

Rhyme Time: Helping Your Child Hear Rhyming Words

Key points

- Hearing that words like 'cat' and 'hat' sound alike is called phonological awareness, and it's one of the early building blocks for reading.
- Spotting rhymes usually comes before children start blending letter sounds together in phonics, so it's a gentle first step, not something extra to add on.
- Children pick this up through everyday sounds and play, long before they're reading words on a page.
- Nursery rhymes, songs and picture books are natural, playful ways to notice rhyme without it feeling like a lesson.
- Every child develops this skill at their own pace, including children learning English as an additional language and children with SEND.
- Your child's school may already be covering this in Reception, so it's worth asking their teacher how it's being introduced in class.

Things to try at home

- Sing familiar nursery rhymes together and pause before the rhyming word to see if your child wants to fill it in.
- Play a silly 'what rhymes with...' game using everyday objects you can see, like a cup, a sock or a spoon.
- Read picture books with rhyming text and let your child join in with the words they remember.
- Make up funny nonsense rhymes together in the car or at bath time, just for fun.
- Clap or tap out the beat of a rhyme to help your child notice the sound pattern.

Find out more

- Ask your child's class teacher how rhyme and sound awareness are being introduced this term.
- GOV.UK has guidance on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework for England, including the Communication and Language and Literacy areas.
- The Department for Education's guidance pages on early reading and phonics explain how these early skills fit into learning to read.