What is rhyme, and why is it so important? Rhyme is the repetition of certain sounds in two or more words, such as cat and bat, bear and stare, and broke and joke. And rhyme is important because it helps children to develop phonological awareness—or their ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds in words. We really need kids to be able to hear sounds in words so that they will be able to read words on the page down the road.  
 ***Here are some ideas of how you can use rhyme***  
  
1. Rhyme Challenge: Whether you are in the car, walking home from school, or sitting poolside, Rhyme Challenge is an easy game that requires no set-up, clean-up, or materials whatsoever.

For Rhyme Challenge, one person chooses a word and says, *I challenge you to think of as many rhymes as you can for "cat"* (or any word). And the next player says as many words as he can that rhyme with that word. Both players keep count. I try to model saying the given word with the rhyming word so my little ones stay on track with rhymes (Cat, bat. Cat, hat. Cat, mat. . . ), but this isn't necessary for older children.  
  
Also try:

* Having one person choose a word then take turns saying just one rhyming word, one right after the other.
* Speed rounds," where we yell out rhyming words as fast as we can. Or, you can do "slow rounds" – it really depends on the day.

2. Rhyme Any Time: pull out the magnetic letters and put a word on the refrigerator, like "cat" or "top" or "bake." Then, any time you’re in the kitchen—making lunches, cooking dinner, whenever—and a child wanders in ask them to make a rhyme on the fridge.

You could say:

* *How many words can you create that rhyme with the word on the fridge?*
* *Let's say all of the rhyme words together.*
* *Now you choose a starting word, and we'll rhyme with yours.*
* *Let's make some sentences using as many of those rhyme words as we can.*

Making solid comparisons like this–and isolating individual sounds this way–is a great way of developing phonological awareness for little ears.

3. Rhyme Go Fish just like the old Go Fish! game we all love, except that this version uses rhyme words on cards.

This game is great for emerging readers who already have a handful of sight words and early word families down.  
  
To play Rhyme Go Fish! all of the cards are placed in the "pond" and each player takes five cards. After checking to see if anyone has any rhyming pairs, the game begins.

Player one asks the player to his left, Do you have a word that rhymes with "men?" Player two reads her words and determines whether she has a match or not. If she does, she hands it to the first player. If not, she says, Nope! Go Fish! Play continues until the first player has no cards in his hand.