



Chat, Play, Read

Fun and simple activities to support babies' and toddlers' communication and language development

In partnership with



Change your story



Chat, play, read

Three simple ways to give your child the best start in life



If you enjoy the activities in this booklet, you will love our newsletter! This will arrive every two weeks with the latest chat, play and read activities, recent news and much more!

Sign up on our website:
[wordsforlife.org.uk/newsletter](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/newsletter)



Simple, fun activities for children

Many little things light up children's brains

Children take everything in. Even the smallest things you do with them can make a big difference to get them ready for the day they start school.



No one knows your child better than you do. Pick and choose the ideas that feel right for you, change our activities or come up with your own.



We know that you are the expert on your child. Some of these activities may take minutes, whereas others may take longer. We want you and your child to enjoy these activities so please don't feel pressured by the clock. You can come back at any point. Follow your child's lead.



Use **#ChatPlayRead** to share pictures and videos of you and your little one doing the activities in this booklet. Each activity has a video too so you can scan the QR codes for more information. We love to see how families use our ideas all over the country!

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Chat activities

The day ahead



The memory game



*Row, row, row
your boat*



*Nappy change
and chat*



Nappy change and chat

Chatting at nappy time helps your child



Your child will like it when you talk to them. By chatting and making faces, you build a bond and help them learn about people.



Good to know

Chatting to your baby from day one gives them the tools they need to learn to speak and understand others.

Top tips for nappy time



Be smiley.



Make different expressions and noises.



Your child likes to watch you and copy. Try sticking your tongue out!



Respond to sounds and faces your child makes.



Stay calm so your child is relaxed and can focus on you.



Try singing one of your favourite nursery rhymes to your baby.

The day ahead



Talking about what you're going to do that day helps your child learn.



Children like routines and knowing what's next.

In the morning, chat to your child about what plans you have. You can do this while feeding them, changing them, travelling or playing.

A good idea is to talk about things in the order that you'll do them in. For example: "First we'll get dressed, then we'll have breakfast."

As your child gets older and learns to speak, you can ask them if they know what's next. It may take them time to learn but just asking helps them pay attention.



Good to know

Routines and knowing what's happening next help us all feel secure and able to learn.

Row, row, row your boat

This nursery rhyme has fun actions and noises to make your child laugh.



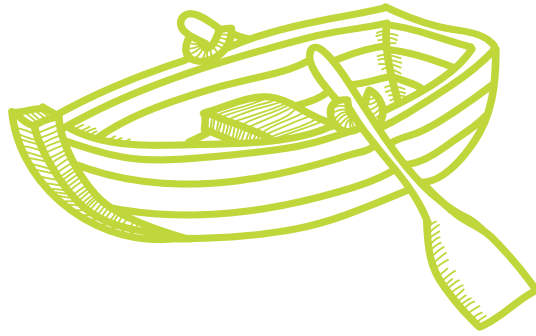
You can help smaller children with simple movements such as putting them on your lap and singing. As your baby can sit securely, they will be able to do more movements and actions independently. Just make sure they have a soft landing!

Sit with your child facing you and hold their hands. Gently move their hands backwards and forwards when you 'row'. Have fun squeaking, screaming or roaring when you see the mouse, crocodile or lion.



Good to know

This song helps with your child's motor skills as they are using their whole body to rock. This can help them with their balance and muscle development.



Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently up the creek.
If you see a little mouse
Don't forget to squeak!

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the river.
If you see a polar bear
Don't forget to shiver!

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
If you see a crocodile
Don't forget to scream!

Row, row, row your boat
Gently to the shore.
If you see a lion
Don't forget to roar!

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.



Good to know

Singing nursery rhymes with your child supports them to learn to talk as they become familiar with the words and rhythm. They may begin to imitate the sounds you make, or join in with the words.

The memory game



This is an easy game to play at home. It encourages your child to talk, think and play.



This fun memory game will help your child communicate and solve problems. Toddlers might discuss the different toys and start to sort them. Older children will enjoy trying to remember what is missing.



Good to know

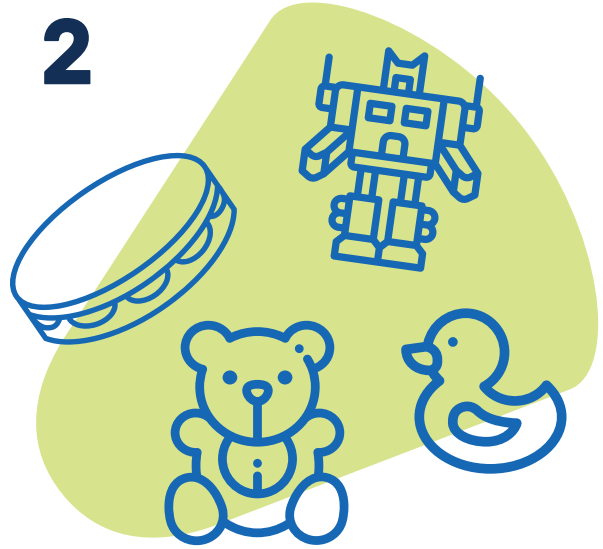
This game helps to build language, concentration and memory.

1



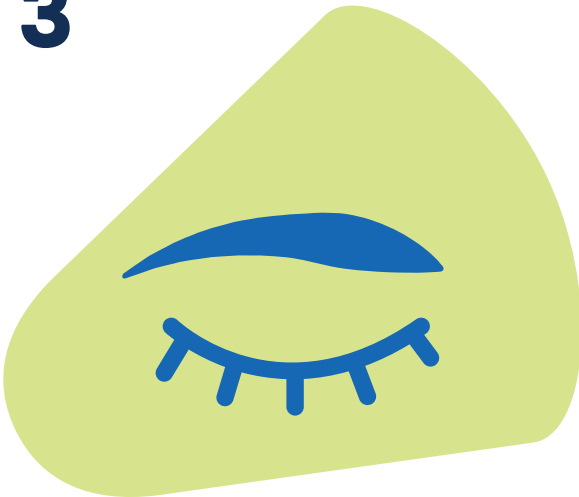
Gather some of your child's favourite toys, books and objects. They can help you with this.

2



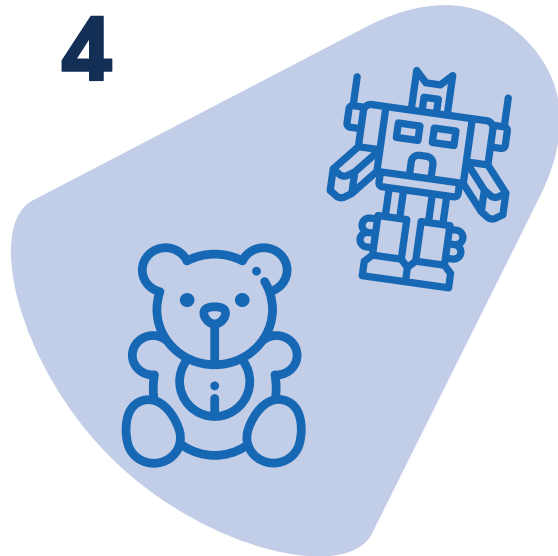
Put them together and talk about what's there.

3



Ask your child to close their eyes and turn around.

4



Remove one of the items. Then get them to open their eyes and see if they can remember what's missing.



Now it is your turn

You can play this game the other way around, with your child removing an item and testing your memory.

Play activities

Bath time fun



Make your own sound box



Zoom, zoom, zoom we're going to the moon



Peek-a-boo

Peek-a-boo



Peek-a-boo is a fun game that young children enjoy!



This is a great game to play when your child is happy and relaxed. You can play this game with your baby in your lap or when your child is laying down and focused on you. Play this game by covering your face with your hands or a blanket. Ask your child “Where did mummy/daddy/your name go?”. Then reveal your face and say “Peek-a-boo!”



Good to know

Tummy time helps your baby to build up strength in their muscles that will help them to sit up, crawl and walk. If your child doesn't like tummy time, a game like this can help keep them entertained.

Bath time fun



Bath time is a good time to chat and play because your child is often relaxed and you have their attention.



Copy your baby's actions or the sounds they make and see how they respond. Talk about what you're doing while you're doing it. For example, when it's time to wash their face say, "Time to wash your face".

If they have a bath with a toy, you can do the action to the toy. For example, "Time to wash ducky's face!"

You can also mime the action. See if your child copies you or makes noises.



Good to know

The more fun you have together, the more your child will learn.

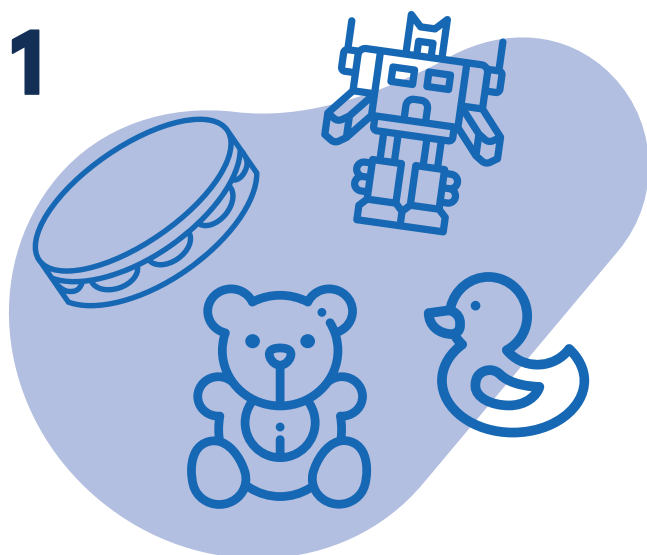
Make your own sound box

There are lots of ways to interact with toys or pictures. One of those ways is by making sounds.

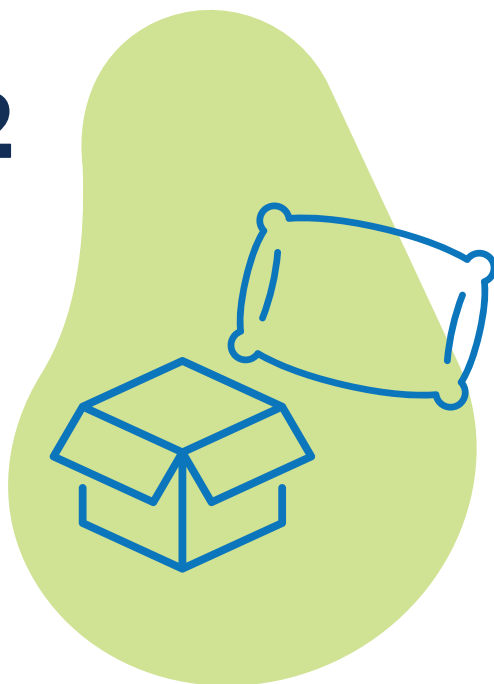


Good to know

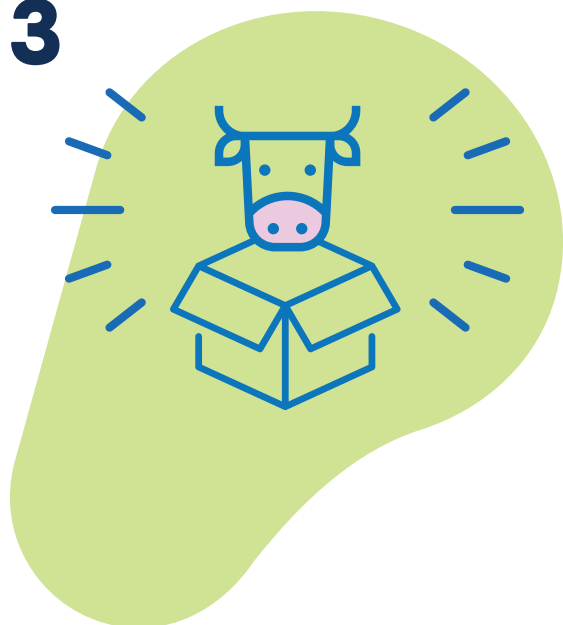
Games with sounds help your child learn to listen better, which is useful for when they're ready to communicate.

1

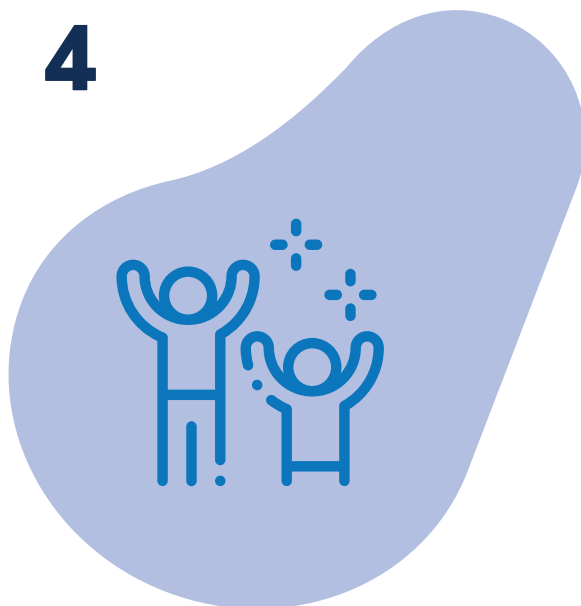
Bring together some familiar objects. These might be toys or pictures of things your child likes. These will go in their 'sound box'.

2

Next, put the objects in a box (or a pillow case will work just as well!).

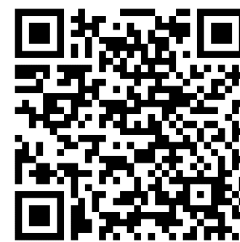
3

Sit with your little one and make the sound of something in the box. For example, a cow goes "moo" or a car goes "vroom". Ask your child to find the toy that made that noise.

4

Encourage them to rummage through the box and find the right thing. When they find it, praise them and say what the object is. For example, 'Well done, you found the cow!'

Zoom, zoom, zoom we're going to the moon



This nursery rhyme has fun actions and noises to make your child laugh.

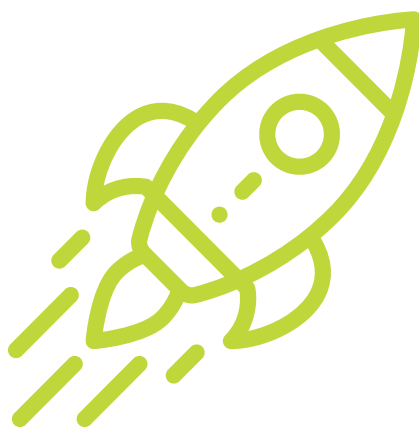


Sit with your child in your arms and gently rock back and forth. Point to the sky and form circles with your arms on your way to the moon. When counting down, increase your volume after every number. When you and your child reach “blast off”, lift them high into the air.



Good to know

This song helps with your child's motor skills as they are using their hands to make shapes. This can help them with their balance and muscle development.



**Attention all astronauts
Please report to the rocket ship
Prepare yourself for blast off
Thank you!
Zoom Zoom Zoom
We're going to the moon
Zoom Zoom Zoom
We're going to the moon
If you want to take the trip
Climb aboard my rocket ship
Zoom Zoom Zoom
We're going to the moon
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1**

We have blast off!

When you reach “blast off”,
lift your child high into the air.



Good to know

You can find books with nursery rhymes in your local library.
Sometimes libraries run free rhyme time sessions.

Read activities

Cosy book time



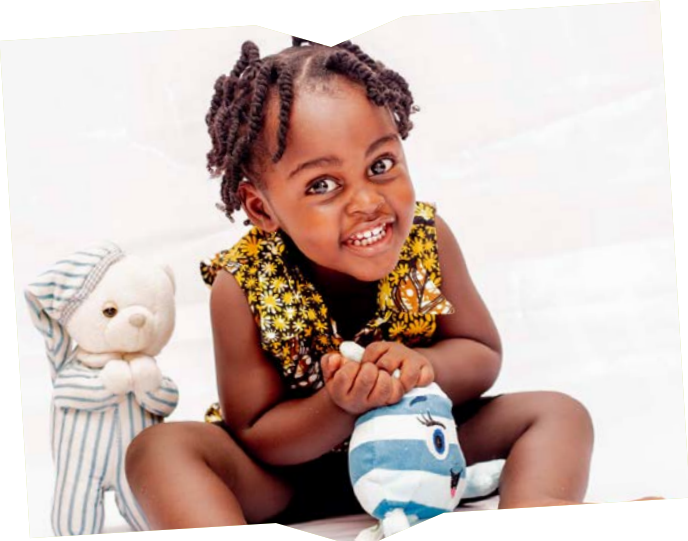
Twinkle twinkle little star



Shopping Together



Teddy's day out



Cosy book time



Children love looking at the pictures and hearing the stories from books.



Finding time each day to look at a book is good for your child's development. It helps them concentrate and learn words. It's also a good opportunity for quiet, cosy time together.

Build a cosy den by hanging a blanket over a table and putting cushions underneath. You can even build a den outside. Sharing a book together in an unexpected place is exciting and children will start to think of books as adventures.

To help build a love for books, you can build story time into your little one's routine. Books can be useful just before bedtime. Looking at a book quietly together can let them know it's time to wind down.

Or it could be in the middle of the day – whenever you think they need some quiet time.



Good to know

Visiting the library can be a social experience for both you and your child. You can also find lots of children's books you can borrow for free.

Top tips for book time

**Look at a book
at any time, it
does not have to
be bedtime**

**Find a
quiet place**

**Talk about the
pictures and
read some or all
of the words**

**Give your child
time to respond**

**Repeat your
child's words**

**Don't read for
too long. Stop
when your
child gets bored**

Shopping together



Your shopping trip can be a chance to chat with your child and show them that letters and words are all around us.



Talk to your child about what you can see as you walk around the shops. Describe the items that you are picking up and encourage your child to do the same. Point out the signs in the shop, logos and labels. This helps your child to understand that letters and words have a purpose.



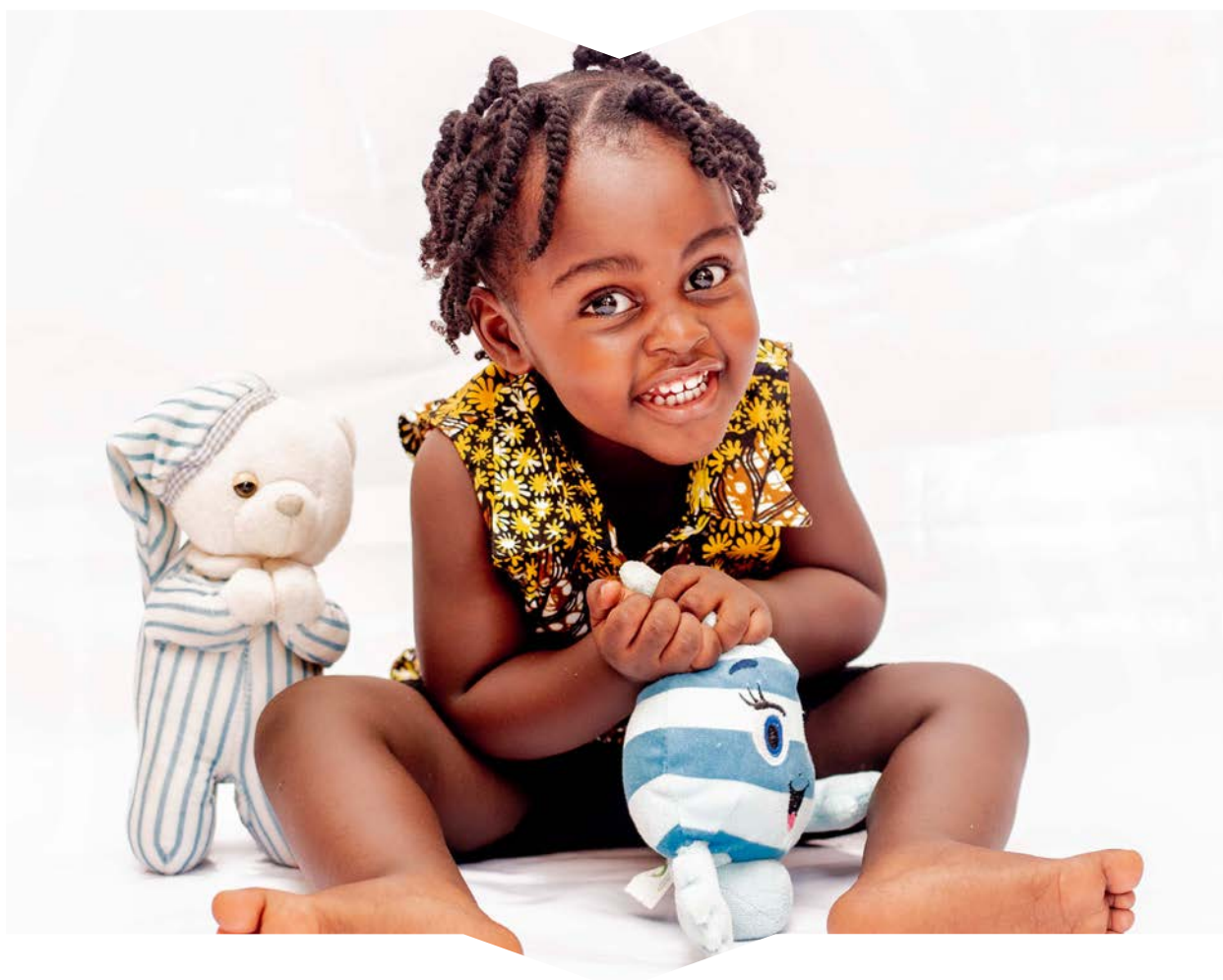
Good to know

Your child might want to create a shopping list, especially if they see you with one. Encourage them to make a mark or draw a picture of each item. They may draw lines or shapes at first.

Teddy's day out



Story time with your child's favourite toy.



This story activity doesn't involve any books. It encourages your child to make up their own story. Choose one of their favourite toys together, like a teddy or a doll. Make it the main character of the story.

If you're stuck for a story idea, try making up a train journey.



Good to know

Making up stories helps nurture children's creativity and imagination.

1 Start with the toy's name and where it lives.

2 Then go on to fill in the blanks:

I am a...

I live in a...

I'm travelling
with...

My best
friend is...

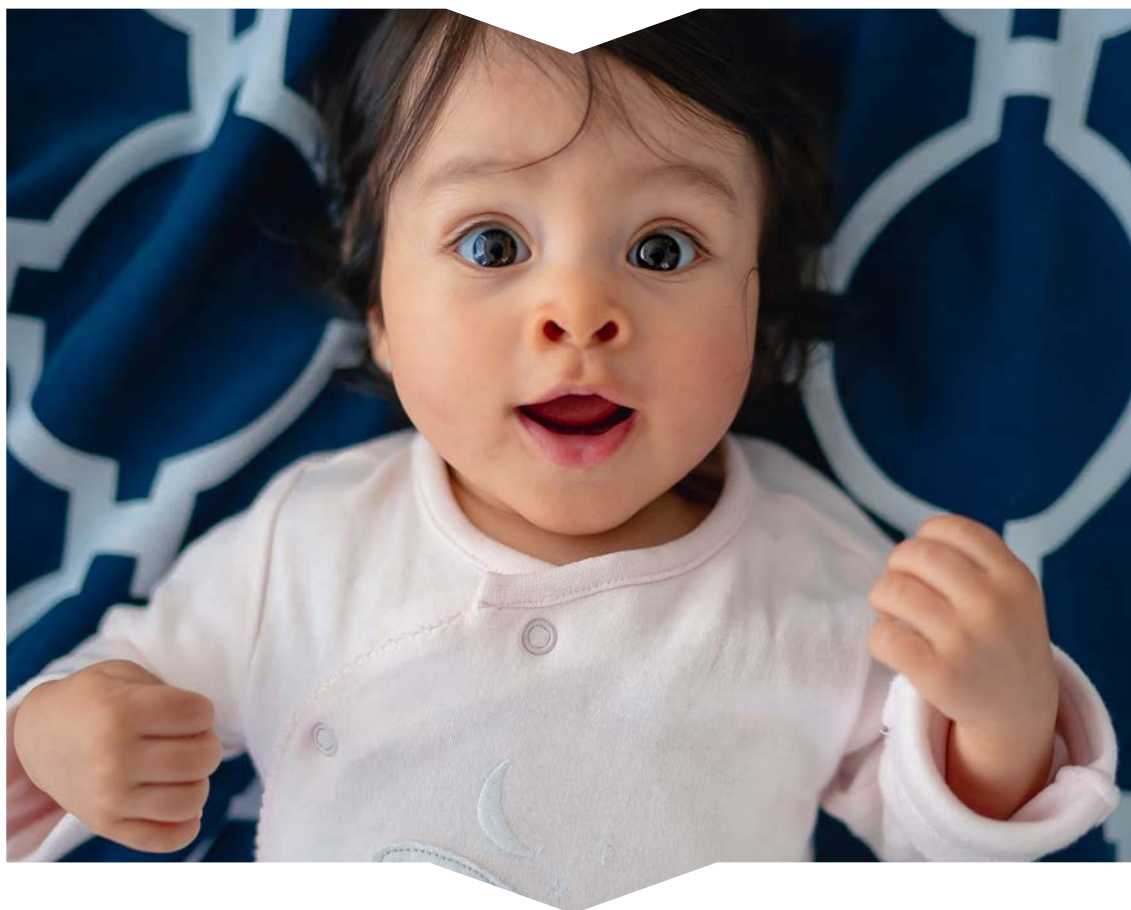
My train is
taking me...

On the way
we saw...

Make up your own prompts as you go. It doesn't matter how silly the story is. Making up stories is fun and helps your child learn to speak and use their imagination.

Twinkle twinkle little star

You can find different nursery rhymes with music in books. Music and singing is a great way to introduce your child to language at an early age.



Sit with your child facing you and show them how to move their hands so they twinkle like a star. Sing the nursery rhyme to your child and make a diamond shape with your fingers.



Good to know

Music can help boost memory and attention skills. It also lowers stress and can calm an upset child.



Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are



Good to know

Singing nursery rhymes with your child supports language, pre-reading and pre-writing skills as they learn to hear different sounds and words in the rhymes.

You can find more ideas for fun activities to add to your routine at:

[wordsforlife.org.uk](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk)

[nhs.uk/start-for-life/early-learning-development](https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/early-learning-development)


[bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people](https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)


About The National Literacy Trust


The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed.

Literacy changes everything. It gives you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. It opens the door to the life you want. But low literacy is inextricably linked to poverty. Over the last 30 years, we have continued to work with people who need us the most, supporting schools, families and communities on a local and national level.

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