

www.SingWithOurKids.com



A Baker's Dozen

13 TRADITIONAL SONGS
TO READ AND SING WHEREVER YOU ARE



This is the first of 13 weekly e-mails with ideas for ways to use the songs on your free CD. So have fun!

1. Download it, Sing it, Learn it!

- If you haven't done so already, burn the CD songs to your I-Tunes playlist, or make copies of the CD for your car or import into your listening devices. And don't forget to make a copy to give to grandparents for times when they have the children. They can also download the songs free from www.SingWithOurKids.com from the Song Library.
- Join your children in singing along wherever you go!
- Now sing the songs *without* the CD- just you, your children, and their beautiful voices; in the car, in the bathtub, in the park, even in the grocery store! You'll soon find yourselves making up your own versions of some of the songs, and probably find a few that become favorites, and they will become *your* songs!

Did You Know?

Traditional songs give children cultural references and a connection to our past, and are likely to be the same songs they will pass down to their children. So sing for the past, the present, and the future!

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Here's your weekly Baker's Dozen Tip. Enjoy!

2. Take a Song and Make a Song!

One of the fun things about traditional melodies is that they make it easy to create a new song everyone can sing. There are even traditional songs with the same melody you already know, like *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, and *the ABC Song*. All three songs share a popular Mozart melody. Melodies are like a hangers for words! Fill your song closet with lots of new songs you and your children make up, like putting your entire family on the Bus as the Wheels go round and round- and don't forget the pets! Children can decide what everyone is doing on that bus.

Here's another example of a new song to an old melody. It's about a digger dog, to the tune of *The Lady With the Alligator Purse* (one of the songs on your Baker's Dozen CD). This is a fun finger play that's a hit with kids 7 and under. Give it a try! Here's the link to the free song which can be found on my artist website <http://nancymusic.com/SOM/index.htm>.

Did You Know?

Songs actually build memory as they organize language into patterns your brain can remember. That's why we all learned the ABC song- and have never forgotten it. So sing for your brain!

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3. Books that Sing!

Since all of the songs on *A Baker's Dozen* have been turned into picture books by various authors and illustrators, you can visit your local library or book store and easily find them. My own library system has seven different versions of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!* When you share these books with children they experience different artistic styles and lots of new words as writers change the rhymes and come up with new expanded versions. Try them all and then discuss and vote on your favorites with your children!

Did You Know?

The way we learn best is by connecting something familiar to something new. So books that sing tap into the way we learn best!

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4. Leave off the Rhyming Word

All of these songs rhyme, making them "predictive" language. Children love it when you leave off the rhyming word and let them fill it in! Even two-year-olds who have been doing this for a while are able to take the song structure and make up new verses. For example, in *A Hunting We Will Go*, let them choose an animal (or not even an animal- they might say shoe or car or something!), and then together you can make it rhyme. So they might say, "We'll catch a shoe and put it in a stew!" This is an especially fun and endless activity in the car. Try it, and see what silly and creative things *your* kids come up with!

Did You Know?

Rhyming builds phonemic awareness, which means understanding that words are made of smaller parts and sounds. It's "playing" with the smaller parts of words. This skill is essential to being ready to read, and it's totally fun!



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5. Lights, Camera, Action!

Traditional nursery rhymes make great mini plays, and with a few simple props from around the house your children will have tons of fun taking center stage! You can sing (providing the soundtrack) while they act out simple songs like *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* and *Hickory Dickory Dock*, to name a couple on [A Baker's Dozen](#). I have many times seen children from 2-6 excited about "performing" them over and over again. Here's a set of simple prop ideas to get you started!



Did You Know?

Nursery rhymes have all the story elements of more advanced stories; characters, plot, conflict and resolution, and of course a beginning, a middle, and an end! So they are a perfect way to introduce younger children to literature.

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6. Old Macdonald Had a..... Pillow Case!?

Here's a fun activity I did with my kids when they were little. I took an old pillow case and put several of their toys in it. We sang *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, and with each verse I would stick my head in the pillow case and make the noise of something inside. They would have to guess, and then we would sing. We started off with animals of course, but over time their favorite toys and miscellaneous items found their way into the farm bag! It was endlessly fun, and got everyone involved. You can change the song completely by doing, Old Macdonald Had a ... Kitchen (put small cooking tools in the bag), had a closet (clothing, hangers, stuff!), a picnic (picnic supplies)...it really is endless! As a performer I went on to make a large purple bag decorated with a barn and animals, and although it does contain farm animal puppets, there are a couple of unexpected objects that always come out. Kids love it! You don't need to buy anything, you'll be singing, and believe me- making up and sharing private little "jokes" with your kids! These are the things kids remember when they are grown (and having children of their own) because they involve *you*!

Did You Know?

Singing and **playing** with your children are just two of the "Five Practices" that help get your children ready to read! To learn about the others, watch this short video on the Sing With Our Kids website. Here's the link:

<http://www.singwithourkids.com/video.htm>

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7. A Song, a Book, and More!

You already know that all of the songs on A Baker's Dozen have been published in picture book form, but did you know these books often come with additional material? Here are some of the things to look for:

- Sheet music and chords
- Additional information and tips for using the book. **The Sing-Along Stories Series** by Mary Ann Hoberman and Nadine Bernard Westcott actually have questions about the illustrations and additional activities to do with children based on the book! Look at one in this series, and you'll get plenty of ideas for what to do with other books.
- A CD or website where you can listen to the recorded song. This is especially common with original songs, which is very helpful!
- Notes by the illustrator explaining artistic choices

So next time you check out one of these "books that sing," be sure to read the whole book- from cover to cover!

Did You Know?

The best place to find out of print books that sing is your local public library!

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8. Head and Shoulders, Baby Massage!

That old familiar song, *Head and Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*, makes a wonderful baby massage song. While you're changing your baby's diaper, try looking into his or her eyes and sing the song slowly as you stop to gently massage each sweet part. When you get to "eyes," gently circle the eyes with your fingers, massage their tiny toes, and so on. It makes diaper changing a time of sweet special connections. And what a gift you are giving your baby – and yourself!

Did You Know?

If you simply sing a song every time you change your baby's diaper, you'll actually be helping your baby get ready to read later on! As you sing and your baby watches your mouth and hears your voice, he gets language, culture, speech patterns, words, and emotions; all delivered by the person your baby loves best- You! And by the way, all of these connections continue as you sing with your toddler and preschooler. You just move the singing from the changing table to dinner table and beyond!

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9. I've Been Working on the Railroad... a song for a lifetime!

When I ask adults what song they remember being sung to them, it's more often than not either *I've Been Working on the Railroad* (usually sung by their fathers), or *You Are My Sunshine* (usually sung by their mothers). Think about that! After nearly a hundred years, and thousands of songs, for some reason- those two have endured and not only comforted countless children, but remain a comfort those children when they are grown. That is what these songs do best; comfort your baby or child, become part of their family history, and remain a comfort throughout their (*your*) lives!

If we try to analyze them the magic seems to disappear into thin air! *You Are My Sunshine* is very sad, and *I've Been Working on the Railroad* is a strange patchwork of song. But they *are* magical, and that is all we need to know.

What song do you remember being sung to you as a child? Have you shared it with your children? Before you know it they'll be singing the same songs to their children.

Did You Know?

You Are My Sunshine is not a traditional song. It was written by Oliver Hood in 1939. And that is why it is not in the Sing With Our Kids Song Library.



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10. A Hunting We Will Go ... for boxes!

In case you haven't visited my artist website, I have over 150 free songs and activities to download. Years ago I made a set of "rhyming boxes" to use with *A Hunting We Will Go*, which you'll hear on *A Baker's Dozen*. You begin the song with the boxes nested inside each other, and unpack them as you go. They are magical! Maybe it's the element of surprise, or the sound they make when I shake them... but even children who don't know how to rhyme "get" it by the end of the song when I use these boxes. I've provided clipart in three sizes, so you can pick what works best with whatever boxes you have. Here's a link to my website with all the directions. <http://www.nancymusic.com/SOM/2009/a-hunting-we-will-go.htm> Of course you can also sing the song helping your child come up with animals (or anything else!), and the rhyming words to go with them. It's a great car activity.



Did You Know?

Rhyming is one of the most important skills children need in order to be ready to read, and most children's songs rhyme!

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11. A New Twist on an Old Song!



Here's a fun way to make a new song from the *Five Little Ducks*, turning it into *Five Little Dragons!* You'll find the recorded version, and printable pages to make a large folding book or tiny kid version on my website, Nancymusic.com. Here is the link, and it's free of course! <http://www.nancymusic.com/5Dragonsplay.htm>

Did You Know?

You can find lots of free activities, printable books, and instructions for homemade instruments on Nancymusic.com. Or just go to the free shop on the Sing With Our Kids website, and start "shopping." It's all free! Here's the link: <http://www.nancymusic.com/giftshop/>



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12. Words, Words, Words!

One of the great things about songs is that they have words we don't use every day. Why is this important? Because we know that the more words children know when they enter kindergarten, the more successful they will be at reading... AND the more successful they are at reading, the more likely it is they will graduate from high school! This all begins at birth as the young brain is primed to learn! Take just two of the songs on a Baker's Dozen; *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*, and *I'm a Little Teapot*. Both are very short and simple. But here are the words they contain would probably not otherwise be a part of a baby or toddler's day:

1. water spout
2. teapot (new word if you only have coffee drinkers in the house!)
3. stout (means sturdy, in case you've forgotten yourself!)
4. handle
5. spout

That's five new words in just these two simple songs! It's the nature of songs; they often use words we don't use in everyday conversation. And because they are repeated, have a context, and are attached to a melody, they "stick" in the brain. So don't worry about getting flash cards for your baby, just sing!

Did You Know?

Most children enter kindergarten with a range of between 3000-6000 words. That's a huge range for teachers to work with! The number of words a child knows is a leading indicator of success in reading. The more words a child knows, the more easily he or she will recognize them in print. New research shows it's also important for children to hear words spoken slowly. Singing naturally slows down language and allows children to hear each sound.



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13. Let's Play a Game!

Now that you know and have been singing and reading these thirteen songs, let's celebrate with a game! Write down all the song titles on slips of paper and put them in a box or jar. On separate pieces of paper put in another container, write the 13 activities listed below. Each day, have your child draw a song and an activity, and do them. This can be great when boredom strikes, during specially designated family time, before bedtime, or any other time you need some quick and easy fun.

1. Grab some pots and pans and march around the house while singing and "playing" your kitchen instruments.
2. Have your child sing the song to a favorite stuffed animal or pet.
3. Draw a picture of something in the song, or about the song, and put it on the refrigerator.
4. Take several different kitchen sized pots, and sing the song "into" each one. This is VERY silly, and your child will hear how his or her voice changes as it reverberates into different spaces.
5. Sing the whole song while jumping up and down!
6. Write down 3 words from the song on pieces of paper, and when you get to those words, pause the song while you give your child that word to hold.
7. Clap the song as you sing it slowly, allowing one clap for each syllable.
8. Sing the song in 3 different voices, letting your child choose (sad, mad, silly, etc).
9. Sing the song snuggled under a blanket in the dark.
10. Hold hands and walk in a circle "Ring around the Rosy" style while you sing the song.

11. Have your child choose a place in the house to go sing the song (suggest some silly places, like behind a door, in a closet, under the stairs)

12. Sing the song lying down on the floor.

13. Hum the song, then sing the song, then simply clap it.

Using these simple songs, you can have endless fun while building shared memories and early literacy! These are the kinds of things that children remember when they are older. Of course, you'll probably think of more songs and more activities!

Did You Know?

The songs you sing with your children now are likely the same ones they will sing to their children. Now *that's* a powerful connection!

Visit www.SingWithOurKids.com for more free songs, activities, and information.