

Top Tips for Running a Successful Rhyme-Time Group



By Jane Newberry

Running a group for parents, carers and Under 5s is hugely rewarding – you don't have to be a specialist, you just need enthusiasm, energy and a love of the material you are using.

The Space

Libraries are now child-friendly – the less cluttered your space, the better. A small child's concentration span is quite short, and they are easily distracted by toys, display stands, fire extinguishers etc., - Don't worry if children wander or rummage through books in your session – they will still be listening.

Starting

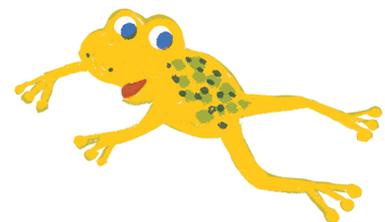
Connect immediately with the children and address everything to them. Different practitioners have different ways of drawing everyone into a circle. I use a big red rope of bells and ribbons – irresistible – but you will find a way. Just singing "Come and join my rhyme-time" over and over will work if you smile a great deal and sound excited.

How



 Have a **programme/list** and work through it without pausing too much. You can have itunes accompaniment for songs if you like or sing unaccompanied. Start by choosing songs you know well – laminate some big pictures which children can hold to show the group what you are singing about.

 Sure-fire **favourites** :
Baa Baa Black Sheep
Old Macdonald
I'm a little teapot
Here we go round the Mulberry bush
The Wheels on the Bus



 Alternating a song with a rhyme works well. Go for as much variety as you can i.e. a sitting rhyme followed by a standing song or a loud clapping rhyme followed by a reflective lullabye. Don't worry if your mish-mash seems very random. Keeping the children's attention is much more important than a tidy theme.

 Provide interest and get children interacting with a couple of **role play** or **colour games**, e.g. Polly put the kettle on using a camping kettle/red mat; rainbow game, choosing a colour & letting the children find this colour on their clothes, reinforced with a rhyme...

 **Instruments** are useful – ideally provide one for each child in the group. teach the children a rubric for keeping instruments quiet like:

“Hug your shakers!”
or “Sticks in the air!” (Claves)

Note : a box or bag of mixed poor quality instruments provides too much choice and children can't distinguish the sound of their one particular instrument in the din! It is best to have separate boxes of shakers/bells/claves.



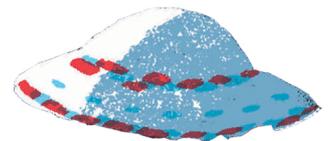
 Make a traditional nursery rhyme more appealing by passing **a balloon** around during the rhyme – good practise for sharing and you can have a different colour each week.

 **Props** – soft toys are invaluable, also scarves to wave and hide under and a wind chime is lovely with teaspoons to tap on the bars.

 **Choice of rhymes** : go for the ones you enjoy yourself and make them super dramatic. Under 5s can't do complex finger actions – they need whole body stuff e.g. pointing/clapping/waving/jumping.

 **Do over-act** – you will not look as daft as you feel!! Feel the Fun.

 Music is NOT essential – you can have a session of rhymes/games and a lovely story to finish.



Big Green Crocodile - Rhymes to Say and Play has all the instructions you'll need and all these rhymes are tried, tested and LOVED by children over many years. Start with these and build your repertoire.

More detailed guidance is published in the introduction to “A Sackful of Songs” Cramer Music.

Both the British Kodaly Academy and Orff Society UK have a wealth of useful resources and training courses but go on... be brave and do your own thing.

Jane Newberry is the author of 'Big Green Crocodile - Rhymes to Say and Play'.

Illustrations are by **Carolina Rabei**.

Big Green Crocodile is published by Otter-Barry Books - contact sales@bouncemarketing.co.uk for copies.



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