Playing with Words

Children love to play, and when they play with words, and the smaller sounds in words, they are developing an early literacy skill called phonological awareness. Recognizing when words rhyme and hearing the beginning sounds of words are things that help kids learn to read later on.

Here's what you can do at home:

- Sing songs with your child every day. Songs break words into syllables and are a fun way to learn about word sounds. In most songs, each syllable in a word gets a different note.
- 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."
- Add actions, such as clapping or bouncing, as you sing a song or say a poem.
- Help your child learn the sounds animals make.
- Make up your own nonsense rhymes and silly songs.
- Catch your child's attention by repeating the sounds he likes to say. Then change the first letter to make a new silly word: "Baa-baa becomes la-la."
- Talk with your child throughout the day.
- Read and re-read stories your child enjoys.
- Say rhymes and sing songs in the language most comfortable for you.

Book of the Month

Hey, Diddle, Diddle, by Hannah Wood (Tiger Tales series)

Nursery rhymes are a simple and easy way to help your child build rhyming skills. Research suggests that children who know lots of nursery rhymes before they begin school tend to find more success with learning to read. You can find more books of nursery rhymes at your local library. Other books in the Tiger Tales series:

Good books to help your child begin to play with words...

Rhyming books
Nursery Rhyme books, such as Mother Goose
Songs that have been turned into books
Poetry books
Books with animal sounds
Books that have repeating words or sounds
Books that have rhythm
More fun with *Hey, Diddle, Diddle*

**Out and about:** Often young children have a word or sound that they say again and again just because it’s fun. Some toddlers love to make animal sounds such as *baa, meow,* or *woof.* Catch your toddler’s attention by repeating the sounds he likes to say. Then change the first letter to make a new silly word: *Ba-ba* becomes *la-la.*

**Music and movement:** Put some rhythm into the song or in nursery rhymes! Bounce, clap, tap, stomp, drum, jump, snap… Giving each part of the word a beat will help your young child learn to break words into syllables.

**Tech tip…** If you have access to a computer you can find websites with nursery rhymes, as well as tunes and activities to go along with them. Here are a few of our favorites:

- Denver Public Library’s podcasts of nursery rhymes & other stories: [http://podcast.denverlibrary.org](http://podcast.denverlibrary.org)
- Mother Goose Club- Rhymes, songs, videos, and activities: [www.mothergooseclub.com](http://www.mothergooseclub.com)
- KIDiddles- words and tunes to lots of favorite children’s songs: [www.kididdles.com/lyrics](http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics)

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**Sing Silly Songs**

**Row, Row, Row Your Boat**

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.

**Now make up new words to the song…**
Row, row, row your car…

**Or make up silly words…**
Tow, tow, tow my goat…

**Nonsense words…**
Bow, bow, bow my doat…

**Sing about where you are going or what you are doing…**
Wash, wash, wash my hands…
Walk, walk, walk to school…

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**What your library can do for you…**

Don’t have access to a computer? Most libraries do not require a library card in order to use the computers. Some even offer free computer classes.

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**Rhyme for Babies**

*Each time you say “fingers,” wiggle baby’s fingers; each time you say “toes,” wiggle baby’s toes.*

- Fingers and toes, fingers and toes.
  - Here are your fingers,
  - And here are your toes.
  - Wiggle your fingers,
  - Wiggle your toes.
  - Here are your fingers,
  - And here are your toes.
  - Wave with your fingers,
  - Wave with your toes.