

# NURSERY RHYMES ARE A LITERACY INTERVENTION. HERE'S THE EVIDENCE.

Simple, zero-cost, and backed by research.  
**Ask families about rhyming at every well visit.**

## THE DATA

Children who know 8 nursery rhymes by age 4 are typically among the best readers in their class by age 8. (The "Rule of Eight")

Knowledge of nursery rhymes at age 3 is a significant predictor of reading and spelling success three years later – independent of social background and IQ.

Rhyming performance is one of the earliest measurable indicators of phonological awareness, the foundational skill for reading acquisition.

## WHY IT MATTERS CLINICALLY

Nursery rhymes build phonological awareness by exposing children to the sound structure of language: vowel and consonant sounds, rhythm, pitch, and volume. This directly supports the neural pathways involved in decoding and early literacy.

### Rhymes also develop:

- Joint attention and turn-taking (early communication precursors)
- Receptive and expressive language through pause-and-fill techniques
- Memory and recall through repetitive pattern exposure
- Parent-child bonding, which supports social-emotional development

## TALKING POINT FOR FAMILIES

**"By the time your child is four, knowing eight nursery rhymes by heart puts them on track to be one of the strongest readers in their class."**

## THE GAP YOU CAN CLOSE

Only 36% of parents regularly use nursery rhymes with their children

25% have never sung one

20% of parents under 24 don't believe nursery rhymes are educational

33% consider them "old-fashioned"

## SIMPLE TECHNIQUES TO SHARE WITH PARENTS

Pause before the last word in a rhyme and let the child fill it in

Use exaggerated gestures and facial expressions

Offer choices: "Should we clap hands or stomp feet?"

Start in infancy. Exposure in utero can support post-birth calming



# YOU ALREADY KNOW THE WORDS. THAT'S THE POINT.

**Nursery rhymes** are one of the most powerful things you can do for your child's brain. You can do it right now, in the grocery store, at bedtime, anywhere.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SING TO YOUR CHILD?

🧠 Their brain develops faster. Kids who know 8 nursery rhymes by age 4 are usually among the best readers in their class by age 8. Eight songs. That's it.

📖 They learn to read more easily. Rhymes teach children how sounds fit together to make words. This is the single most important skill for learning to read.

💬 They start talking sooner. Hearing new words in songs helps children build vocabulary and may encourage them to start speaking earlier.

😴 They sleep better. Lullabies are scientifically shown to calm babies and support healthy sleep. A consistent bedtime rhyme becomes a signal that rest is safe and coming.

🤝 You bond more deeply. The physical touch, eye contact, and repetition in nursery rhymes build the secure attachment your child carries into every relationship they'll have.

## TRY THIS TODAY

Sing any nursery rhyme you know. When you get close to the end of a line, pause and wait. Let your child fill in the word or make a gesture. That moment of waiting is doing more for their brain than you think. Don't worry about being in tune. The research doesn't care if you can sing.

## THE GOAL: 8 RHYMES BY AGE 4

Twinkle Twinkle. Itsy Bitsy Spider. Wheels on the Bus.  
You're already closer than you think.



**UNITED WAY**  
Rock River Valley

