OBJECTIVE:
To associate a pictorial object to a spoken nursery rhyme.

INFORMATION:
People have used nursery rhymes to soothe and entertain babies for centuries. There’s a reason for this – they work! One theory is that the bouncy rhythm and repetitious sounds of nursery rhymes simulate the mother’s ever-present heartbeat that comforted your baby before birth. Using nursery rhymes consistently during your child’s infancy also encourages your baby to copy the fun sounds that you’re making (language acquisition).

Before your baby develops his “pincer grasp” it is important to provide objects that he can put his hands around and explore. This will help your baby assimilate the experience of new shapes and textures while he exercises his grasping skills. Acquisition of these fine motor skills is actually a greater predictor of intelligence than the large motor skills that most people watch for (i.e. crawling, walking, etc.).

The rhyme cube is used to support rhyme recognition. Always use the same rhymes with each icon (the spider is always “Itsy Bitsy Spider”). Your baby will start to anticipate the same rhyme when he sees the icon. Watch your baby’s reaction when you roll the cube to see which rhymes are his favorites (reaching, squealing, tongue movement, bouncing, smiling). Associating the icon with a verbal response (the rhyme) is a pre-reading skill.

LEARNING SKILLS:
Language development
Fine motor development
Visual discrimination
Hand-eye coordination
Anticipation of events
Cause and effect
Social interaction
MATERIALS:
1 pint milk cartons, clean
Bright colored paper to wrap carton
6 nursery rhyme icons (see attached)
Newspaper
Clear contact paper
Glue
Tape

HOW TO ASSEMBLE:
1. Collect and clean 1 pint milk cartons. 
   (Ask your local school to save these during lunch hour)
2. Open carton and fill with newspaper to hold shape.
3. Fold top flat and tape down to form cube.
4. Wrap cube with bright paper (like a gift).
5. Glue one rhyme icon on each side.
6. Cover with clear contact paper.

WHAT TO DO:
Help baby roll cube or roll it toward baby. When cube stops, talk about and then recite the rhyme that corresponds to the icon facing up.

VARIATIONS:
Each time baby rolls the cube show him a Baby Sign that corresponds with the icon. These signs may be from the International Sign Language or signs decided by you and your baby.

SAFETY:
Make sure paper is securely attached to the box.
Teach baby to roll, not throw the cube.
Always supervise your baby.

SUGGESTED RHYMES:
Twinkle, Twinkle       One, Two Buckle My Shoe
Itsy Bitsy Spider       Pat-a-Cake
Tick Tock               Hey Diddle-Diddle
This Little Piggy       Three Little Monkeys

SUGGESTED AUTHORS FOR BOOKS TO SHARE:  
Iona Opie and Rosemary Wells
Jane Dyer
Tomie dePaola

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If they like it, buy more than one!

Don’t be afraid to buy two copies of your baby’s favorite book and never scold them when their natural exploration harms a book. As they mature they will be more able to treat books with care, but for right now it’s the only way they have to learn and discover. This is especially true with lift-the-flap books; babies will take a keen interest in these books when their Pincer grasp starts to develop (around 9-12 months). But it takes a long time for them to refine this skill and their attempts to grasp may be clumsy and harmful to the flaps. You can protect the book by helping your child instead of getting upset or keeping them away from the flaps. This is important exercise for them and we need to relax and roll with the punches. Even if your book collection comes primarily from the library, it’s important for each child to have a handful of books of their very own that they see every day. Shop dollar stores, garage sales, used book stores and library book sales.