

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

Sounds Like ...

 Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Most preschoolers can use speech to let others know their wants and needs. Now they are ready to use more complex language. Playing games that let them practice rhyming, listening for different sounds, and blending sounds together helps them get ready to read and write.

What is the practice?

Many daily activities can help preschoolers pay attention to sounds and learn how sounds are the same or different. Research shows that children who practice playing with sounds have an easier time learning to read and write when they start school.



What does the practice look like?

Play rhyming games with your preschooler by saying a word and having her think of one that "sounds the same." Ask her to think of all the words she can to describe a dog or a cat. These are two kinds of verbal play that help build vocabulary and encourage preschoolers to notice speech sounds.

How do you do the practice?

There are many times each day that you can help your preschooler develop word skills. Most preschoolers love to talk, so it can be as easy as following his interest and playing a "talking game."

- When in the car or waiting at a doctor's office, take turns spotting something and thinking of words that rhyme with its name.
- Help your preschooler blend and take apart the sounds of words by slowly saying a word, like *birdhouse*. Then have him repeat the two smaller words quickly. You can reverse this, too, by having him break long words apart into their sounds: "Say *groundhog* slowly."
- Have fun with silly songs by replacing the real words with pretend words. Replace real words in a familiar song with your child's name, favorite foods, places, or friends.
- Take turns with your child thinking of all the words you can that describe a particular object. Especially use something familiar, like a favorite toy or a pet. This helps build your child's vocabulary, and gives him practice putting what he sees into words.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child enthusiastic about singing familiar songs and nursery rhymes with you?
- Does your child enjoy playing with words and sounds?
- Does your child attempt to make up his own rhymes and songs?

Take a look at sound play with preschoolers

Red All Over

While Dad drives Joey to preschool, they like to play games about what they see out their windows. One of Joey's favorites is pointing out everything he sees of a certain type. For example, one morning they try to find everything red they can see. They call out "red car!" or "red stop sign!" or "red house!" each time they see something red. Sometimes Joey doesn't know the word for what he sees, and his dad teaches him a new word. An example was the time he saw a billboard with a picture of a red life jacket.



In the Act with Costumes

Marnie likes to play dress up with her dad. She acts out the parts of a princess, doctor, or monster with her costume collection. Because her recent favorite story at bedtime is *Mary Poppins* (P. L. Travers), Marnie's dad finds her a fancy old hat and a black umbrella. She can pretend to be the story's magical nanny. Marnie's dad reads the beginning of the story, then tells Marnie, "Okay, you're floating through the air with your umbrella. Where are you going?" He encourages her to act out what he reads. He has her add to the story by using her own imagination. As soon as "Mary Poppins" wishes the story's happy Banks family farewell, Marnie says, "Let's do it again!" They take it from the top.

Rhyme Time

Walter, a 4-year-old with a speech-and-language delay, loves pretending to be a flying superhero. While they ride the bus to his preschool, Walter's grandmother sometimes suggests playing their favorite rhyming game. Walter gets to pick the first word. Often it's something to do with superheroes or something outside the bus window that catches his eye. Walter and Grandma take turns rhyming. "Cape," Walter says, thinking of his superhero outfit. "Okay," Grandma says. "Let me think. How about...

tape?" She emphasizes the similar sounds. "I know one! Mape!" Walter yells. "That's not a word," Grandma laughs. "But it does rhyme with cape. You're right!" Sometimes Grandma rhymes a word that Walter doesn't know, and he learns something new.



"Cape!"



"Tape!"

