

## Highlight Language in Songs and Rhymes

Songs and rhymes are a great way to add language for Communicators, First Words Users and Combiners. When your child learns “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes,” he learns the names of parts of his body. “Old MacDonald” helps him learn animal names and sounds. Songs and rhymes contain action words, such as *hop* in “Sleeping Bunnies.” They also have location words, such as *high* in “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and *down* in “Ring Around the Rosie.”

### Use the Four S's

There are ways to sing to your child that help him take turns and learn new words. **It's not just what you sing, it's how you sing it.** Start by using the Four S's.

**Say Less:** Shorter songs with familiar words are best. If a song has a difficult word or a word you don't think your child will understand, then change it. For example, sing “Head and *tummy*, knees and toes” because *tummy* is an easier word for your child than *shoulders*. You can also shorten the names of songs to make them easier for your child to request, as Brian's mom has done.

**Stress Important Words:** Help your child learn important words in songs and rhymes by making them stand out. Sing the words a little slower and louder, or pause before an important word. For example, you could sing “Twinkle, twinkle little ... *star*.”

**Go Slow:** Make it easier for your child to learn a song by singing slowly. Songs and rhymes are often sung or spoken so quickly that children don't have a chance to really hear the words. A slower pace also gives your child the time he needs to take his turn.

**Show:** The actions that are part of songs and rhymes are natural visual helpers that help your child in three ways.



*Brian's mom shortened the name of the rhyme "Sleeping Bunnies" to "Bunny" with a hopping action. Now that's how Brian asks for the song.*

*Visual helpers show your child what words mean:* Actions work very well as visual helpers, such as when you fall *down* in “Ring Around the Rosie” and roll your hands *round and round* in “Wheels on the Bus.” When paired with the words, these actions help your child learn what the words mean.

Old MacDonald had a farm  
Ee-eye, ee-eye, oh! And on  
this farm he had a ...

Pig.



Scott's dad uses puppets to help Scott learn the names of animals and the sounds that they make.

Pictures and objects are another kind of visual helper. For example, you could play with a toy bus while you sing “Wheels on the Bus” or with toy farm animals while you sing “Old MacDonald.” Puppets also work well as visual helpers and children often love to use them. The puppet can sing along with you and help your child learn some of the words and actions in the song.

*Visual helpers help your child start interactions:* Once your child is familiar with a visual helper and the song it goes with, leave the visual helper out where he can see it. He may start an interaction by picking up a toy or a picture to tell you what he wants to listen to or sing.

*Visual helpers help your child understand choice questions:* Until your child can ask for a song all by himself, give him a choice of two songs. For example, if your child is a Communicator, show him pictures of a spider and a bus, which you have used during “Eensy Weensy Spider” and “Wheels on the Bus.” Then ask “Want to sing ‘Eensy Weensy Spider’ or ‘Wheels on the Bus’?” – pointing to the pictures of the spider and the bus as you say the words. Then sing the one he chooses.

Give your child a choice of two songs using pictures he's seen before: “Want ‘Spider’ or ‘Bus’?”

