

Especially for parents of toddlers! 

Fingerplays All the Way

 Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Exploring the world of language is fun when fingerplays are a toddler's learning tools. Fingerplays let young children enjoy exploring language in ways that build word skills and use new words. Both are important early literacy skills.

What is the practice?

Fingerplays are very brief stories—often with rhymes—that use finger movements to help tell the story. Fingerplays introduce rhyming and poetry to young children. They provide fun opportunities to listen and speak. And they encourage children to match words with physical actions.

What does the practice look like?

When your toddler recites or sings rhymes and uses her fingers or hands to “act it out,” she's doing fingerplays. Singing and doing the motions to *Eensy-Weensy Spider* is an example of a fingerplay. You can find many fun fingerplays by searching on the Web for **fingerplays** or **preschool fingerplays**. Librarians can help you borrow good books of fingerplays, lap games, and other fun literacy activities for toddlers.

How do you do the practice?

Enjoy fingerplays again and again, offering your toddler the opportunity to have fun playing with words and body movements. Do fingerplays together while you're waiting in the grocery line, preparing for bed, or watching a big sister's soccer practice. Fingerplays give a squirming toddler the opportunity to become “active” while he needs to sit and wait.

- Fingerplays and action rhymes can be about any subject that interests your toddler (animals, trucks, food, and more). The sillier and more fun they are, the more your toddler will enjoy trying to say them.
- If the fingerplay is new to your toddler, teach it with excitement. It doesn't matter if you get it “right.” Your interest will capture your toddler's attention.

Bunny Puppet

Here is a bunny, with ears so funny, *(Raise two fingers.)*
And here is a hole in the ground. *(Make hole with other hand.)*
At the first sound she hears, she pricks up her ears, *(Straighten fingers.)*
And pops right into the ground. *(Put fingers in hole.)*

Homes

A nest is a home for a bird. *(Cup hands to form a nest.)*
A hive is a home for a bee. *(Turn cupped hands over.)*
A hole is a home for a rabbit. *(Make a hole with hands.)*
And a house is a home for me. *(Make roof with peaked hands.)*

Where Is Thumbkin?

(Start with hands behind back.)
Where is Thumbkin? Where is Thumbkin?
Here I am. *(Bring right hand to front, with thumb up.)*
Here I am. *(Bring left hand to front, with thumb up.)*
How are you this morning?
Very well, I thank you. *(Wiggle thumbs as if they're 'talking' together.)*
Run away. *(Hide right hand behind back.)*
Run away. *(Hide left hand behind back.)*
(Repeat rhyme with each finger: Pointer, Tall Man, Ring Man, and Pinkie.)



How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your toddler do fingerplays or action rhymes more often?
- Is your toddler enjoying the fingerplays or action rhymes?
- Does your toddler try to make up his own fingerplays or action rhymes?

Take a look at more fun with fingerplays

In Motion

Waiting in a store check-out line with a 2-year-old can be hard. Lewis's mom uses a fingerplay to keep her son from getting restless. Since Lewis likes rhymes, Mom starts playing *Bunny Puppet*. Lewis quickly joins in saying the words and trying to straighten out his fingers for the rabbit's ears. Mom helps with the motions, but since Lewis knows all the words, she doesn't say them. Mom knows Lewis enjoys this because, while Mom is paying for the groceries, Lewis is still doing the fingerplay.



Where Is Thumbkin?

Many evenings, 2½-year-old Vincent and his mom spend time together playing in the family room. Sometimes they read a book or talk about who they saw during the day. Vincent always wants to do fingerplays. He loves their special version of *Where Is Thumbkin?* They each hide just one hand. They sing, "Where is Thumbkin? Where is Thumbkin?" followed by "Here I am! Here I am!" They each bring out their hand and wave their thumbs at each other. Vincent giggles with delight as they finish the rhyme.

I Can Do It, Too!

It's hard for John to get his fingers to do all the motions for fingerplays. But he likes to try. John's mom simplifies the finger motions. For example, in *Eensy-Weensy Spider*, he can't touch each finger together. John and his mom just touch their hands together as they raise their arms. They bring down their arms when they say, "Down came the rain." They swing their arms in front of them when they say "and washed the spider out." With "Out came the sun and dried up all the rain," they lift their curved arms high. Again, they touch their hands together as they repeat, "The eensy-weensy spider climbed up the spout again!"

