Play is the most age-appropriate way for young children to learn. In order for children to know letter sounds and rhyming words when they are older, it is important to play with words throughout the day. Talking with and to your child is one of the most valuable things you can do to help them become a strong reader, so talk a lot and make it fun.

Being able to hear the little parts of words is called phonological awareness. When you are having fun with words by making up nonsense words or animal sounds you are helping develop this important early literacy skill. Start talking with your child from the minute they are born so it becomes a natural interaction with them.

For more information on playing with words, watch this video clip.

www.everychildreadytoread.org/sites/default/files/SongsandLanguage.wmv

Say nursery rhymes so that your child hears words that rhyme. Emphasize the rhyming words. “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are.”

Read and re-read books your child enjoys.

Catch your child’s attention by repeating the sounds he likes to say. Change the first letter to make a new silly word: Baa-baa becomes la-la.

Sing songs with your child. Traditional nursery rhymes are a great source for rhyming words and new vocabulary.

Here’s how...

Did you know...

The Real Mother Goose, illustrated by Blanche Fisher Wright

This sturdy board book, just the right size for little hands, contains 15 nursery rhymes your young child will love bouncing, clapping, and singing with you.

For more information on playing with words, watch this video clip.

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Types of books that help your child begin to play with words...

- Rhyming books
- Dr. Seuss books
- Books that illustrate a familiar song
- Books with a rhythm or beat
- Books with animal sounds
- Poetry and nursery rhyme books
- Books that have repeating words or sounds
**Talk**

*Hickory, Dickory, Dock* is a fun nursery rhyme to act out while your young child is taking a bath. You can use a bar of soap or washcloth to go up your child’s arm when the “mouse ran up the clock” or down their arm and make a splash in the water as you say “the mouse ran down”.

Hickory, Dickory, Dock!  
The mouse ran up the clock;  
The clock struck one,  
Hickory, Dickory, Dock!

Adapted from *125 Brain Games for Babies*, by Jackie Silberg

**Sing**

**Hey, Diddle Diddle!**

Hey, diddle, diddle!  
The cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon;  
The little dog laughed  
To see such sport,  
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

**Write**

In order to learn to hold a pencil later on, young children need to develop the small muscles in their hands and fingers. Give your toddler a clean sponge while she is in the bathtub, or outside with a bucket of water. Show her how to squeeze the sponge in the water to soak it full, then squeeze it out in a large cup or bowl. Make it a fun game to play.

**At your library...**

Don’t have a library card? You can still visit your library for storytimes or to read with your child. Ask your librarian about how to apply for your own card today!

**Play**

**Baa, Baa, Black Sheep**

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?  
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.  
One for my master, one for my dame,  
One for the little boy who lives down the lane.  
Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?  
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.