

Word Wonders Activity 7: Baby Animals Count and Rhyme

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Enjoy rhymes and rhyming stories (18 to 24 months)
- Recognize rhyming words (36 to 48 months)
- Re-tell a story using words and/or actions (18 to 48 months)
- Sequence a story using visual prompts (36 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, younger children will be exposed to rhymes, while older children will practice producing rhymes, using pictures as a prompt. The rhymes provided for this game give children exposure to words with the same ending sound and a different beginning sound. Children also have an opportunity to re-tell the story through actions/gestures and words, as well as sequence the story, using visual prompts as support.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *Over in the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats

For Activity 1 (Engage):

Handout 1: Rhyming Babies Counting Classroom Book

- Glue sticks (enough for your group)
- Crayons or other writing utensils (one per child)
- Small blocks or manipulatives that children can use for counting quantities up to 5 (for younger children) or 10 (for older children)

Additional materials for 36 to 48 month olds:

- One small basket or bin per child in your group
- Small whiteboard and marker

For Activity 2 (Expand):

Handout 2: Count and Rhyme Baby Animals

Optional: 5 Manila folders, stapler or glue

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

For 18 to 36 month olds:

- Make 5 copies of the first page of **Handout 1**. Using a three-hole punch, make holes in each page so they can be added to the binder when you're done.
- Make a copy of the animals (quantities of 1 to 5) from **Handout 1** and cut out each of the images. Clip these and place them in an envelope until you are ready for the activity. If you want to plan ahead and assign specific children to specific quantities, write their names in pencil on the back of the images. If you have more than 5 children participating, scale up the pages and animal images so there is one per child.
- Gather small blocks or other manipulatives to support the counting component of the game and place them in a basket or bin. Keep close until needed.
- Keep glue sticks and crayons aside until needed.

For 36 to 48 month olds:

- Make 10 copies of the first page of **Handout 1**. Using a three-hole punch, make holes in each page so they can be added to the binder when you're done.
- Make a copy of the animals in **Handout 1** and cut out each of the images. Clip these and place them in an envelope until you are ready for the activity. If you want to plan ahead and assign specific children to specific quantities, write their names in pencil on the back of the images. If you have more than 5 children participating, scale up the pages and animal images so there is one per child..
- Place ten blocks or manipulatives in a basket or bin and prepare one basket for each child in your group. Keep the whiteboard/marker close by until needed.
- Keep glue sticks and crayons aside until needed.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Print the animal sets from **Handout 2** (10 pages if you choose to do the entire book).
- *Optional:* Laminate these pages or glue/staple them to manila folder halves to make them sturdier and easier to reuse.
- Identify a space in the room where all children can gather in a circle for this activity.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Book: *Over in the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** *In this book, we will meet lots of different animal mothers and their babies.*
- **Define new words and phrases.** You might introduce key vocabulary like: *meadow* (a wide grassy area where animals can live), *reed* (a plant that grows in water and looks like a tall grass), *burrow* (dig),

bask (to lie in the sun for relaxation), and *glen* (a valley, or a place between two big hills). Help children connect these new words to their lives: *Have you ever burrowed, or dug a hole? Where?*

- **Support phonemic awareness.** Tell the children *“Every page in this story has rhyming words, those are two words that sound the same at the end”*. Emphasize these sounds as you read. On subsequent readings, you may want to pause and notice aloud: *I hear a rhyme on this page: tree and three rhyme because they sound the same at the end! Your turn, say tree, three. These words...* (pause to see if children will say *“rhyme.”* If they don’t, you can start the word by prompting *“Rrrrr...”* or simply saying, *“They rhyme!”*).
- **Support early math learning.** Use the story to practice counting. On each page, take a moment to count the animals (quantities grow from one to 10). Point to each baby and count aloud; encourage children to join in. On subsequent reads, invite a different child to come up and count the animals on each page with you.
- **Prompt children to repeat key phrases. Pause for children to fill-in-the-blank.** Encourage children’s participation during repeated readings by pausing at the second word in each rhyming pair to see if children can fill it in. For example, *“Sing! Said the mother. ‘We sing,’ said the three. So they sang and were glad, In the hole in the ____ (pause)”* (tree). Point to the picture as a “clue” to prompt children if needed.
- **Make connections to children’s lives.** Help children make connections between the book and their life experience. For example, ask if they, like the baby turtles, like to dig in the sand and lie in the sun. Have they ever gone swimming—what was that like? Where did they swim? Do they enjoy hearing birds sing? Have they ever seen lightning bugs?

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Introduce the activity: *The story today showed us lots of pictures of different animal babies with their mothers. Today we’ll work together to make a classroom “How Many Babies?” book!*

Select a child to begin by giving them the **turtle** image (quantity of 1). Name the animal (or ask the child if they know what animal is in the picture).

Show children the first page of the book. Read the text on the page as you point to each word.

Ask: *“How many babies are having fun in the sun?”* Have the child hold up the turtle image so others can see.

Together, count the total number of animal babies. Point to each baby as you count it.

Ask and answer the question: *How many babies are having fun in the sun? One baby turtle is having fun in the sun!*

- **For young children (18 to 36 months):** Hold out the basket of manipulatives and ask each child to choose **one**. Repeat: *You have one! One baby turtle is having fun in the sun!*
- **For older children (36 to 48 months):** Distribute a basket of manipulatives to each child. Ask them to take **one** block out of their baskets—hold up the turtle image as a visual prompt. Using a small whiteboard, write the numeral “1” and repeat: *How many babies are having fun in the sun?* (Pause for a response. Repeat:) *One baby turtle is having fun in the sun!*

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Using manipulatives to represent quantities is a great way to help children learn to count, practice one-to-one correspondence (each object in a set is assigned one number when counting), and to understand cardinality (the concept of quantity).

Explain that in the book we met many animal families. Ask: Who is in your family? As children share who is in their family, count out this quantity of blocks and encourage the child to count with you and/or say the names of different family members as you touch each block.

You can also use the blocks to take votes: Who would rather dig and who would rather swim? Have children “vote” by placing their block under their preferred picture from the book. Count together to see which activity was the class favorite.

Next, the selected child can glue the animal image in the square on the handout.

Write the child's name on the first line of text. Point to the child's name and explain: I wrote (*Thomas*) name. This says: THOMAS.

Repeat this routine for each page, finishing at 5 (honeybees, for children aged 18 months to 36 months) or 10 (fireflies, for children 36 months to 48 months).

For children 36 to 48 months:

For each page of the book, **share additional silly rhymes** (see below). Emphasize the rhyming words and ask children if they can hear which words sound the same at the end. Ask if children want to try to make their own rhymes.

- The turtle is **slow**, on grass or **snow**!
- The **fishes** make **wishes**.
- The bluebirds **fly** in the **sky**.
- The muskrats I **met** were soaking **wet**.
- The **bees** are in the **trees**.
- The crow's **nest** is the **best**.
- The **cricket** has a movie **ticket**.
- The lizard by the **gate** is running **late**.
- The frog in the **pool** is very **cool**.
- The firefly is all **right** at **night**.

Combine the pages into the binder.

For young children (18 to 36 months): Read the book to children when you are done. Pause and wait to see if children will fill in the word "sun" or even the phrase "fun in the sun."

For older children (36 to 48 months): Encourage children to chant the rhyming prompt with you as you read each page. Let older children "read" their pages independently if they wish.

Include the book in the classroom library for children to read during free play. You can also make a copy of this book to share with each family to engage them in this week's activity.

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

Introduce: Our story had lots of rhymes in it, like **one** and **sun** and **two** and **blue**. So, let's play another rhyming game. Remember that rhyming words are words that sound the same at the end.

Ask: How do we know if it's rhyming word? I have a song that helps!

(To the tune of Mary Had a Little Lamb)
One and sun are rhyming words,
Rhyming words, rhyming words,
One and sun are rhyming words,
The ending sounds the same.
Two and blue are rhyming words,
Rhyming words, rhyming words,
Two and blue are rhyming words,
The ending sounds the same.

Place the animal images on the floor in a large circle in the order of the book: Turtle, Fish, Bluebird, Muskrat, Honeybee, Crow, Cricket, Lizard, Frog, and Firefly.

Keep the book nearby to read.

Note: You can stop at 5 or 6 animals (honeybee/crow), depending on your group's size, engagement, and counting skills.

Demonstrate how to play: Stand or kneel behind the turtle image.

Say: *Look! Here is the turtle baby. Let's count: (point) there is one turtle baby!*

Read: *Over in the meadow, in the sand, in the sun, Lived an old mother turtle and her little turtle one. "Dig!" said the mother. "I dig," said the one. So he dug all day in the sand, in the sun.*

Prompt: Let's say the rhyming words: *One and Sun. They rhyme because they sound the same at the end. Let's say those rhymes again: One and sun! One and sun!* (For older children, pause after you say "One" to see if they will fill in "Sun.")

Prompt: *Let's be like the little turtle one and pretend to dig in the sand, in the sun!*

Assign a child to stand or sit behind each image.

Repeat the game:

1. **Going in order of the book, name** the animal: *You are sitting near the fish! It's your turn to stand up!*
2. **Count** the babies: *Let's count how many baby fish there are in your picture: (point to each) 1, 2. Two baby fish!* (Have the selected child lead the counting, if they are ready to do so.)
3. **Read** that page of the book: *Over in the meadow, where the stream runs blue, Lived an old mother fish and her little fishes two. "Swim!" said the mother. "We swim," said the two. So they swam and they leaped, Where the stream runs blue.*
4. **Repeat the rhyme:** *Hey everyone! I heard a rhyme! Did you hear the rhyme? Two and Blue rhyme. They sound the same at the end! Let's say those rhymes again: Two and Blue. Two and Blue.* (Make it fun, clap along, use an excited voice. Encourage older children to join in.)
5. **Prompt** children to act out the target verb in the text, with the standing child as the "leader": *Now let's swim like the fishes! [Child's Name] will be our leader!* (Model the action. Encourage children to get up and move. Don't worry if they listen to the story while standing.)

Continue this pattern until you have completed all ten animals, or the quantity that is right for your class. See below for suggested sounds/actions:

Turtle	Dig with hands
Fishes	Swim with hands and arms
Bluebirds	Say, "Tweet, Tweet." Flap arms as if flying.
Muskrat	Hold hands over head in diving stance and jump up.
Honeybee	Buzz. Wiggle your middle.
Crow	Say, "Caw-Caw." Flap arms as if flying.
Cricket	Hop forward.
Lizard	Stretch out and pretend to sleep.
Frog	Say, "Ribbit-Ribbit." Jump up and down.
Firefly	Open/close hands and sway like a twinkling star.

Use the rhyming song if you wish to reinforce the rhyming words.

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children. To close the activity, use each child's name to create a rhyme. For example: *Today we talked about mothers and babies, and learned about rhyming and counting. Now let's see if I can turn your name into a rhyme. If you hear your name, raise your hand!*

- *I see Boah Noah.*
- *I see Weveah Neveah.*
- *I see Jevin Devin.*
- And so on.

For children aged 36 months and up, when you are done, you might ask if they want to try to make a rhyme using their name.

Summarize: *Today we learned about how to listen for rhymes. Rhymes are words that sound the same at the end. We listened for rhymes as we acted out the baby animal adventures in our book!*

INDIVIDUALIZING THE ACTIVITY

Make it more challenging:

Activity 1

- Ask children if they would like to add additional text to "their" page of the book about the animals pictured. Let the child dictate to you what they would like to say as you write their words on the page.
- Invite children to write their name on the first line of text in the classroom book, rather than have the teacher do it. Offer a thick pencil, crayon, or thin marker for them to use when attempting to write their name on the page.
- Model mathematical vocabulary like more, less, add, subtract/take away, set, combine, compare, etc. as you offer extensions like these:
 - Assign children to higher quantities (5-10) in the book, if they are ready for counting 6-10.
 - Give the children two different animal images (with different quantities) and have them do "counting on" to see how many animals there are "all together." They can use their manipulatives to create sets of these two quantities and then combine the sets to find the total quantity.
 - Use blocks or other manipulatives to compare sets of quantities. Take two different images (such the 2 fishes and 4 muskrats) and place blocks in a line to represent each quantity. Have children look at the lines of blocks and decide which quantity is larger (i.e., one line of blocks is longer than the other).
 - Choose a quantity (like 5 honeybees) and have children represent that quantity in blocks. Then ask what would happen if one honeybee flew away? What quantity of honeybees would they have then?

Activity 2

- Challenge children to create more rhymes that go with the story. For children aged 36 to 48 months, ask if they can, for example, make another word that rhymes with two and blue. Provide a rhyme yourself if children need a model.

Make it less challenging:**Activity 1**

- Select children for smaller quantities (1-3) in the book, if quantities of four or more are too challenging.
- If children are still developing a tripod grasp, offer thick crayons or markers for them to use when approximating their name. It's okay if it's just a scribble! (You can write their name underneath their attempt.)

Activity 2

- Scaffold children's ability to distinguish rhymes through listening. Say the names of the pairs aloud: *One, sun. You say them – one, sun* (wait for children's response). *Do they rhyme, or sound the same at the end? They do! They rhyme! Now let's listen: One, turtle. Do they sound the same at the end? One, turtle.* (Wait for children's response.) *Do they rhyme? Nooo.*

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Use and make rhymes as you go about daily routines: *"This is the **spot** for your **cot**. **Spot** and **cot** rhyme!"* Or, *"What do you **say**? It's time to **play**!"*
- Share stories, nursery rhymes, and songs with simple and repetitive rhyming sequences. Have children raise their hands when they hear a rhyme.
- Make 'rhyming bags' for free play time. This is a bag that holds pairs of objects that rhyme—a toy bear and dollhouse chair, a toy car and star-shaped cookie cutter, a man figurine and a toy pan, a rubber snake and toy piece of cake. Children pour out the bag and find the rhyming pairs.

Song: *Over in the Meadow*

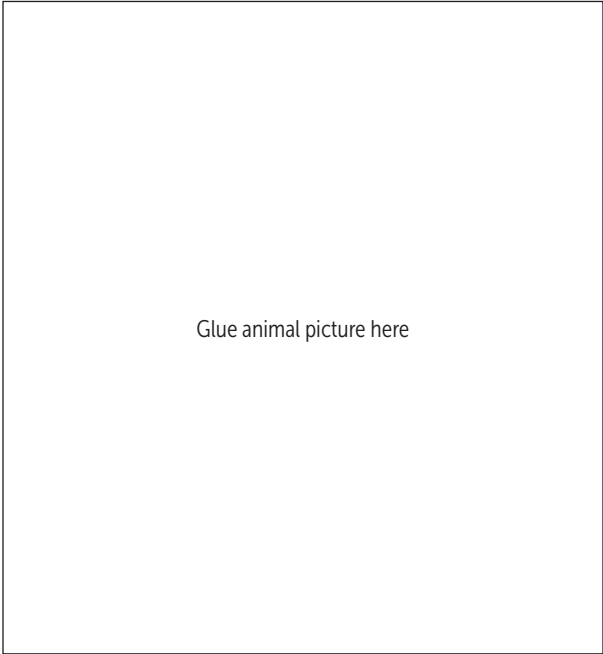
- Share the song with the children: <https://bit.ly/4dfTXDK>
- Model how to join in the actions for each mother/baby grouping – like digging, swimming, etc. Encourage children to join in.
- You can use the images from this activity during the song. Hand each out to a child and when the song mentions "their" character they can come up to put it in basket or on a feltboard.
- Consider giving children shakers or bells so they can join in with the song.

Handout 1: Rhyming Babies Counting Classroom Book

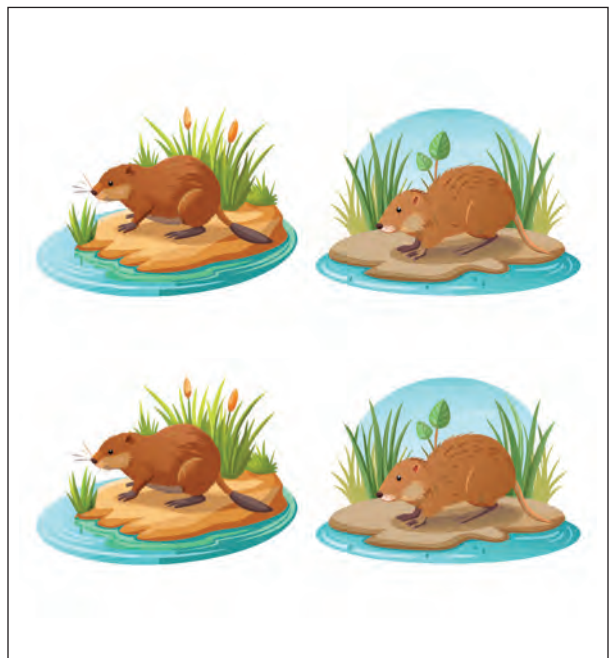
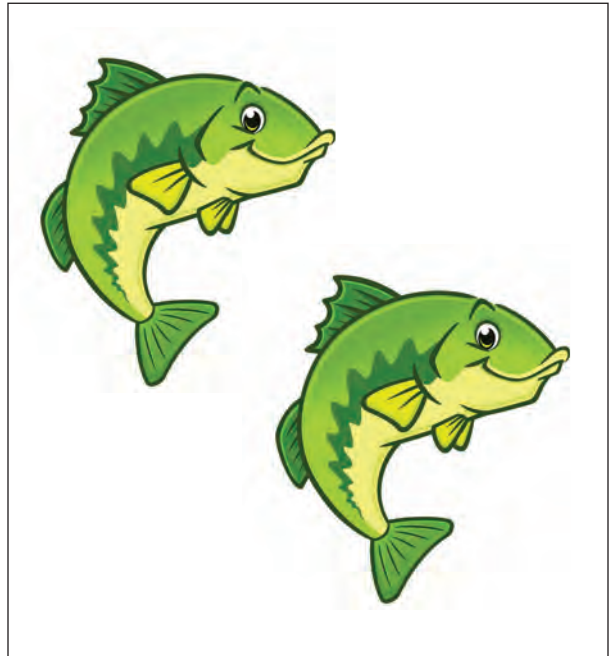
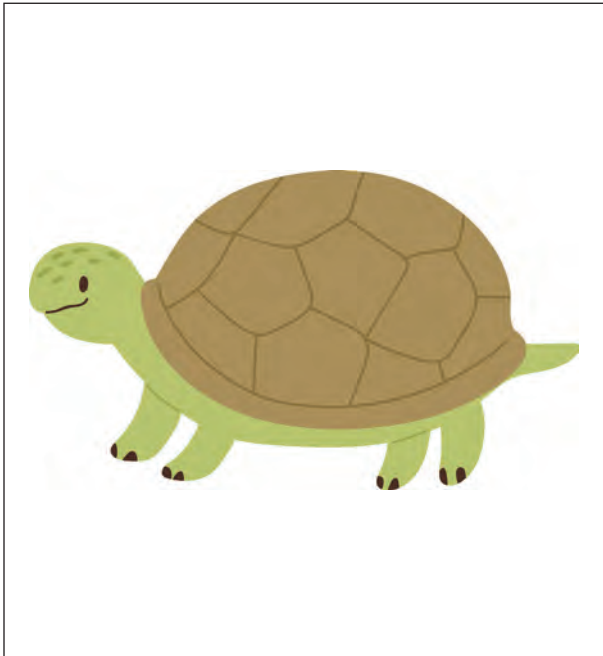
I am _____

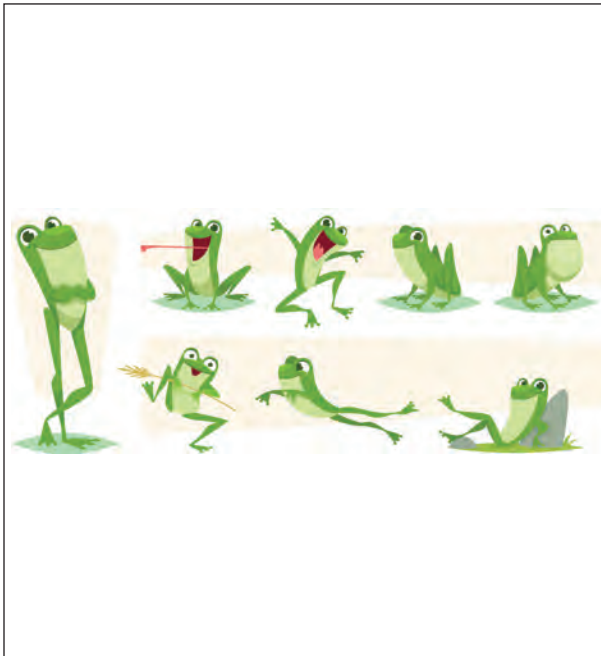
I spy some babies!

How many babies are having fun in the sun?

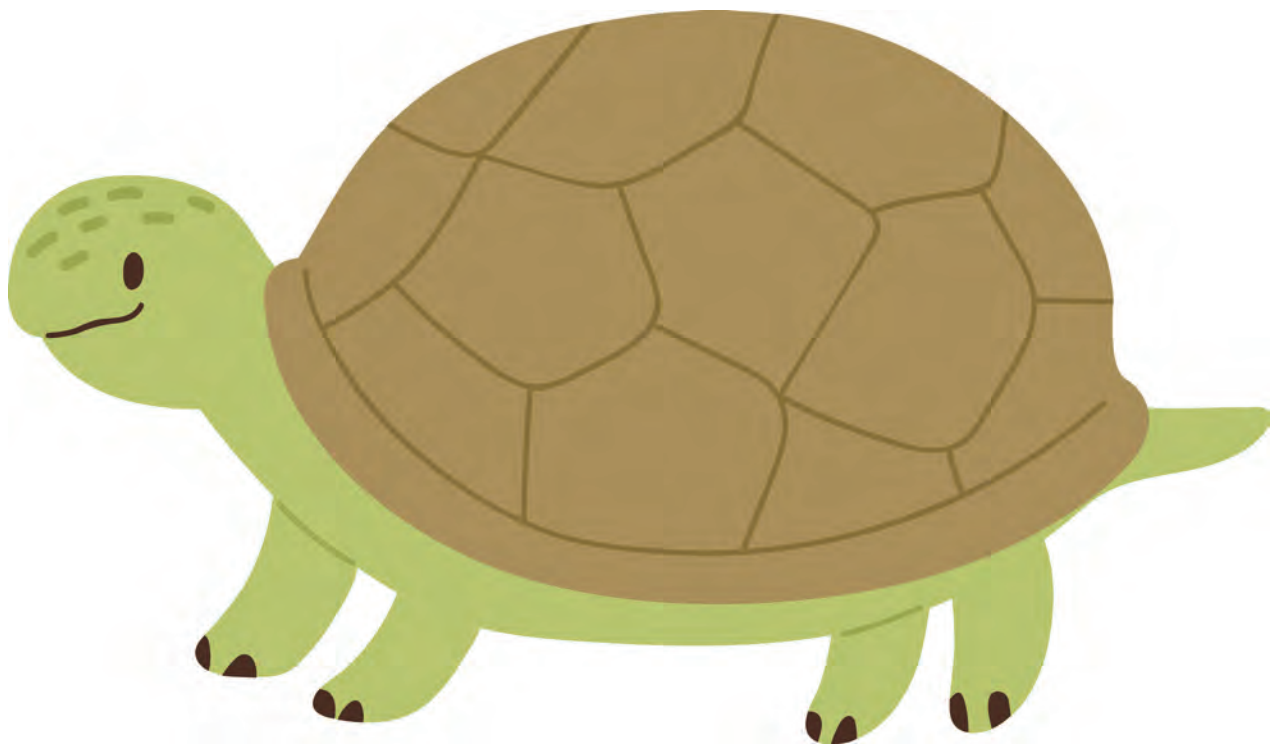


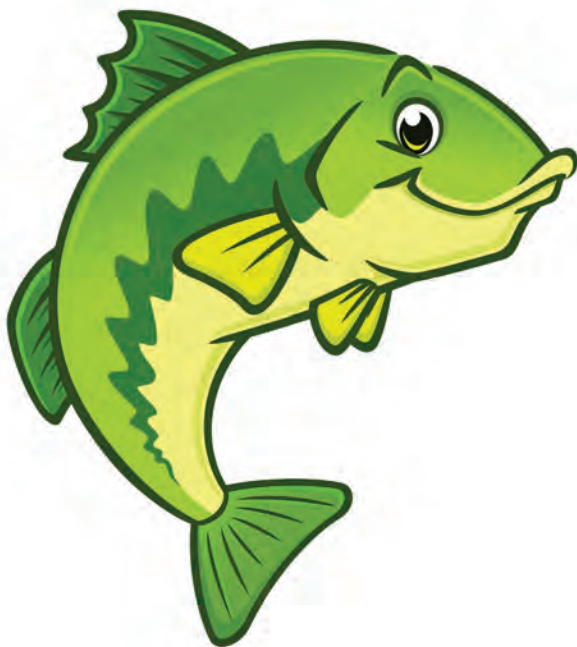
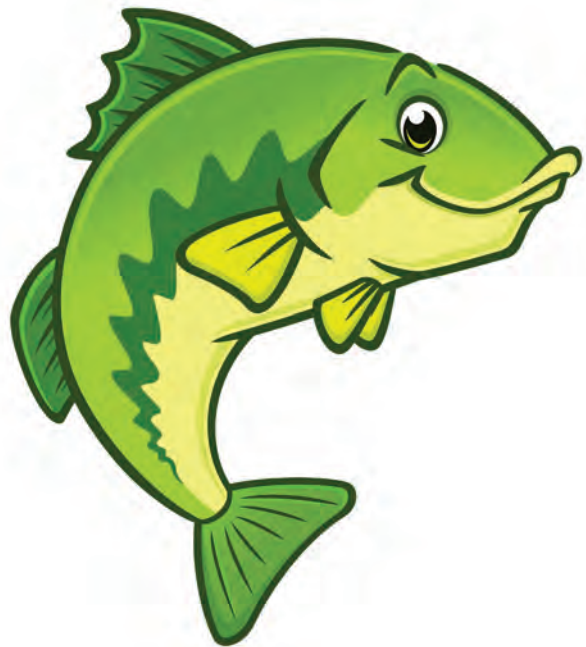
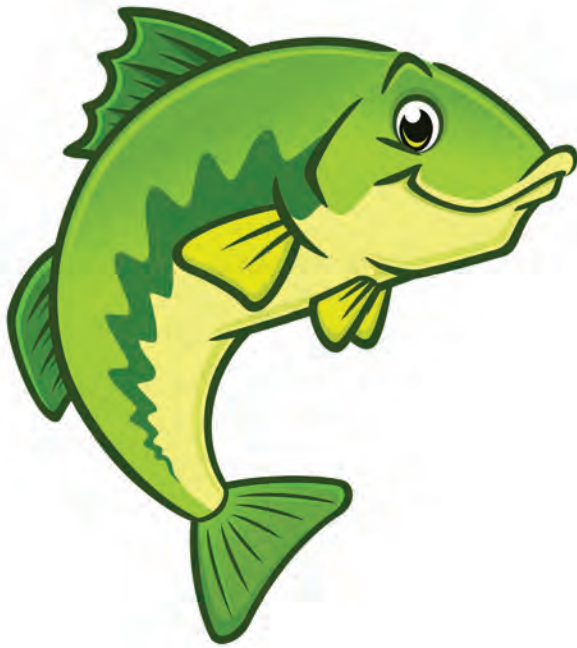
Glue animal picture here





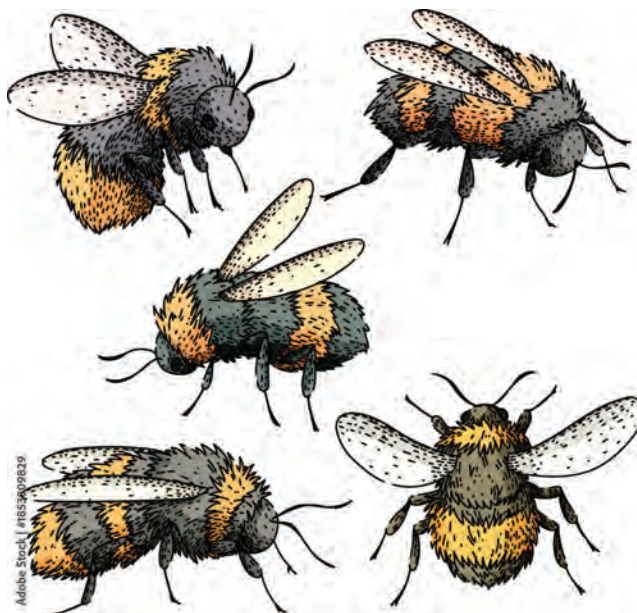
Handout 2: Count & Rhyme Baby Animals





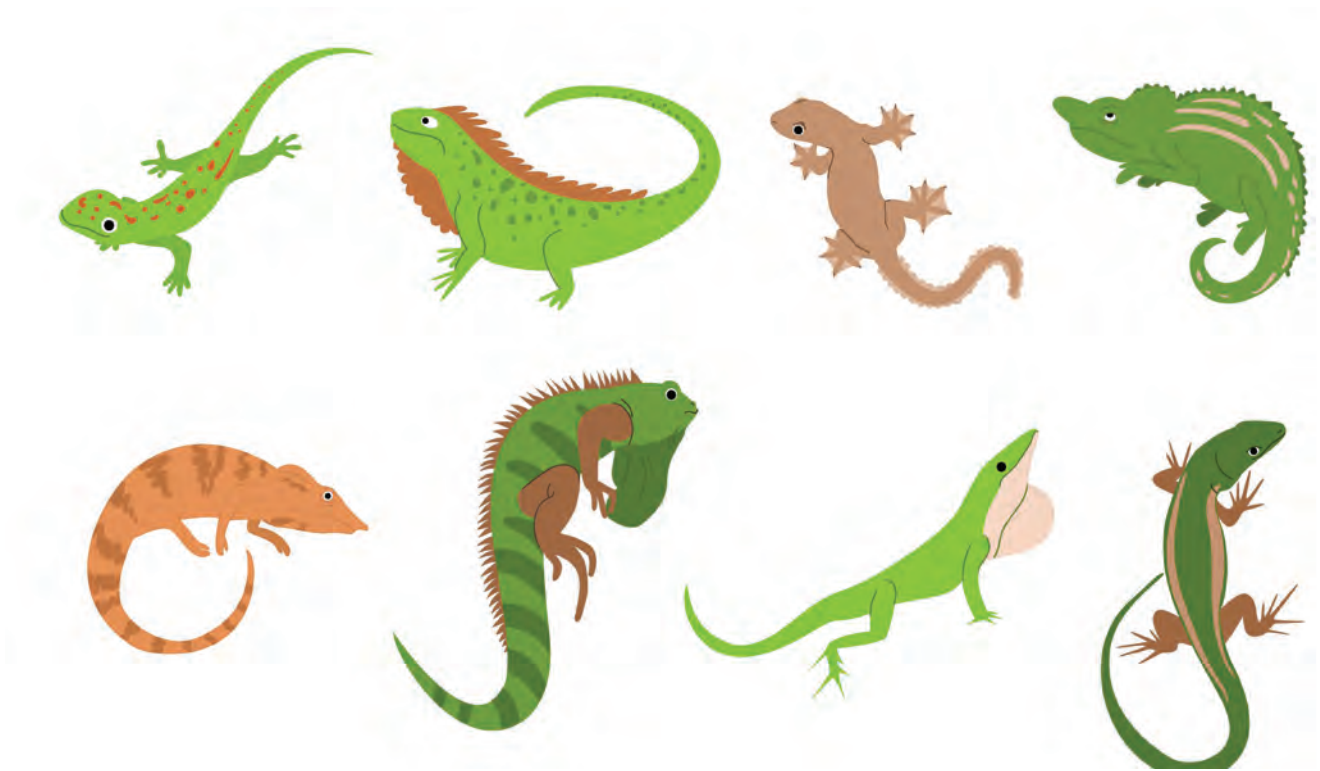






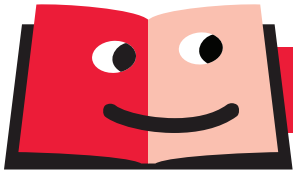












Can You Find a Rhyme?

This week, children practiced listening for rhymes. Children develop rhyming skills at about age 4, so if your child is younger—don't worry! Just listening to rhymes helps them begin to learn this important skill.

First, collect a few objects (like a shoe, small pillow, spoon, and paper plate). Then find a stuffed animal (like a teddy bear).

Show your child the objects you've collected and together, say their names: *shoe, pillow, spoon, plate*.

Tell your child that the Bear is silly, because he only sits on things that rhyme! Share the rhyme below and ask your child to find the object the rhymes with each line:

Ding, Dong, Due, the Bear sits on the SHOE!
(Have your child put the bear on the shoe.)

*Ding, Dong, Dillow, the Bear sits on the
PILLOW! (Have your child put the bear on
the pillow.)*

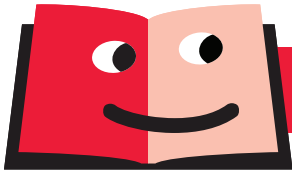
Ding, Dong, Date, the Bear sits on the PLATE!
(Have your child put the bear on the plate.)

Ding, Dong, Doon, the Bear sits on the SPOON!
(Have your child put the bear on the spoon.)



For older children (3 ½ and up), you can pause and see if they can fill in the rhyming word after you've played together once.

Each time when your child has "found" the rhyming object, they can have the bear sit on top of it. Together, you can say the rhyme again: **Due, Shoe!**



Solo para familias

¿Puede encontrar una rima?

Esta semana, los niños han practicado la escucha de rimas. Puede hacer un juego de rimas en casa para que el niño le muestre lo que está aprendiendo.

Primero, reúna algunos objetos (como un zapato, una almohada pequeña, un tenedor y un plato de papel). A continuación, busque un animal de peluche (como un osito).

Enséñele los objetos que ha reunido y decidan juntos sus nombres: *zapato, almohada, tenedor, plato*.

Dígale a su hijo que el oso es tonto porque solo se sienta sobre cosas que riman. Comparta la siguiente rima y pídale a su niño que encuentre el objeto que rima con cada línea:

*Ding, dong, gato, el oso se sienta en el... (haga una pausa para ver si su hijo dice **zapato**).*

*Ding, dong, limonada el oso se sienta en la... (pausa) **almohada**.*

*Ding, dong, retrato, el oso se sienta en el... (pausa) **plato**.*

*Ding, dong, tractor, el oso se sienta en el... (pausa) **tenedor**.*



Cada vez que el niño "encuentre" el objeto de la rima, puede sentar al oso encima del objeto. Juntos, pueden repetir la rima: ¡**Gato, zapato!**