

# Importance of songs and rhymes in the Early Years

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Not only is it fun but it is also a great way to get to know each other. Children's communication skills develop at different rates but there are many things parents can do to help their child develop the skills to read, write and communicate effectively.

Sing to your child. A child loves nothing more than the sound of their parents' voice. Don't worry about being the best singer. Your baby will be soothed and calmed by your voice.

They love changes in variation and vocal tone. This keeps it exciting for them and helps them to learn about the natural sounds of a language. If you forget the words, make up your own variations. What's most important is the time you and your child spend singing together. Giving children a sense of joy and excitement about language will naturally help to boost their desire to read and write.

Rhymes also help us to learn to play with words. They tune our ears to all the sounds in the word. By hearing different sounds we learn how sounds combine and blend together to form a word.

If we can learn the sounds and hear the different sounds that make up a word then we can learn how to play with them, how to change them and most importantly, we can learn to recognise what sounds can be paired with other sounds. A child who knows four nursery rhymes by the time they're four will naturally be a better reader at eight years old.

When saying nursery rhymes, we tend to speak more slowly and clearly. This is great because it means that children have a chance to catch the words and the way they're formed. If you can, ask your child to face you. The eye contact will help your child develop their non-verbal communication skills.

Children love imitating so you may notice your child making faces trying to copy you and the way your lips form words. Speak slowly and clearly and give your child a chance to join in too.

Songs and rhymes have a hugely positive impact on a child's language and literacy development. Children love rhyme, rhythm and repetition. These three things found in songs and rhymes can naturally help to boost a child's language and literacy skills.

Children's language skills are developing long before they're able to verbalise actual words. Babies and children are paying attention to adults as they speak. They're listening to language around them and keeping track of sounds and words. They chat back through a variety of cooing and babbling noises.

There are many benefits to starting early with songs and rhymes. Studies have shown that children who enjoy music, singing and rhyming on a regular basis tend to learn to speak more easily. They have more words to express themselves. They are more confident and creative. Reading and spelling are easier to learn at school.

Music and rhymes also help us learn to hear a steady beat. Research has shown that children who can keep a steady beat are naturally better readers. So while you're singing and rhyming be sure to clap along. Give children a chance to feel the beat through tapping, clapping and marching.

The most important reason to sing and rhyme with a child? It gives them a love of language. And this love of language, of books, of singing and rhyming will form a solid foundation that will help children value learning.

So take some time every day to sing and rhyme with your child. Make up silly little songs and rhymes as you go along. Use active songs and rhymes during playtime. At bedtime, try a lullaby.

You can work them into your day. Play games on the move like 'I-spy'. Make up nonsense words. Have fun playing with language. Talk, sing and read with your child. The benefits will stick with them forever.