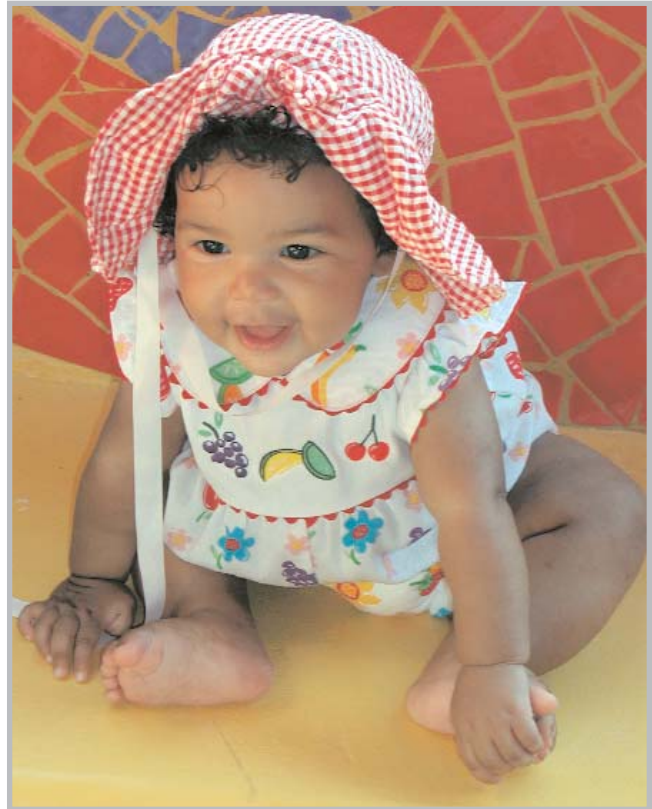


## A Sense of Humor Is No Joking Matter

Where does a sense of humor come from? It appears that it is learned, rather than inherited, and that adults can help children develop a healthy sense of humor. There are many valid reasons you should take the time to do so.

Laughter and humor have intellectual, social, emotional and even physical benefits. A sense of humor is a form of intellectual play and much of that has to do with language development. When children begin to understand words and their meanings, they eventually discover homonyms, words that have the same sound or spelling but mean something different. They then begin to play with these words and may suddenly take an interest in riddle books or making up their own riddles, so they can make people laugh. This drive to bring joy to others begins early, before a child may understand what a riddle is. Every caregiver or parent has experienced the child, who when trying to imitate an older sibling, tells a riddle that makes no sense. The child has an understanding of the joy humor can bring to others but doesn't quite have the language skills for it. Luckily, the jokester is usually the first to laugh, making us laugh, spurring on his future attempts. His will to bring others joy has motivated him to understand language, and he eventually will tell a truly funny joke.

Laughter also has many social benefits. People who make others laugh are seen as more sociable and if they have a well developed sense of humor, make others around



them more comfortable. This ability makes it easier for a child to make friends. Other children are naturally attracted to things that bring them joy and so become attracted to anyone who can make them laugh. Having others attracted to you and wanting to play with you is a natural builder of self-esteem.

Having a well developed sense of humor is also a great way to deal with the every day stresses of life, those things which are completely out of our control but happen none the less. If attention is paid to those things and approached with a sense of humor, children learn to use humor as a coping skill. While this skill won't be totally in place until adulthood, laying the ground work for this development begins very early in life.

While there is very little research on humor and the effects it has on children's health, we know that adults who have a positive outlook on life and a sense of humor about difficult health situations heal faster. (Sharon Jayson, *USA Today*) This skill is a marvelous gift to give to a child. The power to be part of healing oneself will spread through all areas of the child's life.

### **Supporting Children's Funny Bone**

It's never too early to start laughing with children. Infants, while they don't yet have the ability to play with language, do share in contagious laughter. They also respond to things that are surprising and different. Peek-a-boo is a game that infants love because of its element of surprise. Fingerplays like "This Little Piggy" that tickle baby physically usually bring a smile and giggle. As infants near 18 months to two years they will begin to get used to routine, and a break from that routine will be considered funny. If you put your hat on your foot, a two year old may think it very funny. If you try to stick your spoon on your nose, toddlers will think it's just hysterical. Any minor change from what a child thinks is normal can be considered funny. A disposable

diaper worn as a hat can be a delightful break from your routine.

Be careful with sensitive toddlers. If we change something too much, the funny joke becomes scary. If you comb your hair straight up in the air, you're likely to get a good laugh. But if you cut your hair, dye it a new color and change your make-up, the children may break down in tears. Toddlers like small breaks from routine. If you change their reality, it rocks their world a bit too much.

From age two to five, anything that doesn't make sense to a child is funny. A fish in a top hat and tuxedo, or an elephant cooking pancakes is humorous. During this time a child's language skills allow him to communicate things that are incongruous and this opens a whole new world. Words themselves become things to play with. Introducing humorous poetry during these years is a great hit. Add riddle books to your library along with silly picture books that have illustrations that engage the child's new sense of the strange or odd. Brush up on your knock knock jokes. Laugh at the jokes that don't quite make sense to encourage further language exploration.

Get ready for the bathroom humor that goes hand in hand with potty training and remember that humor

can help decrease the stress children may feel about this issue. It's O.K to laugh at their "poopy" jokes. The children want you to laugh. If the bathroom humor is used in inappropriate circumstances, simply don't laugh or react at all. The behavior will soon fade away.

Always encourage children to laugh and be silly and when you hear, "*What flowers do you wear every day? ...Two Lips.*" laugh and celebrate. This little comedian just made a tremendous leap in his intellectual and social development.

Paul McGhee, *Understanding and Promoting the Development of Children's Humor*, Kendall/Hunt 2002

Dr. C. Flatter, Dr. J. Herzog, Dr. P. Tyson, K. Ross, *A Look at Humor in Children Through the Years*, [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org), 2006

### **Great Riddle Books**

**Knock, Knock! Who's There? My First Book of Knock Knock Jokes**  
by Tad Hills

**Eight Ate: A Feast of Homonym Riddles**  
by Marvin Terban

**Riddles**  
by Pam Rosenberg

# Songs and Fingerplays To Tickle a Funny Bone

## Boom, Boom, Ain't it Great to Be Crazy?

A horse and a flea and three blind mice,  
Sat on a curbstone shooting dice.  
The horse he slipped and fell on the flea,  
"Whoops," said the flea, "There's a horse on me!"

### Chorus

Boom, boom, ain't it great to be crazy,  
Boom, boom, ain't it great to be crazy,  
Giddy and foolish the whole day through,  
Boom, boom, ain't it great to be crazy?

Way down south where bananas grow,  
A flea stepped on an elephant's toe,  
The elephant cried with tears in his eyes,  
"Why don't you pick on someone your size?"

### Chorus

Way up north where there's ice  
and snow,  
There lived a penguin and his  
name was Joe,  
He got so tired of black and white,  
He wore pink slacks to the dance  
last night.

### Chorus



## I Can Make a Baby Smile

I can make a baby smile  
When I tickle her toes.  
*(Tickle baby's toes.)*  
And I can make a baby laugh  
When I tickle her nose.  
*(Tickle baby's nose.)*



## Down By the Bay

Down by the bay,  
Where the watermelons grow,  
Back to my home,  
I dare not go.  
For if I do, my mother will say,  
"Did you ever see a bear,  
Combing his hair?"  
Down by the bay.

Repeat with the following phrases  
and then make up your own.

"Did you ever see a bee,  
With a sunburned knee?"  
"Did you ever see a moose,  
Kissing a goose?"  
"Did you ever see a whale,  
With a polka dot tail?"

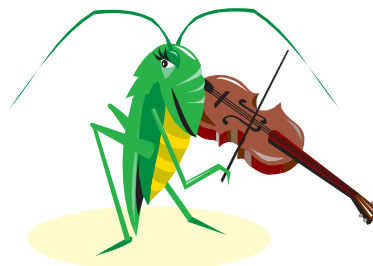


## Wiggle



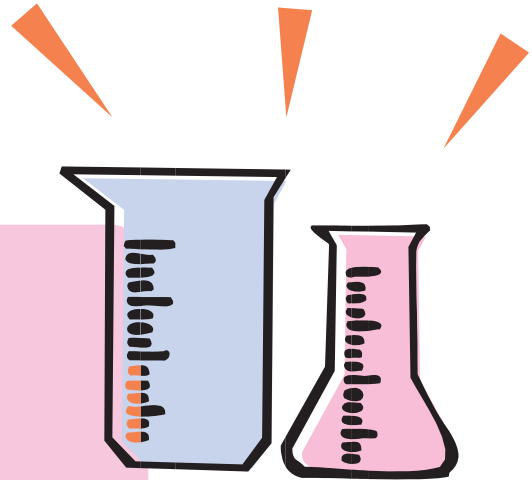
I wiggle, wiggle, wiggle my fingers.  
I wiggle, wiggle, wiggle my toes.  
I wiggle, wiggle, wiggle my shoulders.  
I wiggle, wiggle, wiggle my nose.  
Now no more wiggles are left in me,  
So I will be as still as I can be.

Follow the verse and have  
the children wiggle all their  
body parts.



# Silly Projects and Activities

You can be silly and learn science. The following recipes are for children who are not putting things in their mouths. Do not share these projects with infants and toddlers who may think that it's food.



## Science Recipes

### Silly Putty

Silly Putty is fun to mold and can be pressed into newspaper print to pick up images.

1 cup Elmers Glue  
1/2 cup of liquid starch

Pour glue into a small bowl. Add 2 Tablespoons of the liquid starch. Continue adding the starch kneading until a smooth putty is formed.

### Flubber

3/4 cup warm water  
1 cup Elmer's Glue  
food coloring

2 tsp Borax  
1/2 cup warm water

Stir 3/4 cup water, Elmer's Glue and food coloring together. Mix the Borax and 1/2 cup warm water and stir well. Add the mixture together and watch the Flubber form.

### Silly Walk

Get dressed in jackets and boots. Take a silly walk. Find a hill to roll down and a puddle to walk through. Find an open field and spin around in circles until you drop to the ground. Just have fun for fun's sake.

## Face Paint and Make-up

What child has never gotten into Mom's make-up and then modeled their new look. Children love face paint. You can purchase face paints at most hobby and craft stores. Make sure it is non-toxic and FDA approved. You can also use very inexpensive make-up purchased at your local pharmacy. **Do not allow children to use pointy eye or lip pencils.** Stick with powders with brushes, creams and lipsticks. Face paints are applied with a brush, make-up with its

supplied applicators. The first time paint the children's faces as they request. After that allow them to play, making up their faces as they wish.

**Note:** Both make-up and face paint can stain your furniture. Make sure children are cleaned up before you allow them to play on cloth upholstery.



## Freeze

Freeze is an old game that always makes toddlers laugh. Put some music on and tell the children to dance. The faster and sillier the music the more fun they'll have. Explain when the music stops they all have to stay perfectly still. After a few times they'll understand what to do. Don't keep the music off too long. Toddlers don't freeze for more than two - three seconds.

# All About Town

## Irish Soda Bread

Celebrate St Patrick's Day with this traditional Irish Soda Bread Recipe.

4 cups all purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 Tablespoons sugar  
2 Tablespoons butter melted  
1 cups raisins, currants or cranberries  
1½ cups buttermilk

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.  
Blend the flour, baking soda, salt and sugar in a large bowl.

In a smaller bowl, mix the butter, buttermilk and raisins. Add to the flour mixture and mix only until just blended. Knead dough on a floured surface until smooth.

Place on a greased baking sheet.  
Cut a cross ½ inch deep along the top of the loaf. Bake in the preheated oven 40 - 45 minutes. Cool thoroughly before slicing.

## Read Aloud Books for March

**A Light in the Attic and  
Where the Sidewalk Ends**  
by Shel Silverstein

No one combines children's humor and poetry better than Shel Silverstein. His books have become staples in every child's library. These are great bed time books for those children who have made the linguistic leap into the world of word play. (ages 3 - adult)

## Curriculum Planning - Part 2

Friday, March 3, 2006  
8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Urban League of Hudson County  
253 Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Jersey City, NJ 07305  
Fee \$25.00 (earn 5 CEU hours)  
Phone - 856-582-7000

Perhaps more than any other experience, an effective pre-school program impacts a child's lifetime achievement. In this session, participants will share their completed planning assignments (from Part 1) and further refine their skills in curriculum development.



## Multicultural Education

Friday, March 17, 2006  
8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Urban League of Hudson County  
253 Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Jersey City, NJ 07305  
Fee \$25.00 (earn 5 CEU hours)  
Phone - 856-582-7000

Childcare providers can enrich their programs by providing children with experiences that prepare them to live in an increasingly diverse society. Everyday activities to address diversity will be explored.



## Creative Arts - Just for the Fun of It

Wednesday, March 22, 2006  
8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Urban League of Hudson County  
253 Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Jersey City, NJ 07305  
Fee \$25.00 (earn 5 CEU hours)  
Phone - 856-582-7000

Young children possess great creative potential. In order to foster creativity in children, caregivers need to examine the process by which children are encouraged to learn. In this hands-on workshop, providers will examine ways to create opportunities for young children to develop these capacities.

## Just Silly Stories

### Wiggle by Doreen Cronin

Toddlers will giggle at this story about wiggles. A friendly pup wiggles out of bed and then proceeds to wiggle through the day. At breakfast he winds up with a pancake on his head, but he's undaunted and is illustrated wiggling in his polka dot boxers a few pages later. Black outlined pastel drawings are layered with an occasional photograph, giving the artwork a fresh contemporary look. This book is sure to get everyone wiggling while awaiting the arrival of Spring. (ages 2 - 5)

### Chicks and Salsa by Aaron Reynolds

Day after day the farm animals on Nuthatcher farm eat the same feed. The rooster takes charge of the situation and learns how to make salsa while watching a cooking show through the farmhouse window. The ducks add to the salsa, choosing garlic and spices from the garden and add a bit of guacamole. The author concedes within the text of the story, that he doesn't know where the guacamole or the chips came from, adding to the unquestionable silliness of the story. Inspired by the smells, Mrs. Nuthatcher decides to make tamales and uses up the rooster's ingredients. Refusing to return to their boring diet, the rooster finds a cookbook and begins to explore French cuisine. The animals look as hysterical in their chapeaus as they did in their Mexican party hats. The colorful illustrations are filled with comical animals in unlikely situations. Children will discover something new to laugh at during each reading. (ages 3 - 6)

### Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing by Judi Barrett

As soon as children understand the difference between animals and humans they'll understand the humor in these beautifully drawn pictures. A short phrase on the left hand side proves why the title of the book is true. On the right hand side, the animal dressed most inappropriately shows us how silly it would be for animals to dress as humans. The last page reads, "and most of all, because it might be very embarrassing." The picture beside the explanation shows an elephant in a brightly flowered dress and green hat, looking over a fence at a woman dressed in the same outfit. A short silly book perfect for your toddler or your coffee table. (ages 18 mos. - adult)

### How Do Dinosaurs Clean Their Rooms? by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague

Those ferocious dinosaurs certainly look silly picking up all their teddy bears and trying to hide them under the bed. But well behaved dinosaurs don't hide their mess. They line up their little cars, put their clothes in the hamper and sweep up the dust. You can't help but giggle at the big clumsy dinosaurs using tiny brooms and dusters. But those creatures are very proud when Mom notices their hard work. A very silly way to get a toddler to pick up his toys. (ages 1 - 4)

## WARMLINE

Providing you with practical, accurate information on health, behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

**1-800-713-9006**



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### Childcare Matters

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