Rhyming Words

Background Information
A child's level of phonological awareness is one of the critical factors that predicts that child's later success in reading. Phonological awareness is an understanding of the sound structure of words. It is an understanding that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds. In the beginning of children's language development, they do not need to be able to read or recognize the letters of the alphabet in order to develop phonological awareness. It is all about hearing words and sounds. Later, they will learn how sounds work in print.

Purpose
This multi-part activity will focus on developing one aspect of children's phonological awareness: knowledge of rhyming words. In developing awareness of rhyming words, children need to understand what rhyme means. Rhyming words are words that sound the same at the end of the word. For example, the words can and pan have different beginnings but they sound the same at the end because they both end with the sound -an. The part of the word that rhymes is called the rime.
Nursery Rhymes and Stories

1. Show children the picture of Humpty Dumpty sitting on the wall. Ask them, **What do you see in this picture? What do you think is happening?** If children don’t know this nursery rhyme, tell them that Humpty Dumpty is a character from long ago. Point to Humpty Dumpty and ask, **Is Humpty Dumpty a person? What is he?** (an egg) Ask, **Where is Humpty Dumpty sitting?** (on a wall) Ask, **What do you think would happen if Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall?** (He would crack. He would smash.) **Why do you think that?** (because I dropped an egg once and it broke and made a big mess) Ask, **Do you think this is going to be a real/true story?** (no) **Tell me why you think so.** (because that is a cartoon picture; because eggs don’t have faces, arms, and legs)

2. Read the nursery rhyme aloud to children:

   Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
   Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
   All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
   Could not put Humpty Dumpty together again.

As you read to the children a second time, point out the first two words that rhyme: wall and fall. Say, **Wall and fall rhyme because they sound the same at the end.** They both end with the sound -all. Ask children, **What other words can you think of that rhyme with wall?** (hall, mall, ball, call, tall) Ask, **How do you know that the word you said rhymes with fall and wall?** (because the ending of the word sounds the same as the ending of wall; they both end with the sound -all)

3. Select other nursery rhymes and poems and stories featuring rhymes to share with children. As you read, ask children to listen for rhyming words and to raise their hand when they hear words that rhyme.

To Rhyme or Not to Rhyme?

1. Select two words that rhyme, such as mat and cat. Say the two words aloud and ask children, **Do these two words rhyme?** (yes) **How do you know they rhyme?** (They both sound the same at the end. They both end with the sound -at.)

2. Select two words that start with the same letter but that do not rhyme, such as rake and room. Say the words aloud and ask, **Do these two words rhyme?** (no) **How do you know?** (They do not sound the same at the end. Rake sounds like -ake at the end and room sounds like -oom at the end.)

3. Note that sometimes children may focus on the beginning sounds in the words and not listen to the entire word. Remind children that rhyming words sound the same at the end.

4. Continue with other pairs of rhyming and non-rhyming words. You might take turns and let children choose two words and ask you whether the two words rhyme or do not rhyme.
5. A list of Rhyme Family Word Endings is included below to help you make up rhyming words. Remember that children are listening for rhyming words that sound the same—they do not have to be spelled the same. For example, light and kite sound the same but are spelled differently.

Make Rhyming Books
1. Children can make their own rhyming books. Select a word that rhymes with many words, such as cat. Invite children to draw a cat on a page in their rhyming book. Then have them draw pictures of other things that rhyme with cat, such as hat, rat, bat, or mat. Alternatively, children could look in magazines or newspapers to find pictures of items that rhyme with cat. Ask children to explain why each item they drew or picture they found rhymes with the word cat.
2. Have children add other pages to their rhyming book using other word endings.

Play a Rhyme Concentration Game
1. Make drawings or cut out photographs of items that rhyme (e.g., a lake and a cake, a cat and a hat, a moon and a loon). Glue each picture to a blank piece of paper or cardboard to make cards for the game of Concentration. You may wish to have your child help you make the cards.
2. Place all the cards face-down in rows at random.
3. Children turn over two cards, say the name of the two items depicted on the cards, and decide whether the two words rhyme. If the two cards show pictures of items that rhyme, the child removes that pair of cards from the game. If the items in the pictures do not rhyme, the child turns the cards over and tries again.
4. You may wish to play this game with other members of the family. During play, if the person who turns over the two cards does not make a match, it is the next person's turn. The player who turns over the greatest number of matching cards at the end of the game wins.

Which One Is Not Like the Other Ones?
1. Select one of the Rhyme Family Word Endings from the list provided below, for example, -ock. Identify several rhyming words that have this ending, such as dock, clock, sock, and rock. Also select one word that does not rhyme with these words, such as rain.
2. Tell children that they will be listening for words that belong to a particular rhyme family. Tell them the rhyme family ending that they are going to be listening for (e.g., -ock). Say one example of a word that ends with this sound (e.g., lock).
3. Read out a list of words that have that word ending mixed up with some words that do not have that ending (e.g., sock, rock, song, block, flock, wok, and so on). Ask children to clap every time they hear a rhyming word that ends with -ock.
4. You may wish to have children make a humorous gesture or a funny face when they hear a word that does not rhyme.
5. Repeat this game for other rhyme family word endings. Vary the placement of the non-rhyming words.
Rhyme Family Word Endings

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