

PRAISE FOR FINGERPLAYS!

Whenever I gather with a group of preschoolers, I love to start out by reciting a fingerplay. Fingerplays are fun, fast attention-getters. They focus on a key point or a simple story, and they are easy to learn and do. Children enjoy acting out the motions, and it helps to get their wiggles out! Then they can more easily listen to what I have to say. Here's what you need to know:

Who?

Recite fingerplays with young children ages 2 to 5.

What?

Fingerplays are short poems acted out with hand and body movements. Sometimes fingerplays rhyme and sometimes they don't. Sometimes the rhythm is patterned a nursery rhyme, so you have the option to say or sing them. Here's a classic: "The Eensy, Weensy Spider."

When?

Recite a fingerplay at the beginning of group time, before reading a book, or during a transition.

Where?

Anywhere preschoolers gather: At Sunday School, preschool, or daycare. Or, individually, while you are waiting in line at the store, before naptime, or before you read a book.

Why?

There are several benefits to reciting fingerplays. They encourage language development, social skills, and small and large (finger, mouth, and body) motor control.

How?

Decide which fingerplay you want to use. Rehearse beforehand so you can perform it easily. Read the words; Do the actions (in parenthesis). Children can listen and watch you, or repeat each line after you, or say it with you. Use facial expressions. Add explanation, if needed. In the example below I might start, "Hold your seeds." I always smile because it's so much fun!

The following fingerplay can be sung to the tune of the French nursery rhyme, "Frere Jacques," translated, "Are You Sleeping?" in English. This fingerplay, from *The Giant Book of Bible Fingerplays for Preschoolers*, focuses on the key points in the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

So Big!

Mustard seeds are (look at cupped hand as if it holds seeds)
Very tiny, (pick a seed from cupped hand with pointer finger and thumb)
But they grow (palm downward, hand above your head, looking)
Very tall. (continue looking gradually higher)

Seeds are like God's kingdom, (pointer finger and thumb together holding seed)
Which can grow in your heart. (hands over heart)
It can grow (palm downward, low to ground)
Very tall. (palm downward, hand above head)

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