

Poetry Play

for Families
and Preschoolers!



Family Reading
Partnership

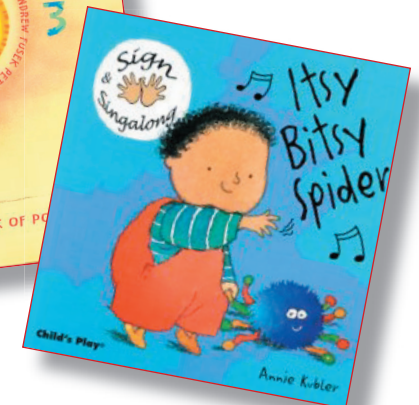
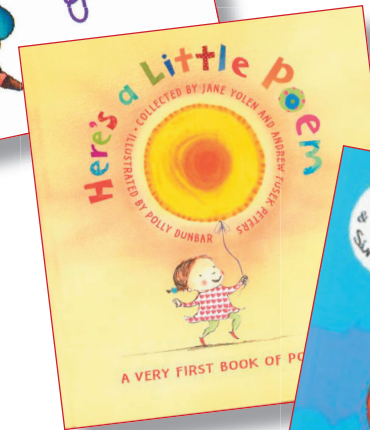
54 Gunderman Rd. • Ithaca NY 14850

607-277-8602

www.familyreading.org



by Elizabeth Stilwell,
Department of Human Development,
Cornell University



Family Reading
Partnership

Rhymes Train Ears

If you've ever recited a nursery rhyme, or sung the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" you've been preparing your child for learning to read!

The ability to hear rhymes—knowing that *cat* rhymes with *hat*, but not with *bag*—is an important skill for preschoolers. It means that your child can hear the sounds of our language. Playing with rhymes trains her ear to hear the differences and similarities in how words sound. Soon, she will learn to connect sounds with letters... and becomes a reader!

There's Always Time for a Poem!

The book "Here's A Little Poem" collected by Jane Yolen and Andrew Peters is a wonderful way to enjoy poetry with your child. The poems are simple and sweet, some are funny and all are about things that are familiar and important to young children.

Poems are "powerful thoughts in little packages."

If you don't have time to read a whole story to your child, there is always time for a poem! Invite your child to choose one before going off to school, or as the very last thing he hears before going to sleep. Soon your child will be saying the poems right along with you!

Share Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are wonderful because they are so memorable. Do you remember any nursery rhymes from your childhood? How about...

Humpty Dumpty
Hickory Dickory Dock
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

Share these little treasures with your child! Research has found that children who are familiar with and can say nursery rhymes when they enter kindergarten often have an easier time learning to

read. This is probably because rhyming helps them discover many common word patterns (such as those in *quick/stick* or *down/crown*). The more familiar these patterns become in language they hear and say, the more easily children will recognize these patterns when they begin to work with printed words.

Encourage Word Play

Encourage word play using poems, rhymes, or songs.

You might begin by saying,

"What rhymes with Matt [his name]?"

Make up silly rhymes, such as, "Did Matt sit on the cat?"

Or try working together to tell a little story about a cat chasing a fat rat! Write down the sentence you've thought up, and have him draw a picture of the idea. Together, make your own rhyming book!

Play a Riddle Game

As your child gets more practice rhyming, you might try to play a riddle game. Try something like,

"I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with fish. And it's something in the kitchen that you put your sandwich on."

"Fish rhymes with ... *dish!*"

Play games like this when you are waiting, shopping, or in the car. It not only passes the time, it gives your child lots of practice hearing and thinking of rhymes.

Children are born poets;
they just need your help to know it!

The Best Part!

Reading and reciting poetry, and making up silly rhymes will help your child connect the joy of spending time with you...with a lifelong joy of reading!