



# Learning to Grow

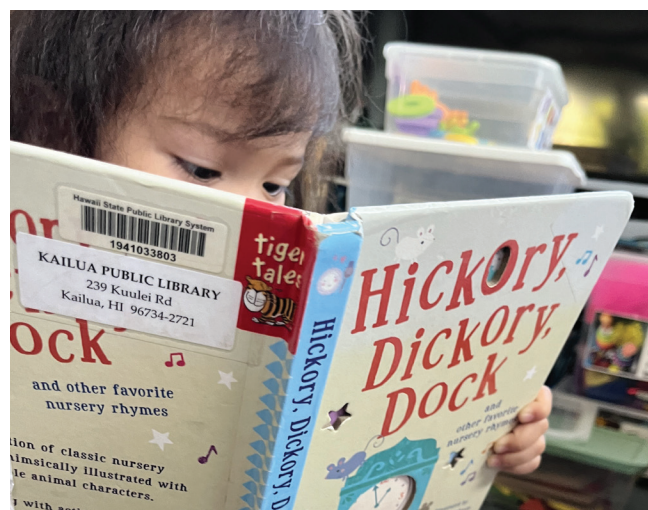
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## Hickory Dickory Dock: Nursery Rhymes Rock! (R.O.C.)

Nursery rhymes are short poems or chants that typically have rhyming words. Some of these include action rhymes, which are nursery rhymes with movement. You are probably familiar with at least a few of them, such as *Humpty Dumpty* and *Little Miss Muffet*. It turns out that nursery rhymes are incredibly powerful influencers in young children's development. Research has shown that when parents and caregivers sing and recite nursery rhymes to children, they gain strong foundational skills for learning – beginning in infancy.

Here are 3 of the many important benefits of nursery rhymes that make them *Rock (R.O.C.)!*

- ♥ **R – Reading Success** - The rhyme and rhythm of nursery rhymes helps young children process speech. It also trains their brain to pay attention to the individual sounds and syllables in words. This is called phonemic awareness, and recent studies have shown that phonemic awareness appears to be the best single predictor of a child's reading success.
- ♥ **O – Ordering/Story Sequencing** - Many nursery rhymes have a simple and clear beginning, middle and end (for example, *Little Miss Muffet* first sat and ate, then saw a spider, and last ran away). This teaches children that events happen in a sequence, and they begin to learn how to arrange information, language, and actions in the correct order.
- ♥ **C – Cognitive (Thinking) Skills** - Studies have shown that exposing young children to nursery rhymes stimulates and strengthens the neural pathways in their brain – improving overall cognitive functions. The simple, repetitive, predictable pattern of nursery rhymes increases children's memory, attention span, and



comprehension skills. Another benefit is that nursery rhymes expand children's imagination! In this newsletter, we'll expand on the important skills that children learn when they hear and recite nursery rhymes, and present helpful strategies for using nursery rhymes with each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

Infants can hear and respond to a voice in their earliest days, so it is important for parents and caregivers to talk and interact with their baby from birth. Furthermore, researchers at the University of Cambridge recently studied the brain activity of infants while they listened to nursery rhymes, and found that the rhythmic speech of nursery rhymes is effective in helping the infant brain process speech, and could be crucial in learning language. The researchers concluded, "Parents should talk and sing to their babies as much as possible or use infant-directed speech like nursery rhymes because it will make a difference to language outcome."

Here are a few tips for singing or reciting nursery rhymes with infants:

♥ **R - Reading Success** - Learn and memorize a few simple nursery rhymes (or write them on index cards and place them around your home) and recite them to your infant throughout the day— while doing pretty much anything —changing her diaper, going for a walk, playing, etc.



- ♥ **O - Ordering/Story Sequencing** - Recite nursery rhymes that have a simple sequence of events, such as *Itsy Bitsy Spider*. Reinforce the sequence by performing the motions/body movements in order while carrying your infant.
- ♥ **C - Cognitive (Thinking) Skills** - Repeat the same nursery rhymes over again. Choose rhymes with a simple, steady beat and lots of repetitive language, such as *BINGO*, and *Mary Had a Little Lamb*.

## Activity for Infants: *Hickory, Dickory, Dock*

*Adapted from Active Baby, Healthy Brain*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Sit on the floor and stretch your legs out. Hold your infant in your lap, facing you.
2. Recite the following nursery rhyme, while using the following movements:

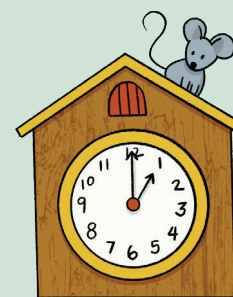
***Hickory, Dickory, Dock*** (bounce child on outstretched legs)

***The mouse ran up the clock*** (raise your knees so your child goes up)

***The clock struck one*** (give a slight bounce)

***The mouse ran down*** (lower your knees so your child goes down)

***Hickory, Dickory, Dock*** (bounce child on outstretched legs)



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

# Toddlers

Language explodes during the toddler years. You can support her language development by singing or reciting nursery rhymes and encouraging her to repeat and recall the words. Research has found that a toddler's ability to remember and recite nursery rhymes is a strong predictor of future reading success. In addition, our brain has an easier time learning and storing information that rhyme. This makes nursery rhymes an excellent way to support young children's development.

Here are a few tips for singing or reciting nursery rhymes with toddlers:

- ♥ **R - Reading Success** - While reciting nursery rhymes to your child, emphasize the rhyming words by saying them louder than the other words. For familiar nursery rhymes, pause before the rhyming words to have your child fill them in (e.g., you say, "One, two, buckle my \_\_\_" (child says "shoe"). You can also use props such as a drum or the bottom of a plastic bowl and a wooden spoon to beat to the rhythm of nursery rhymes.
- ♥ **O - Ordering/Story Sequencing** - Teach your toddler nursery rhymes with motions that emphasize the simple order of actions, such as 'fly away,' then 'come back,' as in *Two Little Mynah Birds*.
- ♥ **C - Cognitive (Thinking) Skills** - Relate the nursery rhymes to what is around her, pointing out objects around the house while singing. You can engage her further by using props or hand and body movements to act out nursery rhymes. For example, for *Jack be Nimble*, use the child's name instead of *Jack*, and say for example, "*(Leah) be nimble, (Leah) be quick, (Leah) jump over the candle stick!*" (while she jumps over an unlit candle lying on the ground).



## Activity for Toddlers: *Two Little Mynah Birds*

*Adapted from the original nursery rhyme Two Little Blackbirds*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Face your toddler and recite the nursery rhyme, while using the suggested movements:
  - Two little mynah birds sitting on a hill*** (show two index fingers in front of you, pointed upward)
  - One named Jack*** (move one hand up and down)
  - The other named Jill*** (move the other hand up and down)
  - Fly away Jack*** (move one hand behind your back)
  - Fly away Jill*** (move the other hand behind your back)
  - Come back Jack*** (return the first hand to the front)
  - Come back Jill*** (return the other hand to the front)
2. Variation: Make two mynah bird stick puppets to use as props, using craft sticks. Glue a drawing or picture of a mynah bird on each stick.



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



# Preschoolers

When your preschooler hears a story, listening comprehension allows her to understand, remember, and talk about it. Research has shown that listening comprehension lays the foundation for future reading and school success. Nursery rhymes are valuable for increasing a child's listening comprehension as many are essentially short stories, with a clear beginning, middle and end. Nursery rhymes also help children create mental pictures (like a cow jumping over a moon). This is powerful for building listening comprehension and expanding their imagination.

Here are a few tips for singing or reciting nursery rhymes with preschoolers:

- ♥ **R - Reading Success** - Change up the rhyming words when reciting familiar nursery rhymes to see if your child notices. (For example, say, *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great ball* (instead of fall). You can even give your child opportunities to make up rhyming words (even nonsense ones) when reciting nursery rhymes.
- ♥ **O - Ordering/Story Sequencing** - Use pictures of objects in a nursery rhyme and ask your



child, "What happened first...next...and last?" Encourage your child to place the pictures in the correct order. You can also use storytelling stones to have her retell the nursery rhymes.

- ♥ **C - Cognitive (Thinking) Skills** - Provide her with props to act out nursery rhymes (such as a tuffet (a low seat such as a pillow or stool), a bowl and spoon, and a stuffed spider – to act out *Little Miss Muffet*.) Flannel pieces and puppets also work great. You can also recite nursery rhymes in other languages or from other cultures, or replace some words with words from another language.

## Activity for Preschoolers: *Hey Diddle Diddle* Storytelling Stones

### What You Need:

- River rocks or smooth flat stones
- Mod Podge (a mixture of glue and water works too if you don't have Mod Podge)
- Paint brush
- Pictures (the size of the stones) to go along with the nursery rhyme (e.g., a cat and a fiddle, a cow jumping over a moon, a dog laughing, etc.) You can usually find and print them from the internet



### What to Do:

1. Glue each picture to a stone using the Mod Podge (or watered glue).
2. Brush Mod Podge over the pictures to the edge of the stones so it creates a smooth shiny surface. Let it completely dry.
3. Have your child use the story stones by lining them up in order to retell *Hey Diddle Diddle*.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles (e.g. neck, arms, and legs)
- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles (e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes)

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Feel important and good about herself
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills and her attention span
- ♥ Develop early reading skills and a love of reading

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop early math skills like ordering
- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

### Muffin Man\* Mini Blueberry Muffins

#### Ingredients:

1/3 cup butter, softened  
1/2 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
2 cups flour

3 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. salt  
2/3 cup milk  
1 cup frozen blueberries



#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. As you make this recipe with your child, sing the nursery rhyme, *Do You Know the Muffin Man?*
3. Together with your child, cream together the butter and sugar in a large mixing bowl.
4. Lightly beat the eggs and add it to the creamed butter and sugar mixture.
5. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
6. Add the flour mixture to the mixing bowl a little at a time, alternating with the milk.
7. Add the blueberries to the bowl and gently fold to combine.
8. Fill the muffin cups 2/3 full with the batter.
9. Bake for 15 minutes or until the muffin tops are golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.



## Resources

### *Rhymers are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes*

<https://www.noblesvilleschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=4380&dataid=4576&FileName=2%20Rhymers%20are%20Readers-Why%20Important.pdf>

In this article, the author presents reasons why nursery rhymes are important to young children in four developmental areas – language development, cognitive development, physical development and social/emotional development.

### *The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays and Chants*

by Jackie Silber and Pam Schille

This book contains over 700 selections that help young children build a strong foundation for reading success, listening skills and imagination. It is available at the Hawai'i State Public Library.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

*Hickory Dickory Dock and Other Favorite Nursery Rhymes* illustrated by Genine Delahaye

Children will delight in this book of classic nursery rhymes. Sing along with action rhymes like Pat-a-Cake and I'm a Little Teapot.

*Eric Carle's Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and Other Nursery Rhymes* by Eric Carle

This sturdy lift-the-flap book of 5 classic nursery rhymes is perfect for little hands.

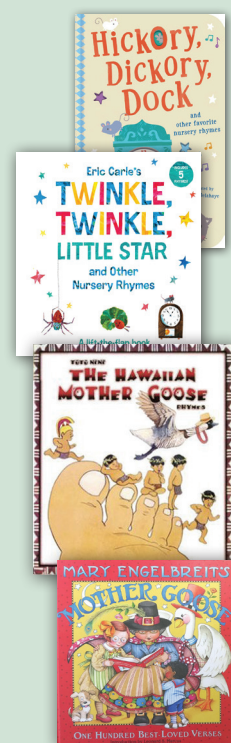
### Preschoolers

*The Hawaiian Mother Goose Rhymes* by Debra Ryll

This book features classic nursery rhymes with a local twist. Little Miss Muffet who sat on a tuffet becomes Little Miss Aku who sat on a pohaku (rock).

*Mary Engelbreit's Mother Goose: One Hundred Best Loved Verses* by Mary Engelbreit

This hardcover treasury includes everyone's favorite time-honored characters—Little Bo-Peep, Humpty Dumpty, Old King Cole, Jack and Jill, and many, many more.



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