

Why Rhyming Works for Children

The answer to the question, *Why Rhyme*, is simple, rhyming is fun! If we can see our children having fun and learning at the same time, it is a win-win situation. What I really want to convey is exactly how rhyming can help set the foundation for reading success in your child's future.

Rhyming is defined as two or more words corresponding in sound. Multiple research studies have concluded there is a correlation between rhyming and reading. Unfortunately for our young, there has been a great push for children to read before they are ready. When they are pushed, they miss the necessary skills taught at an early age, the preschool years. One of the critical steps of pre-reading is the ability to rhyme. An awareness of rhyme as early as preschool can be an indicator to a child's reading abilities at a later stage.

Listening and speaking are a young child's first literary skills. These are the skills required in reciting nursery rhymes. Reading and writing are the next step in the reading process, generally found among the early elementary age group. In order to be a good writer a child first needs the vocabulary obtained in their preschool years. To be a good reader they will need to discriminate among sounds and patterns, another preschool achievement. Rhyming with our young children, can help to work through these steps and onward to successful reading skills.

So just how does rhyming aid in the reading process? A child may be able to join rhyming games as early as 3. Through reciting and memorizing nursery rhymes or songs children learn about rhythm. Children younger than three can also benefit by listening and reacting to the rhythm of the rhymes being heard. When children clap, stomp, or dance to rhymes such as *The Itsy-Bitsy Spider*, *the Wheels on the Bus*, or *Teddy Bear Teddy Bear Turn Around*, they are reacting to the rhythm of the rhyme.

Being read nursery rhymes or watching nursery rhyme videos, requires a skill we keep with us our entire lives, listening! Listening becomes less of a problem for a young child when they are actively engaged. It is obvious to me that my 18-month granddaughter must be singing *Itsy Bitsy Spider* at daycare. Each time I sing the rhyme to her, she lights up and is already performing some of the movements. She is reacting to the rhythm through her movements. This is delightful to see.

At age four most children are now beginning to discriminate between sounds. They are understanding that the written word has a meaning. Through sight and hearing, they are observing that words have common sounds and letters. Through rhyming they are breaking the words down into smaller segments and listening for the re-occurring patterns. This leads to observing word families and an expansion of their vocabulary. Probably one of the most known rhyming authors is Dr. Seuss and *the Cat and the Hat*. Through the reading of these books a child not only hears the similarities, but they can see them in the written word.

As you read a rhyming book aloud, your child will be able to begin predicting the rhyming word that comes next. By reading the text and leaving off a word, the child can verbally finish the rhyme. Non-sensical words are totally permitted at this stage, children love to create silly rhyming words. All the while you are building your child's confidence and ability to read by recognizing similarities in sounds.

Nursery rhymes are full of opportunities for rhyming, enhancing vocabulary and training the ear to sounds. Whether you recite rhymes in the car or in the bath, and you will be amazed by the benefits your young child will gain.

Besides nursery rhymes, there are numerous rhyming books on the market. They are fun and provide entertainment for all ages. I never grow tired of reading *Green Eggs and Ham* or my new favorite, *Rhyming Dust Bunnies!*

*See activity section for suggested rhyming games