

Encouraging Speech with Songs, Rhymes & Puppets

Children LOVE music. How can music help children learn language? Music is especially powerful for connecting and communicating. It can be incorporated throughout the day and help to bring language to life for your little learner. The good news is children will enjoy the music and singing no matter what skills you have or don't have.

The music you choose doesn't have to be *just* children's songs. Classical music is great to have in the background as you and your child play, while you're cooking dinner, or during nap time. You can also play popular music...with child-friendly lyrics of course. Remember, you're trying to help them learn language, so play songs you're not afraid they'll suddenly repeat out in public one day.

While children love listening to music, they also enjoy *making* music. Instruments can be bought or just as easily made or improvised at home. Paper towel or toilet paper rolls with dried rice and beans, pots and pans, tupperware containers of different sizes turned over, coins in a bag, and the list goes on!



marching instead.

Make sure to include movement with the songs and rhymes as well. This can be a part of your everyday routine. Anything that you normally do with children can always be put into song or turned into a rhyme. If you're going into the kitchen together to get a snack or something to drink, try hopping or skipping or

You might change the words into the "Hi, Ho" song of the seven dwarfs while marching to get a drink.

*Hi, ho! Hi, ho! It's off to the fridge we go!
We play all day and get thirsty,
Hi, ho! Hi, ho! Hi, ho...*

or maybe a little Wizard of Oz jingle while going to eat a meal...

*We're off to go to the kitchen
The wonderful kitchen of mum!
Because, because, because, because, BECAUSE
Just think of the wonderful food she's made!*

You can also teach about taking turns! It's helpful for children to learn that they don't just take turns when playing with their toys, but also when communicating. With music, you can get an interaction going and keep it going. It takes a little time, but once your child has heard a song enough times, they'll begin playing a part in completing the rhymes and initiating the singing. Over time, you can pause before finishing a line of a song or rhyme and wait for children to finish (or make the hand motions for the next part).

To help children take turns and also learn new words, remember these 4 things:

1. **Less is more.** Shorter songs with familiar words are far better than longer songs with words your child might have trouble understanding. Also, don't hesitate to adjust words in songs so that children better understand a song (for an example, see song #3 below).
2. **Emphasize important words.** Sing them louder or slower or pause before singing the important word. "Twinkle, twinkle little....**staaaar**."
3. **Slow and steady.** Sing at a pace that will allow children to pick up on the words in the song.
4. **Action!** There's a reason so many children's songs naturally give way to movement. These visual representations help the child learn what a word means, invite the child to interact, and give the child a way to request a song when he/she cannot yet communicate verbally.

In addition to tip #4, you can also provide choice cards for songs. By holding up 2 pictures that each represent a song and reciting the name of the song as you hold up the corresponding picture, you can let your child choose which song (s)he wants to sing.

1. "Humpty Dumpty"

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. (*Sit your child up on your knees.*)

Humpty Dumpty had a great (*Pause and wait..*) ... fall!

(*Bring your knees down quickly.*)

All the king's horses and all the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again.

2. "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"

(*Sit across from your child and join both hands, then rock back and forth as you sing the song.*)

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.

3. "Head and Tummy" (a slight variation of Head and Shoulders)

Head and tummy
Knees and toes, knees and toes
Head and tummy
Knees and toes, knees and toes
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose.
Head and tummy
Knees and toes, knees and toes!

Point to the parts of the body as you sing the words.

4. "This Is the Way We Wash Our Face"

(Sing to the tune of "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the way we wash our face, wash our face, wash our face.
(Sing as you're washing your child's face)
This is the way we wash our face, so early in the morning
(or "before we go to bed")

You can change the words to this tune depending on the activity that you're doing (...brush your teeth, ...put on shoes, ...pick up toys, etc.)

5. "If You're Happy and You Know It"

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. *(clap, clap)*
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. *(clap, clap)*
If you're happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. *(clap, clap)*

Other verses:

...stomp your feet (stomp, stomp)
...spin in a circle (turn in place)
...shout "hooray!" (throw one or both hands in the air)
... do all 4! (do all the movements consecutively)

6. "Itsy, Bitsy Spider"

The itsy, bitsy spider climbed up the water spout.

(Make your fingers like a spider crawling up higher and higher)

Down came the rain and washed the spider out.

(Pull your hands apart and wiggle your fingers and you bring your hands down like rain falling)

Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.

(Put arms in a circle above your head to show the sun)

And the itsy, bitsy spider climbed up the spout again.

(Make your fingers like a spider crawling up higher and higher again)

7. "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"

Old MacDonald had a farm

Ee-eye, ee-eye, oh!

And on his farm he had a **sheep**

Ee-eye, ee-eye, oh!

With a baa, baa here

And a baa, baa there

Here a baa, there a baa

Everywhere a baa, baa

Old MacDonald had a farm

Ee-eye, ee-eye, oh!

Repeat with any other animals you choose. I recommend using puppets for this song. I use these finger puppets from IKEA. You could also make an Old MacDonald refrigerator magnet game.

8. "Sleeping Bunnies"

(Child and parent like on floor with eyes closed, or just the child lies down with parent close by)

See the sleeping bunnies

Sleeping till it's noon

Come and help us wake them

With this happy tune.

Oh, so still. Are they ill?

(Pause and wait)

Wake up, little bunnies and hop, hop, hop. *(Jump up and hop)*

Wake up, little bunnies and hop, hop, hop.

Wake up, little bunnies and stop, stop, stop. (*Stop jumping*)

9. "Five Green and Speckled Frogs"

Five green and speckled frogs
Sitting on a speckled log (*sit at a designated spot*)
Eating some most delicious bugs... "Yum, yum!" (*rub belly*)
One jumped into the pool (*jump into an imaginary pool*)
Where it was nice and cool
Now there are four green, speckled frogs... "Ribbit, ribbit!"

(*repeat for 4, 3, 2, 1*)

Another option is using this story tube to get children involved in the song.

10. "The Wheels on the Bus"

The wheels on the bus go round and round, (*roll one fist around the other*)
Round and round, round and round.
The wheels on the bus go round and round,
All through the town.

Verses:

The people on the bus go up and down...(*sit your child on your knees and bump him/her up and down*)

The door on the bus goes open and shut... (*start with palms of hands together and then open and shut them*)

The horn on the bus goes "Beep beep beep!" (*Pretend you're honking a horn*)

The babies on the bus go "Wah, wah, wah!" (*Pretend to cry*)

The mommies on the bus go "Sh, sh, sh!" (*Put your finger to your lips*)

The wipers on the bus go "Swish, swish, swish!" (*make your hands go side to side like windshield wipers*)