

# A Fistful of Fingerplays

AND OTHER ACTION GAMES AND SONGS



An MCPL  
**GROW A  
READER**

Early Literacy Initiative

# Why are fingerplays important?



Fingerplays provide an opportunity for young children to combine fun and language exploration in a way that enhances word skills and increases the number of words toddlers know -- both important for developing their emergent literacy skills. Children who tell very brief stories using their fingers or hands are doing fingerplays. Fingerplays often use rhymes to help toddlers learn about rhyming and poetry, provide opportunities for listening and speaking, and encourage the coordination of words with physical actions. Fingerplays promote essential verbal, cognitive, and physical development in your child.

We use fingerplays, songs, and action rhymes in all of our Early Literacy Storytimes!

Check **[mymcpl.org](http://mymcpl.org)** for dates and times at your local branch.

**Source:** [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org)

# Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library

Help your child get ready to read with these simple activities:

**Talking** - Make sure your child has lots of opportunities to talk with you, not just listen to you talk.

**Singing** - Sing nursery rhymes so children hear the different sounds in words.

**Reading** - Reading together is the single most important way to help children get ready to read.

**Writing** - Talk to your children about what they draw, and write captions or stories together. This helps make a connection between spoken and printed language.

**Playing** - Play helps children express themselves and put thoughts into words.



## HEAD AND SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES

*(move to touch your named body part)*

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

And eyes and ears and mouth and nose

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

Ankles, elbows, feet and seat, feet and seat

Ankles, elbows, feet and seat, feet and seat

And hair and hips and chin and cheeks

Ankles, elbows, feet and seat, feet and seat

## I WISH I WERE A BUNNY

Tune: *Did You Ever See a Lassie?*

*(perform actions to words)*

I wish I were a bunny, a bunny, a bunny

I wish I were a bunny, cause bunnies can hop

They hop, and they hop, and they hop, and they hop

I wish I were a bunny, cause bunnies can hop

### **Additional Verses:**

Fish – swim

Horses – gallop

Birds – fly

Frogs – leap

Cows – moo

Dogs – bark

Cats – meow

Sheep – baa

## BEARS

One little teddy bear, finding things to do  
Along came another, then there were two  
Two busy teddy bears, climbing up a tree  
Along came another, then there were three  
Three lively teddy bears liked to explore  
Along came another, then there were four  
Four hungry teddy bears, eating honey from  
a hive  
Along came another, then there were five  
Five tired honey bears had fun today  
They'll be back tomorrow, and you can  
see them play

## DINOSAURS

Dinosaurs lived long ago  
Some walked (*stomp in place*)  
Some swam (*pretend to swim*)  
Some flew, you know! (*flap arms at side*)  
Some were big (*hold hands up high*)  
Some were small (*hold hands low*)  
Some were gigantic— (*stretch arms out wide*)  
V-e-r-y tall! (*Stretch arms up high*)



## CIRCUS TRAIN

This is the circus train (*bend arms at elbows*)

Puffing down the track (*move arms around*)

Now it's going forward (*rotate arms forward*)

Now it's going back (*rotate arms back*)

Now the bell is ringing (*pull cord with fist*)

Now the whistle blows (*put fist near mouth and blow*)

What a lot of noise it makes (*cover ears with hands*)

Everywhere it goes! (*stretch out arms*)

Here are the animals, (*point with finger*)

Ready to entertain, lions—tigers—elephants,  
(*count with fingers*)

All aboard the train! (*spread arms*)

## WIGGLES OUT

(*perform actions to words*)

I wiggle my fingers

I wiggle my toes

I wiggle my shoulders

I wiggle my noes

Now no more wiggles

Are left in me

And I will be

As still as can be



## STARS

*(Hold up fingers to count)*

Four little stars winking at me

One shot off, then there were three

Three little stars with nothing to do

One shot off, then there were two

Two little stars afraid of the sun

One shot off, then there was one

One little star not having any fun

It shot off, then there was none

## FIVE PRETTY FLOWERS

See the five pretty flowers we planted near  
the door *(hold up five fingers)*

A little boy picked one, and now there were  
four *(put little finger down)*

Four pretty flowers for everyone to see

The dog stepped on one of them

And now there were three  
*(put next finger down)*

Three pretty flowers, yellow, pink, and blue

The newsboy threw the paper

And now there are two  
*(put middle finger down)*

Two pretty flowers growing in the sun

A caterpillar chewed the stem

And now there is one  
*(put pointer finger down)*

One pretty flower with a smiling face  
*(hold thumb up)*

I picked the pretty flower and put it in a vase  
*(wrap other hand around the thumb)*

## DRIVING SIGNALS

Red light, red light

No! No! No! (*stand still and shake head no*)

Yellow light, yellow light

Slow! Slow! Slow! (*“drive” slowly*)

Green light, green light

Go! Go! Go! (*“drive” carefully*)

## GETTING DRESSED

I put on a shirt and a pair of pants  
(*mime pulling on pants and putting on a shirt*)

I pull up my socks and do a little dance  
(*dance*)

Don't I look neat with my shiny shoes  
upon my feet? (*point to feet*)

Upon my head, I wear a hat of brightest  
red (*point to head*)

A jacket for last and what do you say?  
Hip, hip, hooray! (*wave hands in the air*)  
I'm all dressed to play! (*clap hands*)

## HOUSE FOR ME

This is a nest for the bluebird (*cup hands,  
hold palms up*)

This is a hive for the bee (*put fists  
together, palm to palm*)

This is a hole for bunny rabbit (*make a  
hole with fingers*)

And this is a house for me (*hold fingertips  
together to make a peak*)







## TAPPING POEM

*(repeat several times starting very slowly and gradually speed up, doing all the motions, until everyone is confused)*

Tap your head, tap your toes

Turn in a circle, bend down low

Tap your nose, tap your knees

Hands on your shoulders, sit down please

## CATERPILLARS

“Let’s go to sleep,”

The little caterpillars said  
*(yawn and rub eyes)*

As they tucked themselves *(tuck fingers of one hand into fist of other hand)*

Into their beds

They will awaken by and by  
*(bring out fingers and lock thumbs)*

And each one will be

A lovely butterfly *(finger together, flap hands, and “fly” as a butterfly)*

## CATCHING A FISH

One, two, three, four, five  
*(count out fingers on right hand)*

I caught a little fish alive *(catch all fingers on right hand with left hand)*

Why did you let it go?  
*(release fingers suddenly)*

Because it bit my finger so  
*(shake right hand)*

Which finger did it bite?

The little finger on the right.  
*(point to little finger on right hand)*

## APPLE TREE

Way up high in the apple tree  
(*place both hands above head*)

Two red apples smiled at me  
(*shape hands as if to hold apple in each hand*)

I shook that tree as hard as I could (*pretend to shake a tree*)

And down came the apples!  
(*move hands in downward motion*)

Mmmm... were they good! (*rub tummy*)

## IN MY MIRROR

In my mirror I can see

Two little eyes that look at me (*point to eyes*)

Two little ears, one little nose (*point to ears and nose*)

Ten little fingers, ten little toes (*wiggle fingers, point to toes*)

One little mouth I open wide (*open mouth wide*)

Two little rows of teeth hidden inside (*point to teeth*)

A tongue that pops both in and out  
(*move tongue in and out of mouth*)

Lots of joints that bend about (*bend knees and elbows*)

When I look in the mirror, what do I see?  
(*mime looking in hand mirror*)

A beautiful person looking back at me!

## THREE LITTLE KITTENS

Three little kittens going for a stroll (*walk in place*)

The first one decided to take a muddy roll (*roll arms*)

The second one ran through the garden chasing a mouse  
(*run in place*)

The third one climbed to the roof of the house  
(*pretend to climb*)

And when they all came home up the path (*walk in place*)

Mama Cat said, "It's time for a bath!"

## SLOWLY, SLOWLY

Slowly, slowly, very slowly  
Creeps the garden snail  
*(creeps fingers up child's arm slowly)*  
Slowly, slowly, very slowly  
Up the wooden rail  
But then...  
Quickly, quickly, very quickly  
Runs the little mouse  
*(runs fingers up child's arm quickly)*  
Quickly, quickly, very quickly  
Round about the house *(tickle child)*

## ANIMAL WALK

Here goes the turtle up a hill  
Creep, creep, creep  
Here goes a rabbit up a hill  
Boing, boing, boing!  
Here goes an elephant up a hill  
Thud, thud, thud!  
Here goes a snake up a hill  
Slither, slither, slither!

## LITERACY TIP

Animal Walk makes a great lap bounce for babies and toddlers and a great action rhyme for older children.

## HURRY-SCURRY LITTLE SPIDER

Hurry-scurry little spider  
Starts down at your toes *(touch toes)*  
Hurry-scurry little spider  
Past your knees he goes *(touch knees)*  
Hurry-scurry little spider  
Past where your tummy is *(touch tummy)*  
Hurry scurry little spider  
Give you a spidery kiss *(make loud kiss noise)*

## LITERACY TIP

Think beyond the pencil. Traditional writing utensils are often difficult for little hands to hold. Your preschooler will have an easier time if they can “finger paint” letters in shaving cream, clay, pudding, paint, or even a pan of rice instead of having to hold a crayon or pen.

Help your child learn to break down words into their smaller parts. Singing songs, clapping parts of words, and reading books that rhyme are easy ways to help them hear those smaller word parts.

## A FLY IS ON MY TOE

*(Use stickers as flies and stick to the appropriate body part as you sing the song)*

A fly is on my toe

A fly is on my toe

Hi-ho-the-derrio

A fly is on my toe

A fly is on my nose...

A fly is on my head...

A fly is on my ear...

A fly is on my elbow...

A fly is on my knee...

## WIGGLE WEEK

Mondays I wiggle

Tuesdays I giggle

Wednesdays I jump

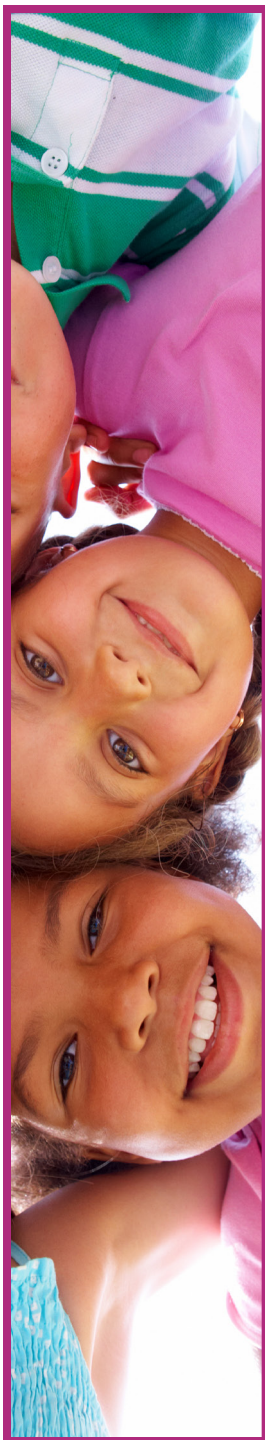
Thursdays I slump

Fridays I dance

Saturdays I prance

Sundays I run

And the week is done!



## CLOCK STRETCH

I am a clock  
I have two hands  
Let us see  
Just where they land

One hand straight up  
The other too  
It's twelve noon—lunchtime  
For me and you

One hand straight up  
One out to the side  
It's three o'clock  
It can't be denied

One hand straight up  
The other down  
It's six o'clock  
All over town

This hand up straight  
Now the other out to the side  
It's nine o'clock  
And it's bedtime

One hand straight up  
The other too  
It's twelve midnight  
Quiet time for me and you

## OPPOSITES THAT I KNOW

You say stop (*hold palm out*)  
And I say go (*motion palms toward you*)  
You run fast, and I run slow (*run in place*)  
You jump high (*jump*)  
And I crawl low (*crawl*)  
These are some opposites that I know



## CRAZY FOOD

Popcorn, popcorn (*jump up and down*)

Mashed potatoes, mashed potatoes  
(*swish feet*)

Boiling water, boiling water (*run in place*)

Spaghetti, spaghetti (*wave arms loosely*)

Fruitcake (*sit down heavily*)

## JACK-IN-THE-BOX

Jack-in-the-box

You sit so still  
(*make fist with thumb inside*)

Won't you come out?

Yes, I will! (*Pop out thumb*)

## ONE TO FIVE

One little nose,

Two little feet,

Three little tickles on  
your tummy so sweet!

Four little kisses on five little toes,

Then one more kiss  
for your sweet little nose!

## LITERACY TIP

Babies' strongest sense is the sense of touch. Using touch in simple rhymes like this one increases security and bonding.



## **BUILDING RHYME**

*(Stack flat hands to represent bricks as you count)*

One, two, three, build a building with me,

Four, five, six, we need more bricks,

Seven, eight, nine, this building looks fine,

Number ten, let's do it again!

## **FIVE GREEN PEAS**

Five green peas in a pea pod pressed, *(make fist)*

One, two, three, four, five. *(lift fingers one at a time)*

They grew and grew and did not stop *(stretch fingers out)*

Till one day that pea pod popped! *(clap hands)*

## **CLAP YOUR HANDS**

Clap your hands 1-2-3

Clap your hands just like me.

Wiggle your fingers 1-2-3

Wiggle your fingers just like me.

## **FIVE LITTLE FINGERS**

One little finger standing on its own  
*(hold up index finger)*

Two little fingers, now they're not alone  
*(hold up middle finger)*

Three little fingers happy as can be.  
*(hold up ring finger)*

Four little fingers go walking down the street.  
*(hold up four fingers)*

Five little fingers. This one is a thumb.  
*(hold up all five fingers, wiggle thumb)*

Wave goodbye 'cause now we are done  
*(wave goodbye)*

## **OLIVER TWIST**

Oliver Twist, can you do this?

If so, do so.

Number one, touch your tongue.

Number two, touch your shoe.

Number three, touch your knee.

Number four, touch the floor.

Number five, jump up high.

## **ONE, TWO**

*(act out each line)*

One, two, tie my shoe,

Three, four, shut the door,

Five, six, pick up sticks,

Seven, eight, lay them straight,

Nine, ten, a big fat hen.

Let's get up and count again!



## ONCE I CAUGHT A FISH ALIVE

One, two, three, four, five,

Once I caught a fish alive.

*(clasp hands together)*

Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,

Then I let it go again. *(let hands go)*

Why did you let it go?

Because it bit my finger so.

Which finger did it bite?


The little one upon the right

*(hold up pinky finger on right hand.)*





## TIPS:

- When asking your child a question, give them several seconds to respond. It takes their developing brain much longer to comprehend and form a response than that of an adult.
  - Read whatever is available. Don't be locked into a traditional book. Read recipes, street signs, or even the subtitles on your favorite television program to show that reading is everywhere!
  - Give objects specific names. You will begin to greatly increase your child's vocabulary if you point out tulips, roses, and daisies instead of calling them all generic flowers.
  - Traditional writing utensils are often difficult for little hands to hold. Preschoolers often find it easier if they can "finger paint" letters in shaving cream, clay, pudding, paint, or even a pan of rice instead of having to hold a crayon or pen.
  - Help your child learn to break down words into their smaller parts. Singing songs, clapping parts of words, and reading books that rhyme are easy ways to help them hear those smaller word parts.
  - Sing with your child, even if you can't carry a tune! Singing helps break down word parts and puts rhythm to language. Your child loves your voice no matter what you think of it.
  - You don't have to actually read books out loud for your child to benefit. Simply looking at and talking about the illustrations in books help children appreciate visual arts as well as understand the storyline of a book.
  - By understanding how their bodies can move, as well as where their bodies are in space, children also gain an awareness of others and the world around them.
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## RESOURCES:

**Center for Early Literacy Learning:**

[earlyliteracylearning.org](http://earlyliteracylearning.org)

**Every Child Ready to Read:**

[everychildreadytoread.org](http://everychildreadytoread.org)

For program information, reading lists, maps to branches, recommended sites, and much more, visit [mymcpl.org](http://mymcpl.org).

