

Especially for practitioners working with infants!

Infant Nursery Rhymes

Sound Awareness

This practice guide includes nursery rhymes that are likely to be especially engaging and entertaining to infants and young children. Repeating nursery rhymes is one way you can help infants learn about sounds, words, and simple stories.

What is the practice?

Saying nursery rhymes is a way of using simple, repetitive poems with a young child. They can be especially fun and enjoyable adult-child activities. Rhyming games help infants pay attention to sounds, become familiar with words, and have opportunities to “ask for more.”

What does the practice look like?

The best nursery rhymes are ones that include some type of movement or some type of touching. The movement or touching helps the child learn the connection between different sounds and words and different things that happen as part of hearing a nursery rhyme. Imagine a mother reciting the words of the rhyme “Baby’s Name” while tickling and touching her daughter. The daughter listens to every sound and watches every movement. You can see why nursery rhymes are so much fun!



How do you do the practice?

Nursery rhymes are not only fun and enjoyable; they serve an important purpose. They are the context for interactive play episodes that help children be active partners in doing and saying the nursery rhyme. Try different rhymes with a child to find ones that he especially enjoys.

Baby’s Name

What is your name? (Point to the child).
I just want to know. (Point to yourself).
Your name is _____. (Say the infant’s name.)
Hello, hello, hello! (Wave to the child).

Dancing Fingers

Fingers are up, (Wiggle the fingers, pointing up)
Fingers are down. (Wiggle the fingers, pointing down).
Fingers are dancing, (Make the fingers appear to dance)
All over town. (Run dancing fingers on the child’s tummy).

Blow Me A Kiss

Tell me you love me, (Cross your heart)
And blow me a kiss. (Blow the child a kiss).
Aim good and straight (Gently place the child’s hand on his or her mouth)
So you don’t miss. (Pretend to catch the kiss).

Make Baby Smile

I can make baby smile. (Gently touch the child’s mouth).
By tickling her toes. (Tickle the child’s feet).
I can make baby smile. (Gently touch the child’s mouth).
By kissing her on the nose! (Kiss the child on his or her nose).

Blow Wind Blow

See the trees move
To and fro
(Move you arm back and forth)
See the trees move
Blow wind, blow.
(Gently blow on child’s tummy or face).

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to make any of the nursery rhyme movements?
- Does the child show signs that he knows what is about to happen?
- Does the child make sounds and vocalize while playing the games?

Take a look at more nursery-rhyme activities

Let's Play Again

Four-month-old Charlene is lying stretched out on her back on her mother's legs looking up at her. This is a position Charlene's home visitor recommended as a good one for this kind of game. Her mother says, "Can you smile for me? I can make Charlene smile by tickling her toes. I can make Charlene smile by kissing her nose!" Charlene has learned to lift her leg to have her toes tickled. She starts to blink her eyes in anticipation of having her nose kissed. Her mom asks, "Do you want to play again?" Charlene squeals and gets excited to tell her mom to "do it again!"



Sing-Along Time

Ten-month-old Daphne is in her highchair while her caregiver, Sue, fixes her something to eat. Sue and Daphne have turned this everyday routine into a kind of sing-along. Sue says, "It's time to eat (pointing to her mouth while making the sign for eat). You're in your seat (pointing to Daphne highchair). Let's fill your tummy (pats her stomach), With something yummy! (hugs herself and smiles)." Daphne tries to continue the game by putting her hand up to her mouth. Sue repeats the made-up nursery rhyme, but this time Daphne touches Sue's mouth and then hers. The more they play, the more excited Daphne gets, showing delight in playing the game.

Dancing Fingers

Nine-month-old Suzette is not able to lift her hands or arms because of a rare muscular condition. With the help of her early interventionist, her mother has figured out how to entertain her daughter with nursery rhymes. She plays Dancing Fingers with Suzette by holding her daughter's arm up in the air and using her fingers to move Suzette's fingers. Suzette shows she enjoys this game by paying close attention to her mother's face. She even tries to get her mother to continue the game by vocalizing to her mom and by getting excited. Mom recites the nursery rhyme again. Suzette's early interventionist notices that Suzette is trying as hard as she can to move her fingers on her own.

