

## Counting, clapping, tapping: Fingerplays for young children

Fingerplays and rhymes are great for engaging young children. Here are some benefits:

- teaching simple math,
- enhancing small and large motor coordination,
- building listening skills and appropriate participation,
- offering valuable prereading skills such as rhythm, rhyme, sequencing and prediction.

The fingerplays I teach may differ from how you know them, or you may change them as you try them with children. This is totally fine! I often adapt fingerplays and stories, using names of the children in front of me, or adding hand motions to give children a chance to cross the midline of the body (a great brain exercise, training the right and left sides to work together).

## Child development refresher

Age 0-2: Children enjoy peekaboo, patty cake, nursery rhymes, fingerplays. Use lots of rhyme and rhythm.

Age 2-3: Still use fingerplays, rhyme and rhythm, lots of repetition. Simple, simple stories, 5 minutes or less. When they're done listening, they're done.

Age 4-5: Starting to differentiate from others, to understand that others have feelings. Continue with repetition, rhyme, rhythm. Go a little longer. Silliness works well with these kids. Stories about families.

Age 6-7: More aware of others, of emotions, understand morality. Better at predicting where the story goes.

## A few fingerplays

### Fee, fi, fo, fum

Fee, fi, fo, fum,  
Here are my fingers,  
Here is my thumb.  
Fee, fi, fo, fum,  
Goodnight, fingers, (fold fingers into fist)  
Goodnight, thumb. (tuck thumb in)

### Five Bananas

Five bananas on a banana tree,  
Three for you and two for me.  
Come let us eat them down by the sea.  
Five bananas on a banana tree.  
Four bananas on a banana tree,  
Two for you and two for me.

Come let us eat them, down by the sea.  
Four bananas on a banana tree.  
(*And so on...*)

### Late Last Night

Five nights ago, when we were all in bed (head on hands as if asleep)  
Old Mrs. Leary lit a lantern in the shed (snap fingers)  
And when the cow kicked it over (kick)  
She winked her eye and said (wink)  
"It'll be a hot time in the old town tonight!"  
Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!  
*repeat with "four nights ago," etc. down to last verse:*  
"Late last night, when we were all in bed..." etc.  
"Water!"

### Little clapping mouse

*\* means clap*  
Behind the tree \* \*  
And under the house \* \*  
There lived a teeny \* \*  
Tiny mouse \* \*  
She loved to sing \* \*  
She loved to tap \* \*  
But most of all \* \*  
She loved to clap \* \*  
She clapped all night \* \*  
She clapped all day \* \*  
She clapped to frighten \* \*  
The cat away \* \* \* \* \* (lots of claps)

### Ten Fat Sausages

Ten fat sausages, sizzling in a pan,  
Ten fat sausages, sizzling in a pan.  
One went POP!  
And another went BAM!  
So there were eight fat sausages, sizzling in a pan.  
Eight fat sausages, sizzling in a pan...  
*Continue diminishing by 2, until you get to*  
No fat sausages, sizzling in a pan.

### Wind the bobbin up

Wind the bobbin up, Wind the bobbin up,  
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap.

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CONNECT. REFLECT. ENJOY.

Wind it back again, Wind it back again,  
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap.  
Point to the ceiling, Point to the floor,  
Point to the window, Point to the door.  
Clap your hands together, 1, 2, 3  
Put your hands upon on your knees.

## **Bazooka Bubble Gum**

*This one is good for teaching kids about money.*

My mom gave me a penny, She said to buy a henny,  
I did not buy a henny, Instead I bought some  
(clap) bubble gum, Bazooka-zooka bubble gum, Bazooka-zooka bubble gum (hands together,  
“swimming” top to bottom)  
My mom gave me a nickel, She said to buy a pickle, Etc.  
My mom gave me a dime, She said to buy a lime, Etc.  
My mom gave me a quarter, She said to pay the porter, Etc.  
My mom gave me a dollar, She said to buy a collar, Etc.  
My mom gave me a five, She said to stay alive, Etc.  
(I do a little choking sound at the end—totally optional)

## **Five little men in a flying saucer**

Five little men in a flying saucer  
Flew down to earth one day.  
They looked left and right  
And they didn't like the sight  
So one man flew away

## **Bubble, bubble pop**

One little red fish,  
Swimming in the water,  
Swimming in the water,  
Swimming in the water.  
One little red fish  
Swimming in the water,  
Bubble, bubble, bubble, bubble...POP!

## **Two Little Blackbirds**

*As with most of these, you can make up your own verses once you've done the basic ones.*

Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill (Place hands on shoulders)  
One named Jack and one named Jill  
Fly away Jack, fly away Jill (Hands fly into air)  
Come back Jack, come back Jill (Return hands to shoulders)

# PRISCILLA HOWE, STORYTELLER

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Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill  
one named Jack and one named Jill.

Two little blackbirds flying in the sky.  
One named Low and one named High...

Two little blackbirds sitting on a pole.  
One named Fast and one named Slow...

## Head and Shoulders

Head and shoulders, baby, one two three (sing twice, touching head and shoulders)  
Knees and ankles, baby, one, two, three (go on from here with other body parts)  
Throw the ball, baby, one, two three (mime throwing a ball), etc.  
add verses and motions as needed

## One, two, three, four, someone's at the kitchen door

1, 2, 3, 4 \_\_\_\_\_'s at the kitchen door. (insert child's name) 5, 6, 7, 8 eating \_\_\_\_\_ off a plate.  
(insert child's favorite food and make eating noises)

## Here is the beehive

Here is the beehive but where are the bees? Hidden away where nobody sees. Watch and you'll see them come out of the hive 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... They're alive! Buzzzzzzz

## Five Little Ducks

Five little ducks went out to play.  
Over the hills and far away.  
Mother duck called quack, quack, quack.  
But only four little ducks came back  
Four little ducks . . .  
Three little ducks . . .  
Two little ducks . . .  
One little duck . . .  
Sad mother duck went out one day. . .  
And all of the 5 little ducks came back

## There were five in the bed

There were five in the bed  
And the little one said, "Roll over! Roll over!"  
So they all rolled over and one fell out Four...Three...Two...etc.  
There was one in the bed  
And the little one said, "At last!"

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CONNECT. REFLECT. ENJOY.

## Sources for more

Think back to your own childhood—do you remember silly little songs and fingerplays from your early years or from camp? I recommend looking at old play-party game books in the library. Check out Dewey Decimal system numbers 372.13 and 793.35.

- Jbrary <https://jbrary.com/>
- Dany Rosevear <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIVzJiSNnUetB-bpHzPKcyQ/playlists>
- Super Simple Songs <https://www.youtube.com/c/supersimplesongs>
- Sef Townsend stories and songs  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD3AcBbGwoX7A2AJKdzBXIQ>
- *Crazy gibberish & other story hour stretches from a storyteller's bag of tricks* by Naomi Baltuck. Hamden, CT: Linnet Books, 1993.
- *Sally go round the sun* by Edith Fowke. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969. Also, *Ring around the moon: 200 songs, tongue twisters, riddles and rhymes for children* by Edith Fowke.
- *Eye Winker, Tom Tinker, Chin Chopper: Fifty Musical Fingerplays* by Tom Glazer. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.
- *Tomfoolery: trickery and foolery with words* collected from American folklore by Alvin Schwartz. NY: Lippincott, 1973. Schwartz has several wonderful collections, such as *And the green grass grew all around* and *Witcracks: jokes and jests from American folklore*, as well as the ever-popular *Scary stories to tell in the dark* series.
- *The grammar of fantasy: an introduction to the art of inventing stories* by Gianni Rodari, translated by Jack Zipes. NY: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1996.

You'll find lots of useful videos on my own YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/PriscillaHowe>

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