A Fistful of Fingerplays

and Other Action Games and Songs

Resources:
Center for Early Literacy Learning: earlyliteracylearning.org
Every Child Ready to Read: everychildreadytoread.org

For program information, reading lists, maps to branches, recommended sites, and much more, visit mycpl.org.
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 for dates and times at your local branch.

Source: www.earlyliteracylearning.org
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!

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