

There are a number of steps that parents can take to help prepare their young children to become readers and to support the reading habit once they are in school. These include:



Feed your child a diet of rich language experiences throughout the day. Talk with your infants and young children frequently in short, simple sentences. Tell stories, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes or poems, and describe the world around them to expose them to words. Name things. Make connections.



Try to read aloud to your children for 30 minutes daily beginning when they are infants. Ask caring adults to be your children's daily reader when you are unavailable.



Seek out child care providers who spend time talking with and reading to your child, who make trips to the library, and who designate a special reading area for children.



Limit the amount and kind of screen time for your child. Seek out educational television or videos that you can watch and discuss with your children.



Visit the public library often to spark your child's interest in books. Help your children obtain their own library cards and pick out their own books.



Set up a special place for reading and writing in your home. A well-lit reading corner filled with lots of good books can become a child's favorite place. Keep writing materials such as crayons, washable markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper in a place where children can reach them.



You are your child's greatest role model. Demonstrate your own love of reading by spending quiet time in which your child observes you reading to yourself. Show your child how reading and writing help you get things done every day—work, cooking, driving, or completing tasks in your home.




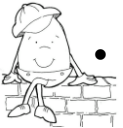



Consider giving books or magazines to children as presents or as a recognition of special achievements. Special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays, can be the perfect opportunity to give a child a new book.



Connect your children with their grandparents and great-grandparents. Encourage them to read books together, talk about growing up, tell stories, and sing songs from their generation.

Why Children Still Need the Delightful Language of Mother Goose

- Research shows that **children who have memorized nursery rhymes become better readers** because they develop an early sensitivity to the sounds of language. (See Marie Clay article.)
- Nursery rhymes are short and **full of alliteration and rhymes**. Children can quickly internalize the language and make them their own. These memorized rhymes are ideal vehicles for playing with language and developing **phonemic awareness**.
- Children **delight in the visual images** and strong rhythmic character of nursery rhymes. Visual imagery and **the rhythms of sound have a powerful effect on cognition**.
- Many **authors** of children's books **assume knowledge of nursery rhymes** and fairy tales. (See *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown and *Each Peach, Pear, Plum* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg.) **The Common Core State Standards include memorizing rhymes.**
- Memorizing nursery rhymes effortlessly **plants the grammatical structure** (or syntax) of language in the child's long-term memory. This **accelerates both language and literacy development**. 
- Nursery rhymes invite movement and dramatic interpretation, allowing children to **personalize meaning and build language concepts and vocabulary**. This is especially vital for children acquiring English as a second language.
-  **Every culture** has its own “nursery rhymes” or “out-loud culture.” See *Tortillas Para Mama*.
- Reading rhymes that children have first memorized supports them in self-concepting or role-playing themselves as successful readers. Repeated experiences with **“magical memory reading” develop fluency**, teach concepts about print and lay the foundation for “guided reading” instruction. (See article on *Magical Guided Reading*.)
- Nursery rhymes feature consistent decodable words (rimes) **conducive to explicit phonics instruction** within a meaningful context; they also reinforce high-frequency words.
- **“Parents as partners”** can engage their children in memorizing nursery rhymes. 
- Many nursery rhymes have **survived since the time of Shakespeare**. They have been polished by children into a form that is almost indestructible.
- When children memorize, recite and perform nursery rhymes they are **developing listening and speaking skills** in a joyful, non-threatening context.
- Active, imaginative teaching with nursery rhymes **takes advantage of how the brain learns best** – it is meaningful, memorable, and multisensory.
- Pre-school and kindergarten children can adapt nursery rhymes and **use the patterns** to make their own individual books or contribute **innovations for group books**. See examples in *Making Class Books in Kindergarten*. Children love being authors and illustrators.
- Nursery rhymes are **basic cultural literacy** – they are gifts of language that all children deserve to own. Common Core Standards emphasize the importance of learning rhymes.  

Download a set of 16 rhymes at this address: www.nellieedge.com/freepoetry_sept2.htm