

Give Your Child a Head Start At Home Activities for Parents and Children



Columbia Sullivan Head Start

Dear Parents,

Over the years, parents have asked for a resource book of games, songs and activities their child does in school so they can use the same ones at home. This booklet has been developed to help you ease your child into preschool and enjoy some of the fun activities together. At Head Start, we believe that parents are their child's first and most important teacher!

The Education Staff of Columbia Sullivan Head Start

Topics included in this booklet:

Preparing for the First Day of Preschool

Separating From your Child

Making New Friends

Helping to Improve Your Preschool Child's Attention Span

10 Reading Tips for Parents

Importance of Outdoor Play

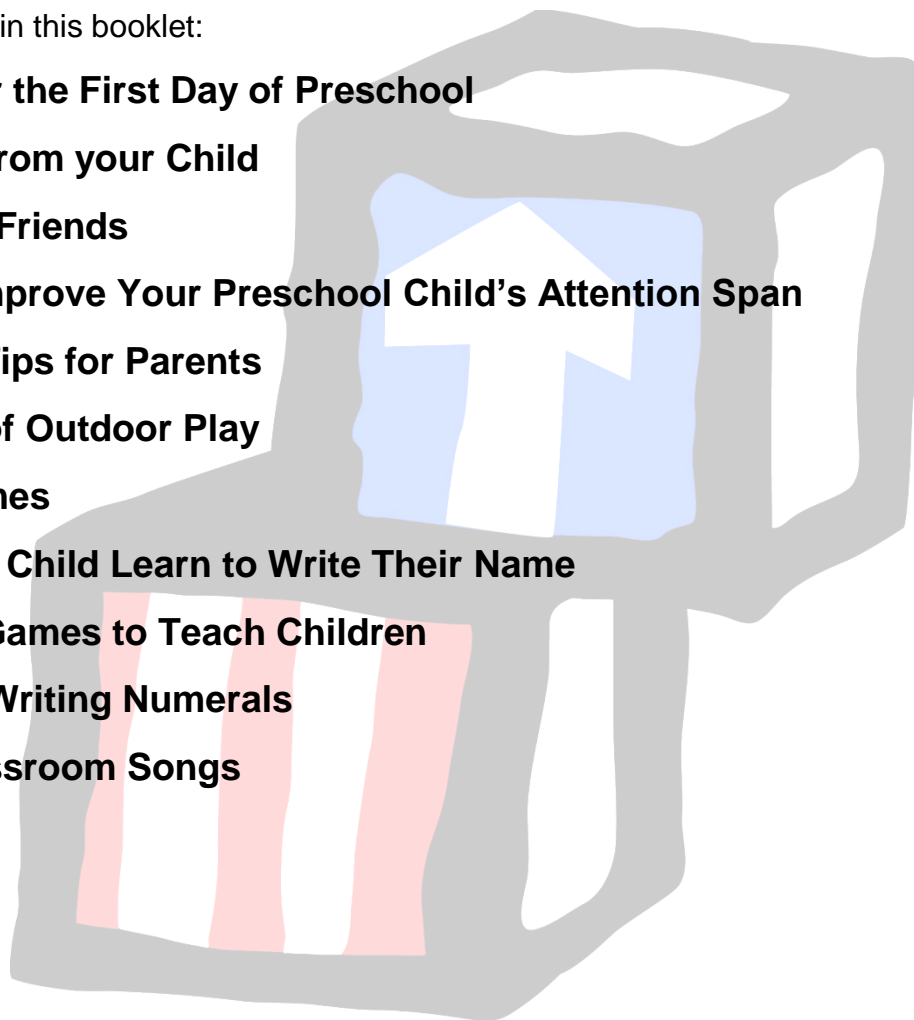
Outdoor Games

Helping your Child Learn to Write Their Name

Using Card Games to Teach Children

Rhymes for Writing Numerals

Favorite Classroom Songs



Preparing for the First Day of Preschool

Develop a bedtime and morning routine

Children who are well rested are better able and more willing to participate in the classroom activities.

Creating a picture time line of activities helps teach sequencing, an important skill for reading.

Preparing your child's clothes and packing their backpack the night before saves time and arguments in the morning.



Talk with your child about what they will be doing at their new school

Here is the **schedule** of a typical day at Head Start:

- Arrival
- Circle Time
- Use of the Bathroom/ Preparation for Breakfast
- Breakfast
- Toothbrush activities
- Second -Step (Learning about emotions and how to express them)
- Small group
- Outside time
- Read-Aloud and Literacy activities
- Music and Movement
- Use of the Bathroom/ Preparation for Lunch
- Lunch
- Quiet Activities
- Free Choice
- Dismissal

We also do fun things like **cooking** once a month, and we have **guest readers** and **puppet shows** throughout the year. Parents and family members can visit the classroom too!



The classroom is divided into **interest centers**. Interest centers encourage certain types of activities to occur in designated areas. Each classroom has the following interest areas:

- Blocks
- Housekeeping
- Library
- Quiet Area
- Art
- Sand/Water play
- Writing
- Science
- Math
- Music and Movement
- Puzzle area (Manipulatives)



There are common **classroom rules** in our classrooms

Classroom rules

1. Walking Feet
2. Gentle Hands and Feet
3. Use inside voices
4. Body is calm

Group time rules

1. *Eyes on the speaker*
2. *Listening ears*
3. *Hands in our lap*
4. Sit crisscross-applesauce
5. *Raise your hand if you wish to speak*

Read stories about the first day of preschool

Check your local library for these and other books about preschool.

What to expect at Preschool by Heidi Mustoff and Laura Rader

It's Time for Preschool by Esme Raiji Codell and Sue Rama

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes

Little Critters: First Day of School by Mercer Mayer



Separating From your Child

For many young children, the first day of preschool is the first time mom and dad leave them in an unfamiliar place, doing unfamiliar activities with unfamiliar faces. While some children just wave goodbye, and are ready to go, others experience fears and tears. Most of the time this period is short lived and disappears in a week or two. Here are some ideas to help your child separate from you more easily.

1. **Develop a goodbye ritual** - Each family will create their own goodbye ritual. It can be as simple as a hug and kiss, rubbing noses, or having your child wave goodbye as you leave the building. It is an important signal that you are leaving and that everything will be alright. Stretching out the goodbyes in the morning can be harder for you and your child.
2. **Never just sneak out** - This scares children because they do not know where you are and did not get your reassurance that you will return.
3. **Always make sure your child knows who is picking them up** - Many children fret all day when they do not know the plan for pick up. Also tell the teacher who will be picking up your child so they know who to expect and can help your child if they forget.
4. **Give your child something of yours that they will have to return to you at pick-up time** - Children often fear that parents will not come back to get them, but will come back for the object entrusted to their care. At drop-off time, give your child a scarf or a key or some other trinket to hold for you until you are reunited.
5. **Send a picture of your family in your child's backpack** – If your child misses you during the day, they can go to their backpack and look at the picture and feel closer to you.
6. **Look in your child's backpack** each day for pictures they drew for you to let you know they were thinking of you throughout the day.
7. **Read stories about characters who are missing their family:**



The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn and Ruth E. Harper

Llama, Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney

Penguin Misses Mom by Michael Dahl and Oriol Vidal

Making New Friends



Making friends is an important part of your child's development at Head Start. Friendships often develop as children play together. You can help your child to learn to play well and be a good friend.

Children who make friends easily have three skills in common: 1) They have conversational skills, 2) They have interpersonal skills, and 3) They have emotional self-control. Fortunately for children who may struggle making friends these skills can be **learned with practice**.

Be an emotions coach - Talk to your child about their feelings and problem solve better ways to handle those strong feelings.

Set limits for your child and attempt to shape their behavior through rational discussions and explanation of the rules.

Teach children to talk with others in a polite way - Teach children the give and take of social conversations. Let children know what they say is important and that you are paying attention. Ask questions but also offer information about yourself in the conversation. One of the best ways to practice these skills is for your child to talk on the telephone (real or pretend).

Play games that encourage cooperation where children work toward a common goal.

Be selective what toys are out during playdates - Before the playdate put away toys that promote fighting and discourage social interaction. Video games tend to be solitary play so put it away. If your child has a special toy that will upset him/her if the other child plays with it, put it away until after the playdate.

Help foster concern for others - When children are unsure what to do, coach a child how to ask the other child if they are alright or to rub the other child's back to comfort them.

Help children read another child's facial expression - When reading books or working through problems between two children, describe the facial cues that tell you how the other is feeling. "See there is a tear rolling down her cheek, she is feeling sad" or "Look how his hands are on his hips and his eye brows are close together and pointed down - he is angry."

Help children learn to join in play - Model the words and have children repeat such as "Can I play with you?" Encourage your child to do something to add to the play. If the children are playing restaurant, you could encourage your child to become a new customer. Role playing these skills at home can give children practice

When possible let children work it out on their own - Supervise play and let them practice their skills, but if they are getting in over their heads, step in and walk them through the way to solve the problem.

Helping to Improve Your Preschool Child's Attention Span

Preschoolers are known to be curious and eager. They usually learn through socialization, play and routine. By the time a child enters kindergarten, he or she will be expected to be able to focus on a task for 20-30 minutes. However, parents may find without guidance and structured activities, their child may have a short attention span. Here are some activities that will help your child develop focus and concentration.



Have a set routine

Children's attention spans are best developed if they have a structured environment and routine. Have a set daily schedule, which makes time for reading, eating, independent playing, napping, bath time, and bed time. Having a picture schedule can help children keep track of what is coming next and provide order and predictability to the day.

Schedule an independent playtime

An independent playtime, of at least an hour, will not only help your child focus, but also increase your child's attention span. Choose a set time and place for playtime. Provide age appropriate toys and materials for your child to play with. This will allow your child to concentrate on the things/she has and what can be done with them. Limit distractions and interruptions.

Set realistic expectations of your child

Give your child a task that takes between two and five minutes per age to make them manageable. Use activities that your child has a natural interest in to increase their attention span. Transform tasks your child finds boring into something more exciting. For example, if your child bristles at the thought of counting but likes the outdoors, go outside and count rocks.

Read together

Read a story together starting out with five minutes and adding five each week as their attention span grows. Allow your child to select books that interest him or her. At age 3 and 4 most children should be able to sit through a picture book and answer questions that you ask during and after the reading.

Play games

Games such as Memory were designed to help develop focus and concentration. Play other games such as Opposites where you say a word such as hot, then your child has to name an opposite to your word. For every five correct answers, the child receives a sticker.

Art Projects

Getting children involved in art projects such as painting, sketching and drawing will help not only with creativity, but with attention span as well. This works because your preschooler will be focusing on this activity for an extended period of time. Choose age-appropriate preschool arts and crafts such as finger paints, crayons, play dough and hand art.

10 Reading Tips for Parents

1. **Read together every day** - This provides a warm loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.

2. **Give everything a name** - Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the airplane. Why do you think they call them wings?" *The best predictor of reading success is the size of a child's vocabulary.*



3. **Let your children see you reading** - Whether it is the mail, books, newspaper, or grocery store ads. You are modeling reading and how important reading is to you. Tell them you like to read. Sometimes talk to them about what you are reading and why. "I see in this ad that your favorite cereal is on sale this week."

4. **Read with fun in your voice** - Use different voices for characters, read with expression and humor. Ham it up! You're making memories for you and your child.

5. **Know when to stop** - Put the book away if your child loses interest.

6. **Be interactive** - Discuss what is happening in the book, point out things on the page such as letters, words, or rhyming words. Ask questions such as "What do you think will happen next?"

7. **Read it again and again** - Go ahead read it for the 100th time. Something in that book has great meaning to your child. *The first step in reading is when children memorize a favorite book and "read" it back to you.*

8. **Talk about writing too** - The print carries meaning and everyone who reads it sees the same words.

9. **Talk about how books work and how to take care of books** - Open the front cover, turn each page by lifting one corner. We read top to bottom, left to right.

10. **Point out print everywhere** - Talk about the written words in your environment such as street signs and grocery labels.

Importance of Outdoor Play

On every nice day, parents in the past would tell children, “Go play outside.” Parents know that children who play outside burn off excess energy, promote a healthier lifestyle, develop friendship and leadership skills, and improve strength and coordination. In today’s busy world, an array of activities, the lure of video and computer games, the lack of a backyard, and safety concerns often limit children’s outdoor play.

Adult Supervision

Young children should always be supervised when playing outside. Young children are not capable of gauging distances properly or capable of foreseeing dangerous situations by themselves. Children like to test their limits so it is important that an adult be there to keep the child safe. Adult supervision can help prevent injuries by making sure children use equipment properly.

Always check the play area for clear sight lines and anything that may cause injury such as broken glass or damaged swing sets or playground equipment

Teaching Children Safety

Adult supervision is important but only half of the equation.

- Children should know how to play safely and responsibly. Children must understand how to wait their turn and the dangers of pushing while on climbers, slides or swings.
- Talk to your child about how to use the equipment safely. “On the sliding board, slide with your feet first”. “Stay inside the guard rails.” or “Sit when you use the slide or swings.”
- Make sure no other child is in the way.
- Only use playground equipment when it is dry. Wet equipment is usually slippery.
- Toys should be used on the ground.
- Set boundaries so children will know where it is safe to play.

Improving Health

Young children exercise their large muscle groups much more vigorously when they play outside than when they play inside. Activities such as running, skipping, climbing, swinging, jumping, peddling a bicycle or throwing a ball require a large area and are important in developing gross motor skills. Experts recommend one hour a day of active outdoor play to help children maintain a healthy weight.



Children who participate daily in vigorous activity daily have improved muscular fitness, better bone health, feel better about themselves, and have better cardio-respiratory endurance.

Cognitive Benefits

Children who play outside often invent their own games which allow them to practice problem solving skills. When the child makes up rules for the game and practices them with their friends, children develop organizational abilities and leadership qualities. They also increase their imagination and creativity.

Sensory Learning

Young children learn best when all their senses are involved. This is done very easily when playing outside where sights, sounds, smells and textures are rich and varied. Playing outside is one of the best ways to gain an understanding of their world. A child's perceptual skill may suffer if they play many hours on the computer or video games. These activities require only two senses. Outdoor play requires the participation of the child's whole body and mind. This is a very powerful teaching tool.

Social Benefits

Being outside promotes cooperative play, which leads to the development of social skills. Waiting a turn to go down the slide, participating in team sports, and working with others to build a sand castle are examples of children learning social skills through outdoor play. Learning how to solve inevitable playground squabbles is a valuable skill. Children learn sharing, taking turns, and including others - all skills they will use far into the future.

Appreciation of Nature

Children develop an awareness of the world around them. They learn to appreciate the sights, sounds and smells of the world around them. A child can satisfy his/her curiosity about plants and animals by observing them in their natural habitat. An awareness of the natural environment at a young age develops a foundation of a life focused on conservation of resources and a respect of nature.

Outdoor Games

Hopscotch - Hopscotch is a classic children's game where the adult draws a grid on the sidewalk and let the children hop into the spaces without stepping on the lines. Then the child throws a little stone in one of the spaces and they have to skip that space. Can they do it? Playing hopscotch helps children learn balance and number recognition and sequencing.



Red Light Green Light - One person stands away from the group. This person calls directions of "red light" or "green light". The other players form a straight line an appropriate distance away. The players in the line can only move when the green light direction is given and must "freeze" when the red light direction is given. The first player to tag the person giving the direction becomes the person to give the direction. The children increase gross motor skills and learn about distance and speed.

Mother, May I - Someone is selected to be the "mother". The other players line up in a straight line an appropriate distance away. The "mother" calls a child's name and tells them what kind of steps they may take and how many. The player cannot move until he/she asks "Mother, may I?" If the player forgets to ask, they are sent back to the starting point. The children learn about distance, counting, creativity and use of large muscles.

Monkey in the Middle- This is a ball game played by three children. Two children stand about 5 feet apart and the third stands in the middle. The two children on the outside begin throwing and catching the ball while the "monkey" tries to catch the ball. If the "monkey" catches the ball, he/she moves to the outside and the person who threw the ball that was caught becomes the "monkey". As children get better at throwing and catching, the outside children can move further apart. The children will learn better coordination



Bowling - Using old plastic soda bottles or plastic water bottles as bowling pins, place six to ten bottles at one end of the sidewalk. Place one bottle in the first row, two bottles in the second row and three in the third row. Have the child stand an appropriate distance from the pins. Roll the ball down the sidewalk to hit the pins. Count the number that fall. Increase the distance the child stand as his/her skills increase. The children will learn better coordination and control as well as counting.



Playground Obstacle Course - Set out a path to follow over the playground using as much of the equipment as possible. Have children climb, hop, jump, and slide over the equipment as quickly as they can.

Sand Diggers - Take a "treasure" to the sand box. Have the children turn their backs while you hide the objects in the sand. The children dig in the sand until they find the "treasure". This is a good sensory processing game.

Follow the Leader - You can play Follow the Leader anywhere, but on a playground it can be really fun. The leader uses his/her imagination and equipment to do funny activities. The others have to follow him around and copy his/her actions. This is a good game to promote creativity and social skills.

Helping your Child Learn to Write Their Name

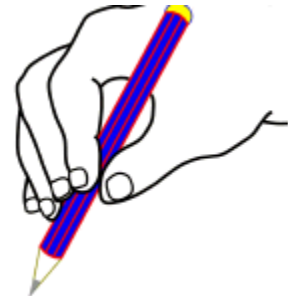
Learning to write your name is an important preschool goal. It is important to help children start with good habits.

1. **Encourage proper posture** - Children should be sitting at a table that is halfway between their waist and shoulder. This may mean that you may need to make a booster seat either out of a soda cube or the telephone book or other sturdy, stable object. The child's feet should be flat on the floor.



2. **Helping your child hold their pencil correctly** - Correcting an incorrect pencil grip can be difficult. Here are three ways to help your child learn to hold the pencil correctly.

- **Use a shorter pencil or a broken crayon** - it forces the proper grip
- **The “pinch and flip” method** - place the pencil on the table. Have your child pinch up the pencil with his/her thumb and pointer finger then bring the pencil back to rest toward the palm of his/her hand.
- **Hide a cotton ball in the pinky and ring finger** - Use the pinch and flip method, then have the child hide a cotton ball in the last two fingers. This will help the child learn to use each of his/her fingers independently.



3. **When writing your child's name, always start with an upper case letter, then use lower case letters for the rest of his/her name.**
4. **Write the child's name on a piece of cardboard and then laminate it with contact paper.** Remember to write their name large because your child is just developing muscle control. Be sure to form the letters using the attached chart. Always start at the top and go to the bottom, then move left to right. (This will also help your child learn reading skills). After you apply the contact paper have your child trace their name with a wipe-off crayon. They will be able to erase it with a tissue and use it over and over again.

Hint: If available, use dry erase crayons over markers, because crayons require more pressure to leave a mark, helping your child develop more muscle strength.

5. **As your child writes his/her name, use a sing-songy voice to spell his/her name with them.** The sing-songy voice will make it fun, but it will also be easier for little ones to remember all the letters. Do not be surprised to hear your little song repeated by your child as they write their name independently.

6. **Make it into a game** - Find new and fun ways to practice writing their name.

- Write your name in the dirt or sand.
- Using sidewalk chalk, write your name 5 times on the driveway for daddy to see when he gets home.
- On a rainy day, get out an old tray. Spray shaving cream on the tray and have them write their name in the shaving cream.
- Write your child's dictated letter or have them draw a picture. Have your child sign it, then mail it to grandma and grandpa.
- Using crayons, have your child write their name very darkly on a white piece of paper, then water color over their name.
- Outside, have your child write their name with glue on a piece of paper, then use glitter over the glue to make a sparkly name tag.
- Using glue on a piece of paper, have your child write their name with the glue. After their name dries, place another piece of paper over it. With the side of a crayon rub the top piece of paper and watch their name appear!
- Take a pail of water and a paint brush outside, your child can "paint" their sidewalk.



Using Card Games to Teach Children

Ever think of having a family game night? Almost everyone has a deck of cards. Using card games can help children learn number recognition, colors, shapes, sequencing, taking turns, problem solving, and even simple addition in a fun way.

While young children may have difficulty shuffling, dealing, and holding cards, it will help with the development of small and large muscles.



Here are some games that teach math or pre-reading skills

- **Kings and Queens** - Get two standard decks of cards. Keeping each deck separate, the adult will need to sort the cards, selecting only the kings, queen, jacks and aces. When your child joins you, you lay your cards face up in a straight line. Your child arranges his/her cards in a straight line face down. Your child then turns one card over at a time and matches it to one of your face up cards. (This game helps children look at the detail in the cards which helps develop skills necessary for reading.)
- **Images** - The adult will take several sheets of different colored construction paper, folding each in half to make two cards. On each of the cards, the adult will draw or paste matching pictures on each of the cards that are the same color. To play the game, divide the cards into two decks, making sure the adult has one complete set of images. The other cards are divided among the other children. The child will lay their cards face up on the table. The adult will draw a card from their pile. The adult will then ask the children who has a card that matches the one drawn. (Depending on the images drawn on the cards, this game can reinforce shapes, letter or number recognition. To make this game more difficult, draw the same image on different color cards.)
- **War** - Take a standard deck and deal half of the cards to each player. Each person turns over one card at the same time. The person with the highest card keeps both cards. The adult helps the child with language. "You had a four of hearts which is larger than my two of clubs." If the amount matches, each player places one card face down on the table and a second card face up on the table. The player with the higher number wins all of the cards from that play. (This game develops counting, number recognition, and playing by the rules.)
- **Memory** - Take a Pinochle deck of cards. Shuffle the cards and place them face down in rows of five or six until all the cards are placed on the table. Each player then turns over two cards. If they match exactly, they keep the match and get a second turn to flip over two cards to see if those match. As you or your child turns cards over, name the cards. "This is a two of diamonds." Help your child remember that a match to the first card he/she has flipped over has been turned over before. Think out loud to model for your child. "Mary turned over a two of diamonds on her last turn; I think this is the one she turned over." (This game will help develop focus, taking turns, playing by the rules, counting, number recognition, and attention to detail, helping in pre-reading skills.)

- **Fish** - Take a standard deck of cards. Shuffle and pass out seven cards to each player. The player sorts the cards he/she has been given. Laying down any matches (such as any two cards that are a 7 or any two kings). The first player then asks one of the other players if they have a certain card. If that player has the card that was asked for, they hand it over to the first player. If they do not have what was asked for, they tell the first player to “Go fish”. The first player lays down any matches they have and the play moves to the second player. (This game helps children take turns, play by rules, counting, number recognition, focus and attention to detail.)
- **Old Maid** - Using a Pinochle deck, add a joker to be the “Old Maid”. Shuffle the cards and deal them to each player until they have all been dealt. The players sort their cards, laying down any that match exactly (eg. two king of clubs). After all the matches have been laid down, the first player draws a card from the player sitting on their right. If they have a match, they lay it on the table. The play moves to the second player and so forth until one person has the only card left - the “Old Maid.” (This game helps children take turns, play by rules, counting, number recognition, focus and attention to detail.)
- **Piggy** - Using a pinochle deck, shuffle the cards. Spread the cards into a circle. Have a player select a card and place it in the middle. The first player draws a card until they get a card that matches the card or is the same suit as the top card on the pile in the middle. The other cards drawn are held by the player who drew them looking for the match. The next time the player has a turn he/she may either select a card from their hand or they must draw from the pile until they get a match. The first player to use all the cards in their hand wins the game. (This game helps children take turns, play by rules, counting, number recognition, focus and attention to detail.)



Have fun playing together!

Rhymes for Writing Numerals

By Jesslyn Karns
Columbia Sullivan Head Start Teacher

- Straight line down, then you're done, now you made the number 1.
- Around the tree and back to you, now you made the number 2.
- Around the tree, around the tree now you made the number 3.
- Down and over and down once more, now you made the number 4.
- Straight line down and belly fat, number 5 wears a hat.
- Curve around the pick-up sticks, now you made the number 6.
- Through the trees and down route 11, now you made the number 7.
- Make an "S", don't be late, now you made the number 8.
- Make a circle, then a line, now you made the number 9.
- Make a circle, your hero, now you made the number 0.

Favorite Classroom Songs

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round,
round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all through the town.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish;
Swish, swish, swish;
Swish, swish, swish.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
all through the town.



Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed

Five little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

Four little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

Three little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

Two little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

One little monkey jumping on the bed
He fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

No little monkeys jumping on the bed
None fell off and bumped his head
So Momma called the doctor and the doctor said
Put those monkeys back in bed!





Herman the Worm

I was sittin' on my fencepost, chewing my bubble gum
(chew, chew, chew, chew)
Playin' with my yo-yo, wee-oo! wee-oo!
When along came Herman the worm
And he was this big (make a motion as if measuring a tiny worm)
And I said: "Herman? What happened?"
"I swallowed a fly."

I was sittin' on my fencepost, chewing my bubble gum
(chew, chew, chew, chew)
Playin' with my yo-yo, wee-oo! wee-oo!
When along came Herman the worm
And he was this big (make a motion as if measuring a little bit bigger worm)
And I said: "Herman? What happened?"
"I swallowed a turtle."

I was sittin' on my fencepost, chewing my bubble gum
(chew, chew, chew, chew)
Playin' with my yo-yo, wee-oo! wee-oo!
When along came Herman the worm
And he was this big (make a motion as if measuring a bigger worm)
And I said: "Herman? What happened?"
"I swallowed a cat."

I was sittin' on my fencepost, chewing my bubble gum
(chew, chew, chew, chew)
Playin' with my yo-yo, wee-oo! wee-oo!
When along came Herman the worm
And he was this big (make a motion as if measuring a bigger worm)
And I said: "Herman? What happened?"
"I swallowed a dog."

I was sittin' on my fencepost, chewing my bubble gum
(chew, chew, chew, chew)
Playin' with my yo-yo, wee-oo! wee-oo!
When along came Herman the worm
And he was this big (make a motion as if measuring for a tiny worm again)
And I said: "Herman? What happened?"
"I burped."

I tried to teach my child with books,
He only gave me troubled looks.
I tried to teach my child with words,
They passed him by, oft unheard.
"How shall I teach this child?" I cried.
Into my hands he put the key,
"Come", he said "Play with me".

