The Child Unplugged

THE BABY NURSERY RHYMES DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK

Simple play ideas to connect.
Explore & Support yours babies development

16
Nursery Rhymes & Song Ideas



0-12 Months

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Singing, Rhymes & Connection

Nursery rhymes and simple songs are a wonderful way to connect, communicate and play with your baby.

The repetition, rhythm, movement and familiar sounds help support early development while creating fun, meaningful moments together.

Singing also gives your baby the chance to watch your face, hear the patterns in your voice and begin to anticipate what comes next. You don't need any special equipment — your voice, your expressions and a few simple actions are more than enough







Why Singing Nursery Rhymes Is So Valuable

- Supports early language and communication
- Builds listening, attention and memory
- Encourages movement and body awareness
- Develops anticipation and imitation
- Strengthens connection through eye contact and interaction
- Makes learning playful, simple and fun



The Hello Song

A happy song to start together!

Why it's great for development

- Helps babies feel safe, included and emotionally connected
- Supports language development and listening skills
- Encourages social interaction and turn taking
- Builds recognition of familiar faces and names
- Introduces rhythm, repetition and routine
- Creates a positive and welcoming start to the session

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you in a circle.
2. Sing the song slowly and clearly, using the actions.
3. Wave your hands for "hello" and encourage your baby to watch and join in.
4. You can gently hold your baby's hands to help them wave, clap or point.
5. Try saying each child's name as you sing to make it personal.
6. Repeat the song with smiles, making eye contact and enjoying the moment together!

Hello, hello,
hello, hello,
It's so good to see you!
Hello, hello,
hello, hello,
It's so good to see you!

(You can also add each child's name:
"Hello [name], hello [name],
It's so good to see you!")

Top tip

Keep it consistent at the start of every session so babies begin to recognise the routine. Use the same tune, actions and smiles — familiarity helps babies feel secure.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



You Are My Sunshine

A gentle song to sing, connect and cuddle!

Why it's great for development

- Builds a strong emotional bond and sense of security
- Supports language development and listening skills
- Encourages eye contact and social connection
- Introduces rhythm, pitch and melody
- Helps with emotional regulation and calm
- Creates a positive, joyful experience

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing the song slowly and gently, using a warm and loving tone.
3. Maintain eye contact and smile – you can gently hold your baby's hands.
4. You can add gentle movements, such as swaying, rocking or small hand squeezes.
5. Encourage your baby to respond – they might smile, coo or move their arms and legs.
6. Repeat the song as often as you like – it's a lovely one to include in your daily routine (morning, playtime or bedtime).

Top tip

Use this song during quiet moments, such as nap time or cuddles. You can also personalise it by saying your baby's name (e.g. "You are my sunshine, [baby's name], my only sunshine...").

You are my sunshine,
my only sunshine,
You make me happy
when skies are grey.
You'll never know, dear,
how much I love you,
Please don't take my sunshine
away.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Calming and magical!

Why it's great for development

- Supports visual tracking and focus
- Encourages curiosity and wonder
- Introduces rhythm, language and early memory
- Creates a calming, nurturing experience
- Builds emotional connection

What to do

1. Hold your baby in your arms or have them lying on their back.
2. Gently wave a scarf, your hands or a star-shaped toy above them as you sing "Twinkle, twinkle little star…"
3. Move it slowly from side to side and up and down, giving your baby time to watch and follow.
4. You can also point to stars in the sky at night or look at a star night light together.
5. Keep your voice soft and gentle, and enjoy the special moment together.

Top tip

Use a scarf, a small light or a star toy to make the song more engaging. Move slowly and give your baby time to look, listen and take it all in.

Twinkle, twinkle
little star,
How I wonder
what you are...

Small songs.
Big connections.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



If You're Happy and You Know It

Express, move and play!

Why it's great for development

- Supports emotional awareness and self-expression
- Encourages movement and coordination
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces cause and effect
- Develops memory and sequencing
- Sparks joy and confidence

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on the floor or on your lap.
2. Sing "If you're happy and you know it..." using a cheerful tone.
3. Clap your hands together and encourage your baby to copy you.
4. Try the other actions too – stomp your feet, wave your arms, say "hooray!"
5. Pause and give your baby time to join in and respond.
6. Repeat and enjoy – make it as fun and silly as you like!

Top tip

Be expressive and keep the pace slower. Your baby will learn through watching, listening and copying you. Try using different actions to keep it interesting.

If you're happy
and you know it,
clap your hands!
If you're happy
and you know it,
clap your hands!
If you're happy
and you know it
and you really want to show it,
clap your hands!

Songs build connection.
Movement builds confidence.
Brighter tomorrows.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Old MacDonald Had a Farm

A fun song to sing, move and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Introduces animal names and sounds
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Supports memory and sequencing
- Encourages movement and participation
- Develops language and vocabulary
- Sparks imagination and pretend play

What to do

1. Sit with your baby and some animal toys or pictures.
2. Sing "Old MacDonald had a farm..." using a cheerful tone.
3. Show each animal as you sing, making the correct animal sound (e.g. moo, baa, oink, neigh).
4. Encourage your baby to copy the sounds and actions.
5. Add simple actions such as clapping, wiggling or bouncing.
6. Repeat and enjoy – you can also swap the animals or use real-life sounds when you're out and about!

Old MacDonald
had a farm,
E-I-E-I-O,
And on that farm
he had a cow,
E-I-E-I-O!

Top tip

Keep it simple and interactive. Pause to give your baby time to respond, and follow their lead. You can also let them choose the next animal!

Songs build language.
Play builds connection.
Brighter tomorrows.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Wind the Bobbin Up

A fun action song to move and play!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages hand and arm movements
- Supports fine and gross motor skills
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces rhythm, language and sequencing
- Encourages social interaction and turn-taking
- Develops memory and body awareness

What to do

1. Sit with your baby facing you, either on the floor or on your lap.
2. Sing "Wind the bobbin up..." slowly and use gentle actions.
3. Rotate your hands in front of you (wind the bobbin up), then pull your hands towards you and clap.
4. Encourage your baby to copy your movements.
5. Repeat and enjoy – you can speed it up as they become more confident!

Top tip

Use big, clear movements and lots of smiles. You can also try using a scarf, ribbon or a simple prop to make the actions even more engaging.

Wind the bobbin up,
wind the bobbin up,
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap,
Wind it back again,
wind it back again,
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap!

Simple songs.
Happy learning.
Brighter tomorrows.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Sleeping Bunnies

A fun song to move, pause and play!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages listening and attention skills
- Introduces the concepts of quiet and loud
- Supports self-regulation and body awareness
- Builds anticipation and memory
- Develops gross motor skills through movement
- Sparks joy, connection and shared laughter

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing the song slowly and gently.
3. When you sing "sleeping bunnies, sleep, sleep, sleep", place your hands together and rest them against your cheek to show sleeping.
4. When you sing "wake up bunnies, wake up bunnies, wake up, wake up, wake up!", open your arms wide and wiggle your fingers to show the bunnies waking up.
5. You can gently help your baby's hands to copy the actions.
6. Repeat the song, encouraging your baby to join in, smile and move with you.

Top tip

Use soft toys or scarves to make it even more engaging. Try changing the speed, using a whisper for the sleeping part and a louder, excited voice for the waking part!

Sleeping bunnies,
sleep, sleep, sleep,
Sleeping bunnies,
sleep, sleep, sleep,
Wake up bunnies,
wake up bunnies,
wake up, wake up, wake up!

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Incy Wincy Spider

A fun song to sing, move and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Builds attention and visual tracking
- Supports early communication and language
- Introduces cause and effect
- Encourages imitation and hand movements
- Builds rhythm and memory
- Sparks curiosity and enjoyment of stories and song

What to do

1. Show your baby a spider (a toy, finger spider or make one with pipe cleaners).
2. Sing the song slowly and clearly, using gentle hand movements.
3. Use your fingers to "climb" up your baby's arm or leg, or up a scarf or soft surface.
4. When it rains, wiggle your fingers down and hide the spider (e.g. under a cloth).
5. Bring the spider out again when the sun comes – using a cheerful, happy tone!
6. Let your baby watch, reach, touch and explore the spider. Repeat and enjoy together!

Incy Wincy Spider

Incy Wincy Spider
climbed up the water spout,
Down came the rain
and washed him out,
Out came the sunshine
and dried him up,
And Incy Wincy Spider
climbed up the spout again!

Top tip

Use different textures and props – a scarf as the rain, a bowl as the water spout, or a felt spider. Keep it playful, repeat often and let your baby explore in their own way.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.

Play move grow together



Open, Shut Them

A fun song to move, play and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Supports hand awareness and fine motor development
- Encourages imitation and attention
- Builds rhythm and listening skills
- Introduces early language and action words
- Promotes social interaction and turn taking
- Sparks joy and confidence

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing the song slowly and clearly, showing the actions as you go.
3. Open your hands wide, then gently shut them into fists.
4. Give a little clap, clap, clap – encourage your baby to watch and try to join in.
5. Open and shut your hands again, then place them on your lap. You can gently help your baby do the actions too.
6. Repeat the song, keeping it playful and engaging. Smile, make eye contact and enjoy the moment together!

Open, shut them,
open, shut them,
Give a little clap, clap, clap.
Open, shut them,
open, shut them,
Put them in your lap, lap, lap!

Top tip

Make it interactive! Pause and wait to see if your baby tries to open, shut or clap their hands. You can also use different textures (e.g. soft scarves or ribbons) to make the song even more engaging.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Row, Row, Row Your Boat

A gentle song to sing, move and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages rhythm, movement and body awareness
- Supports hand–eye coordination
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces positional language (forwards, backwards, stop)
- Sparks imagination and pretend play
- Promotes social interaction and turn taking

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream..." using a calm, cheerful tone.
3. Hold your baby's hands and gently move them back and forth, as if rowing a boat.
4. Try different actions – row slowly, row quickly, stop, or go backwards!
5. You can also place your baby in a basket or seat and gently rock them from side to side as you sing.
6. Repeat and enjoy – let your baby join in by moving, smiling or making sounds!

Row, row, row
your boat,
Gently down the stream,
Merrily, merrily,
merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream!

Top tip

Add simple props to bring the song to life – a basket as a boat, a blue scarf for the water, or a toy duck. Keep it slow and interactive, and follow your baby's lead.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Five Little Ducks

A fun song to sing, count and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Introduces early number concepts and counting
- Supports listening and attention skills
- Encourages language development and animal sounds
- Builds memory and anticipation
- Sparks imagination and storytelling
- Promotes turn taking and interaction

What to do

1. Gather five little ducks (toys, figures or make some from card or felt).
2. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
3. Sing the song slowly and clearly, moving the ducks as you go.
4. As each duck "goes away", remove one duck and count together.
5. When the ducks come back, bring them back one by one, building anticipation.
6. Encourage your baby to watch, reach, point or make duck sounds.
7. Repeat and enjoy! You can also let your baby hold and explore the ducks.

Five little ducks
went swimming one day,
Over the hill and far away.
Mummy duck said,
"Quack, quack, quack, quack!"
But only four little ducks
came back!

(Keep counting down until one, then back up again!)

Top tip

Use real objects to make it hands-on! You could try ducks in a water tray, in a basket, or even make your own from paper and use a blue scarf as the "pond".

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

A playful song to sing, move and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages movement and body awareness
- Supports hand–eye coordination
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces action words and sequencing (first, next, then)
- Sparks imagination and pretend play
- Promotes social interaction and turn taking

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing "Here we go round the mulberry bush..." using a cheerful tone.
3. Gently move your baby's hands, arms or legs in a circular motion as you sing "round the mulberry bush".
4. Try different actions for each verse – wiggle, clap, tickle, lift your arms, or change direction.
5. You can also use a scarf or ribbon and move it in a circle to bring the song to life.
6. Repeat and enjoy – let your baby join in by moving, smiling or making sounds!

Here we go round
the mulberry bush,
The mulberry bush,
the mulberry bush,
Here we go round
the mulberry bush,
On a cold and frosty morning!

Top tip

Use a scarf, ribbon or a small hoop to create a "bush" to move around. Keep the actions gentle and repetitive – this helps your baby build movement patterns and memory.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Driving in My Car

A fun song to sing, move and explore!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages movement and whole body awareness
- Supports listening and attention skills
- Builds anticipation and memory
- Introduces early action words (go, stop, turn, beep)
- Sparks imagination and pretend play
- Promotes social interaction and turn taking

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing "Driving in my car..." using an enthusiastic and playful tone.
3. Use your hands to make a steering wheel and move it as you sing.
4. Add simple actions – beep the horn, turn left and right, go fast, go slow, and stop!
5. You can also place your baby in a box or basket and gently move them as you sing (for extra fun!).
6. Repeat and enjoy – let your baby join in by moving, smiling, or making sounds!

Driving in my car,
Driving in my car,
Beep, beep, beep!
Driving in my car,
Driving in my car,
Beep, beep, beep!
We're going very far,
Driving in my car,
Beep, beep, beep!

Top tip

Use a cardboard box, laundry basket or even a cushion as a "car" to bring the song to life. Add a scarf for a seatbelt or a toy steering wheel for extra engagement.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.



Peek-a-Boo

A playful song to sing, move and connect!

Why it's great for development

- Builds early social and emotional skills (sense of security and trust)
- Supports attention, memory and anticipation
- Encourages turn taking and interaction
- Develops communication and early language skills
- Introduces the concept of object permanence (things still exist, even when they can't be seen!)
- Sparks joy, laughter and connection

What to do

1. Sit with your baby, either on your lap or facing you.
2. Sing "Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo, I see you!" using a bright and playful tone.
3. Cover your face with your hands, a scarf or a light blanket.
4. Pause for a moment to build anticipation, then reveal your face with a big smile!
5. Try different variations – use a toy, a scarf, or even let your baby have a turn hiding and revealing.
6. Repeat and enjoy – watch for their reactions and join in their giggles!

Peek-a-boo,
peek-a-boo,
I see you!
Peek-a-boo,
peek-a-boo,
I see you!

Top tip

Use different materials to keep it interesting – a scarf, hat, cushion or even your hands. Let your baby join in by holding the scarf or covering their own face!

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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Wave Your Scarves

A gentle song to move and explore!

Wave your scarves
up high,
Wave your scarves
down low,
Twirl them round
and twirl them round,
Watch them flutter
to and fro!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages gross motor movement
- Supports coordination and balance
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces colours and descriptive language
- Sparks imagination and creativity
- Creates joy, connection and confidence

What to do

1. Give your baby a scarf (or two!).
2. Sing a simple song such as "Wave your scarves, up high..." using a gentle, happy tone.
3. Encourage your baby to wave, shake and move the scarves through the air.
4. Let them explore different movements – up high, down low, side to side, twirling around.
5. Pause and give them time to watch, copy and take the lead.
6. Repeat and enjoy – scarves can also be used for peek-a-boo or gentle dancing!

Top tip

Use lightweight scarves in different colours and textures. Move slowly, keep it playful and let your baby explore at their own pace.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter tomorrows.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.

Play
move
grow
together

Rainbow Ribbons

A fun song to move and explore!



Wave your ribbons high,
wave your ribbons low,
Twirl them round
and watch them go,
Swish them here,
swish them there,
Wave your ribbons
everywhere!

Why it's great for development

- Encourages gross motor movement
- Supports hand-eye coordination
- Builds listening and attention skills
- Introduces colours and descriptive language
- Sparks imagination and creativity
- Promotes confidence and self-expression

What to do

1. Give your baby a ribbon, scarf or a ribbon wand (you can also use scarves or fabric strips).
2. Sing a simple song such as "Wave your ribbons high..." using a cheerful tone.
3. Encourage your baby to move the ribbons up high, down low, side to side and all around.
4. Pause and let them explore at their own pace.
5. Repeat and try different actions – swish, wiggle, twirl, hide and peek!

Top tip

Use ribbons in different colours and textures. Let your baby explore freely – there's no right or wrong way to play! Follow their lead and enjoy the moment together.

Simple songs.
Creative play.
Brighter futures.

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PLAY. CONNECT. GROW.

Little rhythms big smiles

Music Time

A simple song to make some noise!



Why it's great for development

- Builds listening and attention skills
- Encourages rhythm and coordination
- Supports fine and gross motor skills
- Introduces cause and effect
- Develops creativity and self-expression
- Builds confidence and social interaction

What to do

1. Give your baby a safe drum, pot, pan or a simple shaker (or use your hands).
2. Sing a simple song such as "Let's make some music..." using a happy, upbeat tone.
3. Show your baby how to tap, shake or bang and encourage them to copy you.
4. Pause and listen to the sounds together – take turns.
5. Try different rhythms (fast/slow, loud/quiet) and see what your baby does!

Let's make some music,
let's make some music,
Bang, bang, bang,
Let's make some music,
all day long!

Top tip

Use everyday household items like wooden spoons, pots or a shaker. Let your baby explore different sounds and textures and follow their lead.

Music builds brains.
Play creates confidence.
Little moments matter.

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Slow, calm sensory experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials