

Baby & Toddler Storytimes: Why We Do What We Do

I Am Special: We sing this song every week to help kids internalize that they are special and important. The routine of always starting with the same song will also help them always be prepared for storytime and help them feel comfortable as the session begins.

Open Them, Shut Them: This song builds your child's motor skills as well as helps them get used to doing routine sequences. We do this song every week, and over time each kid learns and performs more and more of the song, which strengthens their memory.

Wiggly Little Fingers: Before we do this song we review wiggling our fingers fast, slow, high, low, to each side and then to both sides. This builds your child's vocabulary as well as helps them understand spatial relations. Throughout the song they will use their whole hand to wiggle all of their fingers, which activates several parts of their brain.

This is Big: This song deals with opposites and both builds your child's vocabulary and teaches them the physical relationships between those concepts.

Thematic Sing Along & Felt: While most of what we do in storytime is routine with slight changes, we also like to include something completely different. The sing along & felt we include each week will be related to our theme, but will do something new each time. We've sung about hidden gnomes (and found them in the forest), learned the names of different kinds of birds, sung about unicorns, and piled elephants into a bathtub. This is also when we do one of our favorite activities - play a pattern game! The pattern games we play teach your child basic math concepts like patterns, addition and subtraction. They also encourage problem solving at basic and complex levels!

Action Cards: Doing Action Cards every week helps your child get their wiggles out as well as helps build their imagination and express themselves! Playing is an important part of early literacy - it helps children think symbolically, so they can see that words and thoughts can represent real experiences and physical objects.

Scarf & Rhyme: Each session we sing a new season related song with our scarves. Doing certain motions along with the song helps your child's brain development, as well as prepares them for following instructions. Even for children who do not wave their scarves, the tactile experience of touching the scarves, which are made of a fabric they do not usually experience, provides enrichment. Seeing others wave their brightly scarves also allows them to see rhythmic motion. Handing out the scarves and shakers also teaches children to wait their turn and accept what color they are given. Clean up time reinforces the positivity of cleaning up and helping others.

Scarf Dancing Song: Playing music for your child encourages brain growth as well as gives them a creative outlet. Children who feel a little shy often feel more adventurous when holding a scarf. We encourage kids to dance how they want to for at least part of the song, giving them an important creative outlet.

2 Little Friends: We do this rhyme every week maintaining the same rhythm, tune and actions, but we change out the subjects and what they do. This helps your child understand the concepts of rhythm & melody in a new way as well as shows them a way to be creative with something that is routine.

Pretend Time: Like the Action Cards, pretend time provides your child with an important opportunity that is very important for brain growth, mental health and early literacy. Our pretend time is always related to that week's book theme, whether we're creeping through the forest, pretending we're a cat, or flying like a bird. The kids always enjoy having some time to be silly, too!



Little Red Wagon, Smooth Road, Gregory Griggs: These lap bounces help babies get their wiggles out, provide bonding time between them and their adults, help babies feel rhythm, help them build their vocabulary, and help understand the correlation between words and actions.

Nursery Rhyme: Nursery Rhymes have been around for centuries and have stood the test of time. They have been proven to be excellent for children's brain growth due to their rhyming and rhythm. They are also an excellent shared cultural experience for children. We have updated the wording to many of the nursery rhymes we use to better reflect current cultural values.

Breathing Exercise: We take three deep breaths every storytime. These breaths have your child use the entirety of their lungs, which will encourage healthy lung growth as well as help prevent their contracting lung related illnesses like pneumonia. We also use this as a mindfulness exercise - your child is living entirely in the moment where all they need to do is breathe deeply. This exercise often helps soothe upset children and has even stopped children's sobs, as their lungs have the opportunity to fill entirely and the few moments of relaxation help reset their emotions.

Count the Room: Children are learning to count, and after the milestone of learning to count to ten has been reached higher numbers can be a difficult concept. Each week we count how many friends we have with us at storytime, which often brings us to the high twenties or low thirties. This routine helps your child hear higher numbers on a consistent basis as well as gives them a physical representation of the numbers for when they learn about them in the classroom. As we count we point to each person with our hands pressed together rather than with one finger. This prevents the building of the habit of pointing.

1 Little Red Friend: This song teaches counting as well as colors. Each session we will change what we are counting (birds, leaves, flowers, etc.) but the numbers and order of the colors will stay the same. This is another example of using the same rhythm and tune, but changing a few details.

5 Little Ducks: Setting up for this song involves a call and response section (the children have to declare that we have mama and baby ducks) as well as for the children to say if all baby ducks are standing correctly so we're ready to begin the song. An important part of this exercise is for children to understand that changing the incorrect duck doesn't necessarily mean it is now correct - we often have to change the duck a few times before it is right. We count backwards during this song, showing basic subtraction. Each baby duck goes behind the hill, then at the end the hill is moved and all baby ducks are shown again, which helps your child get a firmer grasp on spatial permanence. At the end of the song as all baby ducks are shown to have disappeared, and mama duck is sad. With the routine return of the baby ducks, we are showing children that even though someone may go away for a while, and it may be sad, they will return.

Friend Time: This section includes the use of small Beanie Babies. As we pass them out, children practice waiting their turn and being content with the friend they get that week. Our first song involves holding their friend high in the air and bringing them down to the floor. Our second song involves dropping their friend and picking it back up, which helps children work on following directions quickly. We also put the friends on various body parts throughout the song, helping them build that vocabulary. We always include their belly and say, "What good bellies" to internalize body positivity that will hopefully stay with them through their lives. The things children hear routinely in this part of their life will form their internal monologues throughout adolescence and adulthood. We also always hug our friends during this song. Studies have shown that children who receive and give 3 or more hugs a day have better mental health throughout their lives. Affection allows your child to feel safe, reduces stress, encourages brain growth, reduces depression later in life, and encourages the development of executive function.

Wave Goodbye Like This: This song creates a goodbye routine, which helps your child understand storytime is now over. We take our time to say goodbye, while also reinforcing rhythmic musical concepts used in the beginning of storytime, which will help your child's brain grow healthily.

