



# Five Big Freight Trains

A Fingerplay for Head Start and Early Childhood Programs

Subjects: Health and Safety

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**Safety Message: Always stay AWAY from freight trains - do not play around the tracks.**

## OVERVIEW

Fingerplays are brief poems that rhyme, in which children can use their fingers to “act out” certain parts of the poem. Fingerplays can be used to develop language skills, direction-following skills, to experience rhythmic language and to increase attention spans of young children. Fingerplays can be used as part of circle-time, to provide transition into another activity, to introduce a theme or unit on trains/transportation, and various other ways.

## SPECIFICS

In presenting this fingerplay, children will be introduced to a basic safety rule if they are ever in the position of being near railroad tracks in their neighborhood, or any neighborhood. The basic safety message in this fingerplay is to *always stay AWAY from freight trains and to not play around the tracks.*

**OBJECTIVES** The students will:

- repeat/say the fingerplay, Five Big Freight Trains.
- develop small-motor skills while they move their fingers to animate the rhyme.
- learn a basic safety rule of never playing around tracks and staying away from freight trains.

## MATERIALS

- Five Big Freight Trains Fingerplay
- Pictures of trains, optional

## TEACHER PREPARATION

Before presenting the fingerplay, it is necessary to become thoroughly familiar with the rhyme. Memorize the rhyme, or print it on a poster board, chart paper or chalkboard for added early reading experiences.

## ACTIVITY

1. Introduce the fingerplay to children by saying the rhyme and using the finger movements.
2. Invite the children to repeat the rhyme – one line at a time at first.
3. Repeat again using finger movements.
4. Continue to repeat the rhyme during the day and week of study in which the theme of this rhyme (rail safety, trains, transportation) works with your learning themes/units.
5. Once the children are familiar with the fingerplay, discuss what the trains are trying to tell them. (Never play around tracks and always stay away from freight trains.)
6. Encourage the children to repeat the rhyme at home and share it with their parents, siblings or “important” people in their lives.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Make five (5) different freight trains and glue to the fingers of old gloves.
- Make objects to illustrate the rhyme for a felt or magnetic board.
- Make a big book to illustrate rhyme.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

- Pedestrian Safety Information Around Tracks and Trains
- Bells are only one of the warning devices on a locomotive; horns also provide a louder audible warning.
- Railroad tracks, trestles, yards and equipment are private property and trespassers are subject to arrest and fines. Railroad property is private property.
- Cross tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings.
- It can take a mile or more to stop a train, so a locomotive engineer who suddenly spots you ahead has little chance to miss you. For your safety, it is illegal to be there unless you are at a designated public crossing.
- Trains can overhang the tracks by at least three (3) feet on either side in both directions and loose straps hanging from rail cars may extend even further.
- The only safe place to cross is at designated public crossing with either a crossbuck, flashing red lights or gate. If you cross at any other place, you are trespassing and can be ticketed or fined.
- Do not cross the tracks immediately after a train passes. The view of a second train might be hidden by the first. Trains can come from either direction. Wait until you can see clearly in both directions.
- Flashing red lights signal that a train is approaching from either direction. You can be fined for failure to obey these signals. Never walk around lowered gates at a crossing. DO NOT cross the tracks until the lights have stopped flashing and it is safe to do so.
- Freight trains do not travel on a predictable schedule; schedules for passenger trains change also. Always expect a train at every highway-rail grade crossing at anytime from any direction.