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.

Featured Book

Farmyard Rhymes, by Claire Beaton

What can be better for young children than rhyming and animals? This collection of songs and nursery rhymes are all about animals that live on the farm. You may recognize some of your favorites, as well as learn some new rhymes. The illustrations are made of fabric, which gives a different texture to each picture. Claire Beaton has a series of rhyming books—

Bedtime Rhymes,
Nursery Rhymes,
and Action Rhymes

More Books that Teach Phonological Awareness . . .

Itsy Bitsy Spider; Bingo; Old MacDonald; Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, by Rosemary Wells

Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed, by Eileen Christelow

There’s a Wocket in My Pocket, by Dr. Seuss

Llama Llama Red Pajama, by Anna Dewdney

The Sounds Around Town, by Maria Carluccio
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 books of nursery rhymes at your local library.

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

More fun with Farmyard Rhymes…

Move and groove… Give your toddler a wooden spoon and a pot lid or box. Sing a song, such as Old McDonald Had a Farm, helping him or her tap one beat for each syllable. Old—Mac—Don—ald—had—a—farm. Try other songs, too!

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/
Mother Goose Club- Rhymes, songs, videos, and activities: www.mothergooseclub.com
KIDiddles- words and tunes to lots of favorite children’s songs: www.kididdles.com/lyrics

Animal noises… Making animal noises is a great way to teach the sounds that letters make—baa, cluck, neigh, etc.

Song to Sing with Your Child

Barnyard Song
(to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)

If you’re a chicken and you know it say, “cluck cluck.”
If you’re a chicken and you know it, then you really ought to show it.
If you’re a chicken and you know it say, “cluck cluck.”

Repeat with:
Pig: “oink, oink”
Cow: “moo, moo”
Sheep: “baa, baa”

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.

Books to Go from Your Library

Funding for this project is made possible by the Idaho Commission for Libraries’ Read to Me program, and the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under a provision of the Library Services and Technology Act.