics that interest your child. For example, if your child is interested in vehicles, then she might enjoy fingerplays that allow her to make driving motions or fire-truck noises. If your child likes adventure, fingerplays that involve going on a bear hunt or meeting new creatures might interest her. Children who like to move a lot can do fingerplays that involve big movements. Other children may prefer to make small motions and movements.
- Encourage your child to think of her own words and hand motions to rhymes and songs. Provide places in the play where she can “fill in” the next word. Let your child be the storyteller with her own lyrics and creative style of expression and movement.
- Show your child your enjoyment and enthusiasm by singing, smiling, and moving along with the story or song. Let your child know that she is doing a good job by praising or going along with her ideas.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child using new vocabulary?
- Does your child remember the words and movements of fingerplays?
- Does your child show interest in creating new stories or rhymes?

# Take a look at more finger games for preschoolers

## Firefighter Fingerplay

Three-year-old Andre hears the sirens of a fire truck. He runs to the window of his bedroom to see it drive by. "Firefighter!" says Andre excitedly to his mother, pointing at the disappearing truck. "Time for bed" says his mother, lifting him into bed. "I saw the firefighter man!" says Andre, still excited. "You did! I'll bet he's going to help someone," says his mother. "And now it's time for my little fireman to go to bed." She sits on the bed next to Andre and holds up her right thumb for him to see. "This brave fireman is going to bed." She places her right thumb on her left palm. "Down on the pillow he lays his head." She curls her fingers around her thumb, as Andre starts to copy her movements. "Wraps himself in his blanket tight and plans to sleep this way all night." She closes her eyes. "But the fire alarm rings! He opens his eyes!" She opens her eyes. "Quickly he's dressed and down the pole he slides." She grips her left arm with her right hand and slides it down from wrist to elbow. Then she moves her hands to pretend to turn an imaginary steering wheel. "Then he climbs on the truck to go! go! go!" Andre laughs and mother and son do the fingerplay one more time together.



## "Once there was a bunny...."

Four-year-old Madison rides in the back seat of the family car next to her grandmother. Her grandmother sees that Madison is getting restless. "Madison," she says, "Did I ever tell you about the little bunny?" Madison loves animals and quickly shakes her head "no" in anticipation. "Well," begins her grandmother, "Once there was a bunny." She makes a fist with her left hand, extending two fingers for ears. "And a green, green cabbage head," she makes a fist with her right hand. "'I think I'll have some breakfast,' the little bunny said." Her grandmother moves her "bunny hand" toward her "cabbage hand." "So he nibbled and he nibbled." She moves the fingers on her left hand. "Then he turned around to say, 'I think this is the time I should be hopping on my way!'" She makes hopping movements with her left hand so the "bunny" hops away from the cabbage. Madison giggles. "Now let's see if you can make the bunny," says her grandmother. She begins to teach Madison the fingerplay, amusing her for the remainder of the car ride.

## "One Little Bee"

Five-year-old Jamar has difficulty with articulation of certain sounds. He sits with his father at the kitchen table eating breakfast. As Dad starts to pour some honey on Jamar's toast, he starts reciting: "One little bee flew and flew. He met a friend, and that made two." Seeing that he has Jamar's interest, Dad continues. He carefully articulates the *b*, a sound that is hard for Jamar to pronounce. "Two little bees, busy as could be. Along came another and that made three." His father sets the honey down and holds up three fingers. "Three little bees, wanted one more / Found one soon and that made four." He holds up four fingers. "Four little bees, going to the hive / Spied their little brother, and that made five." He holds up five fingers. "Five little bees working every hour / Buzz away, bees, and find another flower!" Jamar smiles. "Did you like that?" asks his father. Jamar nods and his father says, "Let's say it together. One little bee...." He carefully articulates the *b* sound at the beginning of the word. Jamar joins in, copying his father's articulations and hand movements.

