St George's Nursery Rhyme Progression

Nursery Rhyme Progression for Nursery

Why Nursery Rhymes Matter

Nursery rhymes are an important part of early childhood development, supporting children's communication, language and literacy skills. Through repeated experiences of singing, listening and performing nursery rhymes, children develop vocabulary, memory, listening and attention, phonological awareness, rhythm and rhyme. These skills help children recognise patterns in language and provide a strong foundation for future reading and writing success.

Research suggests that children who know a range of nursery rhymes demonstrate stronger phonological awareness skills, which are closely linked to later reading achievement. Studies by Bryant, MacLean, Bradley and Crossland (1989) found that knowledge of nursery rhymes in the early years was a strong predictor of later literacy development, particularly children's awareness of rhyme and sound patterns.

Nursery rhymes also support children's oral language development by exposing them to rich vocabulary, repetitive language structures and opportunities for shared interactions with adults and peers. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights the importance of developing children's spoken language and vocabulary as a foundation for future literacy success.

In addition, nursery rhymes help children develop memory, sequencing skills, listening and attention, mathematical concepts such as counting and pattern, and confidence in speaking and performing. Through regular exposure to nursery rhymes, children build the knowledge and skills needed to become successful communicators, readers and writers.

Nursery Autumn Term	Nursery Spring Term	Nursery Summer Term
Listening, Joining In and Familiarity **Autumn 1** • I can listen to familiar nursery rhymes. • I can watch and copy simple actions. • I can join in with repeated words and sounds. • I can respond to music by moving my body. • I can show enjoyment when singing nursery rhymes. • I can recognise some familiar nursery rhymes. **Autumn 2** • I can join in with actions independently. • I can join in with repeated phrases.	Building Confidence, Memory and Participation **Spring 1** • I can join in with familiar nursery rhymes using actions and some words. • I can remember and repeat key words and phrases. • I can join in at the correct time during a familiar rhyme. • I can recognise several familiar nursery rhymes. • I can use actions to help me remember a rhyme. • I can participate in group singing activities. **Spring 2**	Recalling, Retelling and Exploring Rhyme **Summer 1** • I can sing familiar nursery rhymes with confidence. • I can recall key words and phrases from familiar nursery rhymes. • I can join in with an entire nursery rhyme. • I can talk about characters and events in a nursery rhyme. • I can recognise when two words rhyme. • I can choose and request my favourite nursery rhymes. **Summer 2** • I can recite some familiar nursery rhymes from memory.

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• I can remember parts of familiar nursery rhymes. • I can anticipate familiar actions and words. • I can recognise when a nursery rhyme is beginning. • I can choose a favourite nursery rhyme. End of Autumn Term I can join in with familiar nursery rhymes using actions, sounds and some words.	• I can join in with most of the words in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can remember the sequence of events in simple nursery rhymes. • I can suggest what might come next in a familiar rhyme. • I can identify characters and objects in nursery rhymes. • I can recognise when words sound the same at the end. • I can sing familiar nursery rhymes with growing confidence. End of Spring Term I can confidently join in with familiar nursery rhymes, remember key words and phrases, and begin to notice rhyme and repetition.	• I can remember the order of events in simple nursery rhymes. • I can identify rhyming words in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can use actions, expressions and movements when performing nursery rhymes. • I can discuss what happens in a nursery rhyme. • I can confidently join in with group performances of nursery rhymes. End of Nursery I can confidently join in with familiar nursery rhymes, remember and recite parts of them, recognise rhyming words and talk about what happens in the rhyme.

Vocabulary Development

Through regular exposure to nursery rhymes, children will develop and use vocabulary related to actions, movement, listening, counting, rhythm and rhyme. Practitioners will model and encourage the use of language such as **sing, song, action, clap, tap, listen, join in, rhyme, count, loud, quiet, fast, slow, remember, repeat, character, happy, sad, big, little, start** and **stop** to support children's communication, language and early literacy development.

The nursery rhymes have been carefully selected to support children's development of listening and attention, communication and language, vocabulary, memory, rhythm, rhyme, counting, physical development and early literacy skills.

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Autumn 1 - Focus: Listening, joining in and actions	Spring 1 - Focus: Memory, repetition and recall	Summer 1 - Focus: Recall, rhyme and number awareness
I'm a Little Teapot – Encourages children to join in with actions and follow simple movements. Tommy Thumb – Supports finger awareness, body vocabulary and imitation skills. Incy Wincy Spider – Develops sequencing, actions and storytelling through movement. Wind the Bobbin Up – Encourages participation, listening and gross motor development. Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes – Supports body awareness and vocabulary development. Hickory Dickory Dock – Introduces rhythm, repetition and early counting concepts.	Miss Polly Had a Dolly – Develops storytelling, vocabulary and recall. Humpty Dumpty – Encourages discussion about characters and events. This Little Piggy Went to Market – Supports sequencing and counting. Hickety Pickety – Develops listening and memory skills. Frere Jacques – Introduces pattern, repetition and listening to different languages. Sleeping Bunnies – Encourages listening, following instructions and participation.	Round and Round the Garden – Encourages anticipation and participation. Here Is a Beehive – Develops counting and finger awareness. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive – Supports number recognition and rhyme. Five Little Ducks – Develops counting backwards and memory. The Mulberry Bush – Encourages movement and discussion about daily routines.
Autumn 2 - Focus: Listening, memory and participation	**Spring 2 - Focus: Building confidence and recognising patterns**	**Summer 2 - Focus: Performance, sequencing and confidence**
Here's the Church – Encourages finger movements, anticipation and vocabulary. See Saw Margery Daw – Develops rhythm, turn-taking and movement. Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star – Supports memory, repetition and vocabulary. I Hear Thunder – Encourages listening skills and discussion about weather. The North Wind – Introduces seasonal vocabulary and expressive movement. Jingle Bells – Supports rhythm, memory and seasonal celebrations.	Pat-a-Cake – Supports rhythm, turn-taking and memory. Two Little Dickie Birds – Develops finger movements and positional language. Hot Cross Buns – Introduces rhyme and repeated language patterns. Baa Baa Black Sheep – Supports recall and repetitive language. Little Bo-Peep – Develops storytelling and character understanding. Old MacDonald Had a Farm – Builds animal vocabulary and listening to environmental sounds.	Pussycat, Pussycat – Introduces place names and storytelling. Row, Row, Row Your Boat – Develops rhythm, cooperation and memory. The Wheels on the Bus – Supports vocabulary and repetitive language patterns. Ring a Ring o' Roses – Encourages group participation and rhythm. Ride a Cock Horse – Develops imagination and storytelling. Hokey Cokey – Supports body awareness and following instructions. Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed – Develops counting, recall and sequencing.

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Nursery Rhyme Progression For Reception		
Reception Autumn Term	**Reception Spring Term**	**Reception Summer Term**
Recalling, Performing and Exploring Nursery Rhymes **Autumn 1** • I can confidently join in with familiar nursery rhymes. • I can recall and recite parts of familiar nursery rhymes from memory. • I can use actions and expressions when performing nursery rhymes. • I can talk about the characters and events in a nursery rhyme. • I can recognise words that rhyme in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can explain the meaning of some familiar words from nursery rhymes. **Autumn 2** • I can recite familiar nursery rhymes with increasing independence. • I can remember and sequence the main events in a nursery rhyme. • I can identify pairs of rhyming words. • I can predict missing words and phrases in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can compare familiar nursery rhymes and talk about similarities and differences. • I can perform nursery rhymes confidently in a group. End of Reception Autumn Term I can confidently recite familiar nursery rhymes, identify rhyming words, recall key events and	Analysing, Retelling and Playing with Language **Spring 1** • I can recite a range of familiar nursery rhymes from memory. • I can identify and explain rhyming words in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can retell a nursery rhyme in my own words. • I can discuss the characters, events and settings in nursery rhymes. • I can explain the meaning of unfamiliar words with support. • I can identify repeated words and phrases in nursery rhymes. **Spring 2** • I can generate my own rhyming words. • I can recognise when words do not rhyme. • I can sequence the events in a familiar nursery rhyme. • I can compare different nursery rhymes and discuss similarities and differences. • I can use vocabulary from nursery rhymes in my play and conversations. • I can perform nursery rhymes confidently using expression, actions and appropriate volume. End of Reception Spring Term I can recite familiar nursery rhymes from memory, identify and generate rhyming words, retell rhymes	Creating, Adapting and Applying Nursery Rhyme Knowledge **Summer 1** • I can confidently recite a range of familiar nursery rhymes from memory. • I can identify rhyming words in familiar nursery rhymes. • I can suggest my own rhyming words. • I can retell familiar nursery rhymes in my own words. • I can discuss the characters, events and vocabulary in nursery rhymes. • I can perform nursery rhymes independently and in a group. **Summer 2** • I can create simple rhyming strings. • I can adapt parts of a familiar nursery rhyme by changing words or characters. • I can explain why words rhyme. • I can identify patterns and repetition in nursery rhymes. • I can use vocabulary from nursery rhymes in my speaking and storytelling. • I can confidently perform and share nursery rhymes with others. End of Reception I can confidently recite a range of nursery rhymes from memory, identify and generate rhyming words, retell and

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characters, and perform nursery rhymes with expression and confidence.	in my own words, and discuss their characters, events and vocabulary.	adapt familiar rhymes, discuss their meaning and vocabulary, and perform them with confidence.

Reception Vocabulary Development

Through regular exposure to nursery rhymes, children will develop and use a wider range of vocabulary related to rhythm, rhyme, sequencing, storytelling and performance. Practitioners will model and encourage the use of language such as **rhythm, beat, rhyme, sequence, predict, repeat, character, audience, performance, remember, retell, compare, describe, discuss, explain, pattern, verse, beginning, middle, end, similar** and **different** to support children's communication, language, phonological awareness and early literacy development.

The nursery rhymes have been carefully selected to build upon children's previous experiences of nursery rhymes in Nursery. They support the development of phonological awareness, vocabulary, memory, storytelling, sequencing, rhythm, rhyme and confidence in speaking and performing.

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Autumn 1 - Focus: Recall, performance and vocabulary	Spring 1 - Focus: Retelling, vocabulary and understanding	Summer 1 - Focus: Phonological awareness and comparison
If You're Happy and You Know It – Encourages children to perform confidently and follow instructions. Days of the Week – Supports sequencing and understanding of time-related vocabulary. Monday's Child – Introduces descriptive vocabulary and pattern. Polly Put the Kettle On – Develops memory and recall of longer rhymes. The Animal Fair – Supports vocabulary development and discussion. The Muffin Man – Encourages recall, questioning and participation.	One, Two, Buckle My Shoe – Reinforces counting and rhyme patterns. Sing a Song of Sixpence – Introduces rich and unfamiliar vocabulary. Old King Cole – Encourages discussion about characters and events. ABC Song – Supports letter knowledge and early literacy. This Old Man – Develops memory, counting and repetition. There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly – Encourages sequencing, recall and storytelling.	London Bridge – Encourages cooperation, rhythm and participation. Little Miss Muffet – Supports storytelling and vocabulary development. Down in the Jungle – Encourages movement, imagination and descriptive language. I Had a Little Nut Tree – Introduces new vocabulary and discussion. Oranges and Lemons – Develops memory and listening skills.
Autumn 2 - Focus: Memory, sequencing and rhyme	**Spring 2 - Focus: Rhyme recognition and language development**	**Summer 2 - Focus: Creativity, performance and confidence**
Five Little Men in a Flying Saucer – Develops counting, sequencing and recall. Pease Porridge Hot – Supports memory through repetition and rhythm. Ten in the Bed – Encourages counting backwards and prediction. Hey Diddle Diddle – Introduces imaginative language and discussion. Ten Green Bottles – Develops number knowledge and sequencing. Five Little Snowmen – Supports counting and seasonal vocabulary.	Mary Had a Little Lamb – Supports discussion about characters and events. Five Currant Buns – Develops counting, rhyme and simple problem-solving. Dingle Dangle Scarecrow – Encourages performance and movement. The Grand Old Duke of York – Supports understanding of positional language and sequencing. Five Speckled Frogs – Develops counting backwards and recall. Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary – Introduces descriptive vocabulary and discussion.	Five Little Monkeys Swinging in the Tree – Develops sequencing, recall and prediction. The Queen of Hearts – Encourages discussion about characters and story events. Apples and Bananas – Supports listening to and manipulating sounds in words. My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean – Develops memory and confidence when singing longer rhymes. Bobby Shaftoe – Introduces traditional language and vocabulary. Ten Fat Sausages – Reinforces counting and number patterns.
End of Reception		

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By the end of Reception, children will have experienced a broad range of traditional nursery rhymes and songs. They will be able to confidently recall and perform familiar rhymes, identify and generate rhyming words, discuss characters and events, explain new vocabulary and demonstrate the phonological awareness needed to support early reading and writing.

Assessment Checkpoints

Nursery Autumn	Nursery Spring	Nursery Summer
✓ Joins in with simple actions and movements. ✓ Shows enjoyment when listening to nursery rhymes. ✓ Recognises some familiar nursery rhymes. ✓ Participates in group singing with adult support.	✓ Joins in with repeated words and phrases. ✓ Remembers key words from familiar nursery rhymes. ✓ Anticipates familiar actions and parts of rhymes. ✓ Begins to notice when words sound the same.	✓ Recites parts of familiar nursery rhymes. ✓ Recognises rhyming words in familiar rhymes. ✓ Talks about characters and events in a nursery rhyme. ✓ Participates confidently in group performances.
Reception Autumn	**Reception Spring**	**Reception Summer**
✓ Recites familiar nursery rhymes with increasing independence. ✓ Identifies rhyming words in familiar nursery rhymes. ✓ Recalls key events and characters. ✓ Performs nursery rhymes confidently with actions and expression.	✓ Recites a range of nursery rhymes from memory. ✓ Generates simple rhyming words. ✓ Retells familiar nursery rhymes in their own words. ✓ Discusses characters, events and vocabulary.	✓ Confidently recalls and performs a range of nursery rhymes. ✓ Identifies and generates rhyming words. ✓ Adapts parts of familiar nursery rhymes. ✓ Explains vocabulary, characters and events. ✓ Demonstrates the phonological awareness needed to support early reading and writing.