

# MOTHER NATURE NURSERY RHYMES

## TALKING POINTS

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### 8 Ways to Instill a Love of Nature in Children

Children who spend time in nature on a regular basis are shown to become better stewards of the environment. Because children are our future, it's important to teach them about the environment at an early age because these lessons will become their normal. Here are eight out of countless ways to encourage kids to connect with nature.

1. Let children play outdoors where imagination is fertile ground. Children who play outside are more physically active, more creative in their play, and show better concentration.
2. Embrace a new outdoor activity such as camping, bird watching, or catching fireflies.
3. Take walks in nature. Bring along a backpack or tote with things like a journal, magnifying glass, binoculars, compass, etc.
4. Study nature. Look at birds, squirrels, or other animals through binoculars. Collect river rocks, climb a tree. Close your eyes and listen. What do you hear?
5. Craft something using items found in nature. Paint rocks for the garden, make a hanging mobile, or create a nature boat and float it down the river.
6. Plant a garden and let kids help pick the fruits of their labor. Give them their own set of gardening tools and even a small space they oversee. Let them choose their own seeds.
7. Adopt a pet. Providing children with the opportunity to feed an animal and treat "creatures" gently supports a sense of respecting nature and develops empathy.
8. Read books about nature. There are many amazing books about nature, including *Mother Nature Nursery Rhymes*. Help instill a love of reading along with a love of nature by getting lost in some great nature-inspired books.

# Q&A WITH THE AUTHORS OF MOTHER NATURE NURSERY RHYMES

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## **What are five key things parents and caregivers can do to encourage respect and a love of nature in children, as well as nurture our environment?**

Help children become aware of nature by renewing your own acquaintance with the physical world. Take time to smell the flowers, listen to the birds, admire the trees, and watch the fireflies. Teach them to use all their senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste) when exploring the natural world.

Take trips to the farmer's market in your area to discuss food and where it comes from, who produces it, and how it gets to grocery stores. Take your own reusable bags. Read product labels in the supermarket and, when possible, choose food that is responsibly grown and locally produced.

Visit local botanical and public gardens, science museums, maritime museums, zoological gardens, nature reserves, animal sanctuaries, and national forests and parks.

Ask young children to help recycle plastic, glass, metal, and paper at home and when you are out.

If in doubt about an action or situation, remember to ask, "What would Mother Nature do?"

## **Why did you create Mother Nature Nursery Rhymes?**

Thirty-three years ago, the world started to hear about the possible environmental disasters if humans did not consider the destruction of our habitat, and water and air pollution. We were all working for a small non-profit press in Santa Barbara, California, and had already published *Father Gander Nursery Rhymes* by Doug Larche, which adapted traditional rhymes to reflect new diverse messages and illustrations.

Having heard the predictions and warnings about the environment, nature, and all living things we decided it was time to call in Mother Nature to help with another version of nursery rhymes. We hoped our rhymes would cultivate in children a love of nature that will stick with them and, soon enough, the meaning would come through. As the saying goes, lessons learned in the nursery are lessons learned for life.

### **Can small children understand nursery rhymes?**

Most nursery rhymes have been around for nearly three hundred years, and versions are found in different countries and languages. Traditional rhymes don't always make much sense to adults, let alone children. The words used often referred to events of the day; some were political, some quite brutal, and others challenged society, taxes, rumors, and so forth. A little like Twitter today they were commentaries and opinions. Handed down throughout the years we still hear and remember rhymes, the tune, even the person who sang them, and we remember the hand actions, alliteration, the cadence, and the word rhyme. Little children will continue to do the same again and again, and, if the rhymes make sense, all the better.

### **Are nursery rhymes important?**

Research shows that rhymes help young children develop early language and literacy skills. Hearing repeated and rhyming words helps children make sounds and build their own vocabulary, and rhymes teach children that stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Most important, they help children develop their imaginations.

### **Why revise the old rhymes, why not just write new rhymes?**

Nursery Rhymes have been revised, cleaned up, and adapted over the years. In 1744, one of the first collections was called Tommy Thumbs Songs, many followed along, and when the rhymes came to America some years later Mother Goose took over and became a popular theme. Father Gander showed up in the 1970s and added his versions, and today collections of all sorts of rhymes are often referred to as a treasury of rhymes, and they are. We chose to include some traditional rhyme rewrites with an updated nature theme and even some updates of our own original revisions, plus some brand-new nature rhymes.



## **What else can parents do to help their children develop a love of nature?**

We offer ideas and resources for parents and caregivers on pages 28-31 of the book. *Go to the Park*, a rhyme on page 30, lists simple and fun actions that embrace nature. Of course, there are lots more things kids can see and do at the beach, in a garden, or on a camping trip, etc. Have fun making a rhyme with your child about their favorite things to do and observe in nature. Use *Rap on Garbage* and *Go to the Park* as inspiration.

### **Rap on Garbage**

Too much garbage  
Not enough space.  
Got to be careful  
Not to replace  
Forests with dump grounds,  
Fresh air with fumes,  
Oceans with plastic  
Which the fish will consume.  
Reuse or recycle,  
Don't throw things away.  
Fix or repair them  
Save for the next day.  
Every litter bit hurts,  
Wherever we are,  
Every little bit helps,  
Be a 'love the earth' star.

### **Go to the Park**

Go to the park  
Look at the sky

Eat an orange  
Watch a fly.

Draw in the sand  
Peer through the fog  
Run through the leaves  
Sit on a log.

Pick up twigs  
Blow bubbles up high  
Walk by the stream  
Make a mud pie.

Splash in a puddle  
Play under the trees  
Smell the flowers  
Listen to the bees.

Climb up a hill  
Roll down a slope  
Ride a bike  
Jump with a rope.

Paint a picture  
Play with the cat  
Sing lots of songs  
Wear a sun hat.

Feel the rain  
Find stars in the dark  
Count all the birds  
Let's go back to the park.