

Especially for parents of toddlers!

Movin' and Groovin' Nursery Rhymes

Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Exploring the world of language while getting to move their bodies is exciting for most toddlers. Action rhymes—rhymes paired with body movements—are fun. They give toddlers opportunities to learn new words and phrases while matching them with physical movements.

What is the practice?

The chants and body movements of action rhymes promote the development of speech and listening skills. Young toddlers often engage in action rhymes with a parent or other children.



What does the practice look like?

Action rhymes are short rhymes—either sung or spoken—that are matched with body movement to tell a story. An example of an action rhyme is *Ring Around the Rosies*. Walking in a circle with big brother and sister and falling down at “We all fall down” is great fun. You can find action rhymes that help toddlers build word skills by searching the Web. A good term to search is **action rhymes**. To help you make up your own action rhymes, search with the term **rhyming words** for fun ideas.

How do you do the practice?

The practice guide *Fingerplays All the Way* offers some suggestions about how to introduce action rhymes to your toddler. Using action rhymes about topics of interest to your child is an important starting point. The following are a few examples of action rhymes your toddler might enjoy:

Little, Bigger, Biggest

A little ball, (Make a ball with finger and thumb.)
A bigger ball, (Make a ball with two hands.)
And a great big ball. (Make a ball with arms.)
Now help me count them.
One, Two, Three! (Repeat gestures for each size.)

Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, Merrily, Merrily, Merrily,
Life is but a dream.
(Sitting on the floor with your child, hold his or her hands and rock backward and forward.)

Stretching

When I stretch up, I feel so tall. (Reach high.)
When I bend down, I feel so small. (Bend over.)
Taller, Taller, Taller, Taller. (Reach up high.)
Smaller, Smaller, Smaller, Smaller.
(Get low on the floor.)
Into a tiny ball.

Ring Around the Rosies

Ring around the rosies.
A pocket full of posies. (Hold hands and go around in a circle for the first two lines.)
Ashes, ashes, we all fall down! (Fall to the ground.)

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your toddler participate more in action rhymes?
- Is your toddler smiling and laughing while doing the action rhyme?
- Does your toddler try to change or make up new action rhymes?

Take a look at more action rhymes for toddlers

Fun with Rhyming

Two-year-old Sadie always enjoys jumping and running around, so action rhymes are fun for her. She and her dad do the motions together and take turns being the leader. Dad starts with “Stand up tall” and they both stretch up high. “Get down small” and they drop to the floor in a ball. Then Sadie takes a turn and calls, “Run to the hall!” They both take off running to the hall. The back-and-forth directions continue with words rhyming with *ball*, like *call*, *hall*, *small*, *tall*, *fall*, *crawl*, and *wall*. Sadie loves playing the game and begins to make up nonsense words that rhyme.



Calming Action Rhymes

Sometimes going to bed isn't easy. Peter's dad has found that calming action rhymes help his 30-month-old toddler settle down. Dad makes up a rhyme for bed time. Dad says, “Time for bed, time for bed,” and Peter crawls onto the bed. “Fluff up your pillow,” and he pushes on his pillow. “Lay down your head,” and down goes the head. “Pull up the blanket,” he pulls up the cover. “Tuck in tight,” Dad makes sure the covers are up. “Close your eyes and sleep all night!” Dad knows Peter enjoys the rhymes, actions, and settling effect of the routine because he asks for it every night.

It's a Stretch!

Raza, a toddler with moderate motor impairment, loves to sing and dance to his favorite children's songs. When “Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” starts, Raza loves the rhymes and tries to touch the correct body parts. Big brother Sahil stands behind him and helps move Raza's arms to touch the right parts at the right time. Sometimes they both get lost going too fast, which makes them laugh. Sometimes Sahil tries to get Raza to do the motions wrong, and he cheers when Raza catches the mistake. They both sing the song, and Raza moves more easily as his muscles strengthen and stretch.

