

Silly Songs: A Fun Way to Build Fluency Skills Online

With our Silly Songs practice, merriment and music partner to build fluency skills. We turn familiar tunes on their heads by changing the lyrics in playful ways, and then sing them with students in person or online. Fluency has never been so much fun! Silly Songs help:

- **Build community around a shared text.** When a class or family learns songs together, everyone participates and enjoys a shared experience, which is particularly important in these challenging times. When teachers and students create their own silly songs and share them with friends and family, engagement is heightened as they entertain a real audience.
- **Integrate wordplay, expression, and word-study opportunities.** A song is like an earworm—it’s hard to forget the lyrics; as a class routine, singing familiar songs brings up many opportunities to introduce or revisit words and phrases. Silly songs further invite students to play with rhyme, puns, tone, and vocal and facial expressions, which lights up the language centers of their brains in a natural way.
- **Invite repeated reading.** An entertaining performance requires rehearsal, and rehearsal requires lots of rereading with expression. All that repeated reading reinforces sight word vocabulary, fluid phrasing, and the patterns and rhythms of language.

Here are some ways to use Silly Songs to build your students’ fluency at home:

If your students have a device of their own:

- Find a silly song they will enjoy enough to want to rehearse and share—or write your own silly song. We’ve provided three songs to consider from *The Megabook of Fluency*—just download them from this site.
- Prerecord or livestream the silly song. Screen-share the lyrics or send them to students so they can read along as they listen. Consider singing the song two or three times through to give students time to learn and practice with phrasing and expression.
- Invite them to share the song with their families.
- Whether you prerecord or livestream, practice and plan before you present. Here are some pointers:
 - Avoid a long introduction—start singing as soon as possible.
 - If students are not familiar with the original tune, sing it first. (See how Tim does this in the “Bring Joy to Reading: Song” video when

presenting “You Are My Teacher,” sung to the tune of “You Are My Sunshine.”)

- Amplify your expression by using onomatopoeia, alliteration, interjections, and other sound-related language techniques. (See how Melissa does this in her at-home video with her son: They identified the onomatopoeia words in “He’s Always on His Phone” and emphasized the sounds of the phone as they sang.)
 - Pay close attention to line breaks and phrasing to give a fluent delivery for students.
 - Above all, enjoy entertaining your students with the song!
- As a fun extension, challenge students to write their own silly songs to familiar tunes, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” “The Itsy Bitsy Spider,” and “Baby Shark.”
 - Encourage students to post their lyrics—and/or videos of them singing their song—on a shared learning platform for peers to enjoy and try themselves.

If your students share a device at home:

Follow the same steps and suggestions as above, videotaping the silly song in advance and posting it. If possible, use your digital learning platform to have students share their responses, as well as their own silly songs.

If your students have limited or no online access:

If you are creating packets of materials to send home, consider sending the downloadable Silly Song pages and sharing some tips for caregivers. You might:

- Thank the caregiver for taking a few minutes to enjoy singing with their child—a fun way to support his or her reading. (Much like reading aloud, singing together provides a predictable and well-loved routine, connects reader and listener in a shared experience they can enjoy together now and revisit later, and provides the child with a model for fluent, yet playful reading and writing.)
- Provide some pointers for delivery, such as:
 - Sing the original tune if your child is not familiar with it.
 - With your child, find fun ways to make your rendition expressive—by emphasizing sounds, elevating your voices at predictable parts, and/or adding gestures and movement.
 - Sing it again—perhaps for other family members. While your child might memorize the song after singing it many times, having the lyrics in hand gives him or her another opportunity to read.

- Above all, encourage the caregiver to create an enjoyable experience that the child will want to repeat. That might mean composing a silly song together based on a favorite family tune.