

CORE SKILL: COMMUNICATE

Sound and Rhyme Awareness



What You Need to Know

Toddlers are fascinated by the **sound** of language. Songs, poems, rhymes, silly sentences, and rhythmic and repeating phrases can capture their attention, inspire them to move their bodies, and encourage their active participation in singing or following along. It's not just fun to infuse the toddler classroom with this sound-oriented language; it's important for their literacy development.

Things to Consider

Toddlers may not fully understand what it means for a word to rhyme with another word. In fact, as you infuse talk about rhyme into the classroom, you may see children trying to “rhyme” and often choosing words with little relation, or choosing words that are linked in meaning but not sound. Encourage their attempts and provide additional examples, drawing their focus to sounds and endings of words in fun ways. Remember, the big idea for toddlers is to help them notice the *sound structure* of words as something different than *what a word means*. The ability to think about the sound structure of words – and to be able to analyze and manipulate various sound parts – is rooted in this basic understanding, which will grow across the preschool years.

Development of Sound and Rhyme Awareness

| Between 9 and 18 months, children may: | Between 18 and 36 months, children may: |
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| Say a few words of familiar rhymes in stories or songs. | Say or repeat familiar rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs. |

Setting the Stage

Activities and materials that support the development of vocabulary:

- ◆ Select books that will expose children to rhymes and rhythmic and/or repeat text. Read these books often, providing children an opportunity to hear rhyming text on a regular basis and learn the songs and poems they most enjoy.
- ◆ Play music with obvious rhyme and repeat phrases as part of the daily routine.
- ◆ Teach poems or songs with fingerplays. Set time aside to actively teach children songs and poems with specific movements. Adding movement to songs and poems engages young children and also provides a concrete way for them to reflect an awareness of various sound units (e.g., words within sentences) and rhythm patterns.
- ◆ Make up silly rhymes as part of transition routines. This is a great time to expose children to rhymes in a fun way and use children's natural interest in rhymes as a way to support classroom functioning.



Intentional Teaching Practices to Build Sound and Rhyme Awareness

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| OBSERVE | <p>OBSERVE</p> <p>Observe children’s interest in rhyme. Consider how rhymes and songs capture their attention, their interest in repeating rhymes or rhyme phrases, and the ways in which they try to create silly rhymes themselves (even if incorrect). Notice their language as they talk about poems, songs, or silly sentences. Do they talk about how “words sound” or use the words “rhyme” or “sound the same” when they are discussing rhymes, songs, poems, or silly sentences?</p> |
| FOCUS | <p>Stress the Rime Endings of Rhyming Words</p> <p>As you present rhymes or rhyming text, use exaggerated stress and silly voices to emphasize rhyming words within sentences and draw attention to the rime ending of rhyming words (e.g., <i>c-at</i>, <i>b-at</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Morning Circle: “Hickory, dickory <i>dock!</i> The mouse ran up the <i>clock!</i>” ◆ Transitions: “We are ready to start our <i>day!</i> First we will listen and then we will <i>play!</i>” ◆ Reading Time: “Silly Sally went to <i>town</i>, walking backwards and upside <i>down!</i>” |
| SCAFFOLD I | <p>Say Rhyming Words, Song Refrains, or Rhythmic or Repeated Text Together</p> <p>When teaching rhymes or songs, present a line and then ask children to join you as you repeat the words/phrase a second time. Alternatively, pausing before rhyming words in very well-known songs can also encourage toddlers to say the words with you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Morning Circle: ““The itsy-bitsy spider went up the water... (<i>pause</i>) Say it with me, <i>spout!</i> Down came the rain and washed the spider... (<i>pause</i>) <i>out!</i>” Once encouraged, children may join you in saying the whole song, and that is okay! ◆ Transitions: “It’s time to go. Let’s say our goodbye poem together (<i>with gestures</i>). ‘Open, shut them, open, shut them, raise your hands up <i>high</i>. Open, shut them, open, shut them, time to wave <i>goodbye!</i>” ◆ In Small Group: “We are going to learn a new song. ‘Twinkle, twinkle little star (<i>gesturing by opening and shutting hands on each word</i>). How I wonder what you are (<i>for whole sentence have hands open to the side in a questioning gesture</i>)? Let’s do this together!” |
| SCAFFOLD II | <p>Comment on Words That Sound Similar or Rhyme</p> <p>Explicitly labeling and defining rhyming words within songs, poems, or text reinforces the concept and draws children’s focus to the sound of the language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reading Time: ““Chicka chicka <i>boom boom</i>. Will there be enough <i>room?</i>’ <i>Boom</i> and <i>room</i> rhyme! They sound the same at the end.” ◆ Morning Circle, or after transition song: “There is something special in the song we just sang. Listen! ‘We are ready to start our <i>day!</i> First we will listen and then we will <i>play!</i>’ The words <i>day</i> and <i>play</i> rhyme! Our song has rhyming words that sound the same at the end. When I say it next time, you can notice the rhyming words!” |
| KEEP IT GOING | <p>Consider what you learned from observing children on Monday as well as their reaction to your Focus and Scaffolds. Find ways to build the activities in the Setting the Stage into your regular routines.</p> |