

Especially for parents of toddlers! 

Toddler Rhymes and Rhythm

 *Rhymes and Sound Awareness*

Nursery rhymes help toddlers become aware of the rhythms and rhymes of language. Using old rhymes and new rhymes you invent helps your toddler become familiar with the sounds of letters and words.

What is the practice?

This guide includes rhyming activities to help toddlers learn to focus on sounds. Such activities help toddlers learn that the change of one letter sound creates a rhyming word with a new meaning. For example, **cat** to **hat**. Combining rhyming words to make a silly poem is a fun activity for toddlers.

What does the practice look like?

Children learn how sounds and words are connected when they hear words with identical or similar endings repeated in rhymes. Simple rhymes created for young children are often called *nursery rhymes*. "Hickory, dickory dock / A mouse ran up the clock...." is an example of a well-known nursery rhyme.



How do you do the practice?

Everyday life presents different opportunities for playing rhyming games. Repeating, singing, or making up rhymes can become part of many ordinary routines. You can search the Internet for *nursery rhymes* or *rhymes for toddlers*. You can find children's nursery rhyme books at the library. There are many fun poems about everyday activities (bath time, working in the garden) and occasions (birthdays and holidays).

- Identify rhymes about things your toddler is interested in or enjoys. For example, if your child likes animals, "Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle..." might be a good choice. The more your child enjoys the content of the rhyme, the more likely she will say the rhyme with you.
- Rhymes can happen anywhere. You can make them up as you walk down the street. For example, "Step one, step two, look at my shoe." You and your toddler can repeat rhymes during daily activities. For example, try "Rub a dub, dub, three men in a tub" during baths.
- Don't worry about getting the rhymes "right." Young children simply enjoy the sounds they are making. The sillier the rhymes are the better!
- As your toddler gets used to saying rhymes with you, let her pick or start the next rhyme. Let your child make up a rhyme all alone or with a little help from you. Remember, it is the fun of rhyming that motivates her to continue rhyming, not whether the rhyme makes sense.
- Praise your toddler's efforts to say rhymes with you and to make up rhymes.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your toddler saying rhymes with you?
- Does your toddler smile or laugh when rhyming?
- Does your toddler want to make up new rhymes?

Take a look at more rhymes and rhythm

Walkin' and Rhymin'

Taking a walk through the mall with his mom is one of 27-month-old Damian's favorite activities. While walking along, his mom often begins a silly rhyme: "One, two, buckle my shoe." Damian repeats it while looking up and smiling at his mom. Now his mom says, "One, two, buckle my shoe; three, four, close the door." Damian repeats the two lines. They add lines, "Five, six, pick up sticks. Seven, eight, lay them straight. Nine, ten, a big fat hen." Damian sings out the words in unison with his mom.



Rub-a-dub-dub!

Taking a bath is something 22-month-old Anna enjoys. But sometimes it is hard to stop playing with her favorite toys and get in the tub. Anna's dad helps by using a silly rhyme to let her know it is time for a bath. Dad says, "Rub-a-dub-dub, three friends in a tub, and who do you think they be? Anna, the baker, and the candlestick maker, put them in all three!" He scoops up Anna and off they go together singing and laughing "Rub-a-dub-dub."

Rhythmic Learning

Rhyming is also about rhythm. Dylan, a 2-year-old, has moderate hearing loss. Dylan's mom uses her favorite rhymes, adding movement to help him feel the rhythm. Dylan loves the rhymes when his mom rocks him back and forth to the rhythm. He likes his mom to help him clap the rhythm as they chant their favorite rhymes.

