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Chinese Nursery Rhymes



Volume 1



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Chinese Nursery Rhymes

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bīng guō gài
冰 锅 盖
ice pan cover

hóu lǎo gē , xiǎng shāo cài 。
猴 老 哥 , 想 烧 菜 。
monkey old brother think cook vegetable

qiāo kuài bīng , zuò guō gài 。
敲 块 冰 , 做 锅 盖 。
hit chunk ice make pan cover

jià huǒ shāo , shì ér huài 。
架 火 烧 , 事 儿 坏 。
support fire cook situation little bad

guō gài fēi shàng tiān ,
锅 盖 飞 上 天 ,
pan cover fly up sky

biàn chéng dà yún kuài 。
变 成 大 云 块 。
change into big cloud chunk

hóu gē shǎ le yǎn ,
猴 哥 傻 了 眼 ,
monkey brother stupid (particle) eyes



shuāng shǒu zhuā nǎo dài 。
双 手 抓 脑 袋 。
both hand grab brain bag

谢采筏

A pan cover made of ice (written by Xiè Cǎifá)

Old Brother Monkey wanted to cook some vegetables. But he used a chunk of ice he had just cut as a cover for his pan. Fire being part of the cooking equation, the situation went awry. The pan cover went into thin air and became quite a huge cloud. Brother Monkey who couldn't believe his eyes grabbed his head with both hands.

Notes

- Focus more on how words and groups of words are formed in Chinese when studying nursery rhymes. Familiarize yourself with the pinyin transcription as well.
- 哥 is an appellation. Although the meaning of this character is “elder brother,” the person you call 哥 might not necessarily have any family relationship with you.
- 儿 is a cutifying particle (see Level 1 Course 4 Lesson 6 on Cutifying Particles) used as a suffix for certain characters and does not necessarily carry any particular meaning.



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cán gū niang
蚕 姑 娘
silkworm young lady

cán gū niang
蚕 姑 娘 ，
silkworm young lady

bái yòu pàng
白 又 胖 。
white also fat

xiǎo sāng yè
小 桑 叶 ，
small mulberry leaf

zuò huā chuáng
做 花 床 。
do flower bed

tǔ yín sī
吐 银 丝 ，
spit silver silk

zuò yī shang
做 衣 裳 。
make clothes



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chūan qǐ lái
穿 起 来 ，
wear (action being done)

hǎo piào liang
好 漂 亮 。
very beautiful

Miss Silkworm

Miss Silkworm is white and fat. She makes a small mulberry leaf her flowery bed. She spits silvery threads of silk to make her own clothes. And when she puts them on, how beautiful she is!

Notes

- Notice the structure VERB / OBJECT + 做 + OBJECT in order to say "to make something from something."
- 起来 means TO RISE but is used figuratively here.
- 好 means GOOD but can also mean VERY when placed before an adjective.



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dà jiǎo dà
大 脚 大
big feet big

dà jiǎo dà , dà jiǎo dà ,
大 脚 大 , 大 脚 大 ,
big foot big , big foot big ,

yīn tiān xià yǔ bú hài pà 。
阴 天 下 雨 不 害 怕 。
cloudy sky down rain no fear

dà jiǎo hǎo , dà jiǎo hǎo ,
大 脚 好 , 大 脚 好 ,
big foot good , big foot good ,

yīn tiān xià yǔ shuāi bù dǎo 。
阴 天 下 雨 摔 不 倒 。
cloudy sky down rain slip no topple

Big Feet are Big

Big feet are big, big feet are big, when it rains on a cloudy day I have no fear. Big feet are a good thing, yes a good thing, because when it rains on a cloudy day, I never slip and fall.

Notes

- The verb TO BE is missing in 大脚大
- The negative 不 is inserted between the verb 摔 and the result 倒. For more on negatives, see Level 1 Course 4 Lesson 8 – Negative Particles.



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dà tóu
大 头
big head

dà tóu dà tóu
大 头 ， 大 头 ，
big head big head

xià yǔ bù chóu
下 雨 不 愁 ，
down rain no worry

rén jiā yǒu sǎn
人 家 有 伞 ，
other people have umbrella

wǒ yǒu dà tóu
我 有 大 头 。
I have big head

Big Head

Big head, big head, does it rain? I don't care! People have umbrellas, but I have my big head!

Notes

- The adjective is placed before the noun.
- 伞 is an accurate pictogram of an umbrella.



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dà wán yào
大 丸 药
big pill drug

yǒu gè xiǎo jiāo jiāo ,
有 个 小 娇 娇 ,
have one little delicate delicate

chī fàn bǎ cài tiāo ,
吃 饭 把 菜 挑 ,
eat rice get vegetable choose

bái cài gěi bà ba ,
白 菜 给 爸 爸 ,
white vegetable give papa

luó bo gěi lǎo lao 。
萝 卜 给 姥 姥 。
radish give grandma

bù chī zǐ qié zi ,
不 吃 紫 茄 子 ,
no eat purple eggplant

bù chī yún dòu jiǎo ,
不 吃 芸 豆 角 ,
no eat kidney bean corner



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bù chī zhè , bù chī nà ,
no eat this no eat that
zui hòu chī shàng dà wán yào 。
in the end eat up big pill drug

One Big Pill of Medicine

Once there was a little dainty one who was a finicky eater. She used to give all her bits of cabbage to Daddy, and all her radishes to Granny. She wouldn't eat purple eggplants, she wouldn't eat kidney bean samosas, she wouldn't eat this, she wouldn't eat that. In the end, she had to swallow one big pill of medicine.

Notes

- 有 means TO HAVE but when placed at the start of a sentence, it means THERE IS or THERE ARE.
- 爸爸 is pronounced bàba. The second ba has no tone because it uses the neutral tone. For more on neutral tone, see Level 1 Course 2 Lesson 4 – Pinyin Notations.



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diǎn diǎn chóng
点 点 虫
dot dot worm

diǎn diǎn chóng , chóng huì pá ,
点 点 虫 ， 虫 会 爬 ，
dot dot worm worm can climb

diǎn diǎn jī , jī huì tí ,
点 点 鸡 ， 鸡 会 啼 ，
dot dot chick chick can screech

diǎn diǎn gǒu , gǒu huì fèi ,
点 点 狗 ， 狗 会 吠 ，
dot dot dog dog can bark

diǎn diǎn niǎo , niǎo huì fēi ,
点 点 鸟 ， 鸟 会 飞 ，
dot dot bird bird can fly

dū dū dū dū fēi le qù ,
嘟 嘟 嘟 嘟 飞 了 去 ，
(sound) fly (past) go

fēi dào wài pó wū zi lǐ 。
飞 到 外 婆 屋 子 里 。
fly to grandma house little in



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Tiny Tiny Worm

Tiny worms can climb, tiny chicks can screech, tiny dogs can bark, tiny birds can fly, du, du, du, du, fly past by, fly into Granny's house.

Notes

- 里 is placed before the noun.
- 外 placed before 婆 lets us know that the grandmother is from the mother's side. 外 means OUTSIDE.

In Chinese culture, the father's line is the more important one and is therefore considered as INSIDE.



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fàng niǎo dàn
放 鸟 蛋
free bird egg

niǎo wō lǐ ,
鸟 窝 里 ,
bird nest in

méi le dàn 。
没 了 蛋 。
no (past) egg

niǎo mā ma kū ,
鸟 妈 妈 哭 ,
bird mama cry

niǎo bà ba hǎn 。
鸟 爸 爸 喊 。
bird papa shout

wǒ bǎ niǎo dàn fàng huí qù ,
我 把 鸟 蛋 放 回 去 ,
I put bird egg free back go

niǎo mā niǎo bà hǎo xǐ huān 。
鸟 妈 鸟 爸 好 喜 欢 。
bird ma bird pa much like

彭天喜



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Free the Eggs (written by Péng Tiānxī)

Alas, no eggs in the bird's nest anymore! Mama Bird cries, Papa Bird shouts. So I put the birds' eggs back into the nest. Mama Bird and Papa Bird appreciate it very much.

Notes

- 没 is the negative for the verb TO HAVE. For more on negatives, see Level 1 Course 4 Lesson 8.
- Notice the structure 把+ OBJECT + VERB which is the equivalent of VERB + OBJECT



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hǎi shuǐ
海 水
ice pan

dà hǎi dà hǎi wǒ wèn nǐ :
大 海 大 海 我 问 你 :
big sea big sea I ask you

nǐ wèi shén me zhè me xián ?
你 为 什 么 这 么 咸 ?
you why this much salty

dà hǎi xiào zhe lái huí dá :
大 海 笑 着 来 回 答 :
big sea smiling come back answer

yīn wèi yú rén liú le hàn 。
因 为 渔 人 流 了 汗 。
because fishing people run (past) sweat

dà hǎi dà hǎi wǒ wèn nǐ :
大 海 大 海 我 问 你 :
big sea big sea I ask you

nǐ wèi shén me zhè yàng lán ?
你 为 什 么 这 样 蓝 ?
you why this form blue



dà hǎi xiào zhe lái huí dá
大海笑着来回答：

wǒ de huái lǐ bào zhe tiān
我的怀里抱着天。

刘饶民

Seawater (written by Liú Ráomín)

Big sea, big sea, I ask you: why are you that salty?

The big sea replied with a smile: because fishermen sweat.

Big sea, big sea, I ask you: how come you are blue?

The big sea replied with a smile: I have the sky in my heart.

Notes

- 着 is the equivalent of the English -ing.
- 答 means TO ANSWER. 回答 means TO REPLY.



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hēi ní bā huáng ní bā
黑 泥 巴 ， 黄 泥 巴
black mud yellow mud

hēi ní bā huáng ní bā
黑 泥 巴 ， 黄 泥 巴 ，
black mud yellow mud

nóng mín bó bó xǐ ài tā
农 民 伯 伯 喜 爱 它 ，
peasant uncle like it

yòu zhòng mài zi yòu zhòng dòu
又 种 麦 子 又 种 豆 ，
and again sow wheat and again sow bean

yòu zāi shù miáo yòu zāi huā
又 栽 树 苗 又 栽 花 。
and again plant tree sprout and again plant flower

蒋应武

Black Mud, Yellow Mud (written by Jiǎng Yīngwǔ)

Black mud, yellow mud, my uncle on the farm likes it. He sows not only wheat, but also beans. He plants not only saplings but also flowers.



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hǔ dà wáng zhào xiàng
虎 大 王 照 相
tiger big king shine picture

dà lǎo hǔ , shān zhōng wáng ,
大 老 虎 ， 山 中 王 ，
big old tiger mount center king

duān zhe xiàng jī qù zhào xiàng 。
端 着 相 机 去 照 相 。
carrying picture machine go shine picture

yào gěi xiǎo māo zhào ,
要 给 小 猫 照 ，
want (particle) little cat shine

xiǎo māo xià de shàng shù liǎo ;
小 猫 吓 得 上 树 了 ；
little cat frighten so that up tree (past)

yào gěi xiǎo tù zhào ,
要 给 小 兔 照 ，
want (particle) little bunny shine

xiǎo tù xià de zuān dòng liǎo ;
小 兔 吓 得 钻 洞 了 ；



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little bunny frighten so that get into hole (past)

yào gěi dà é zhào
要 给 大 鹅 照 ,
want (particle) big goose shine

dà é xià de tiào hé liǎo ;
大 鹅 吓 得 跳 河 了 ;
big goose frighten so that jump river (past)

yào gěi xiǎo niǎo zhào
要 给 小 鸟 照 ,
want (particle) little bird shine

xiǎo niǎo xià de shàng tiān liǎo
小 鸟 吓 得 上 天 了
little bird frighten so that up sky (past)

dōng bēn xī pǎo dào chù zhào ,
东 奔 西 跑 到 处 照 ,
east hurry west run everywhere shine

zuì hòu shá yě méi zhào dào 。
最 后 啥 也 没 照 到 。
in the end anything too not shine succeed

冯幽君

The Tiger King Goes for a Photowalk (written by Fény Yōujūn)



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Great Tiger, Lord of the Mountains, is out on a photo walk with his camera. He wants to shoot a little cat, but the little kitty is so frightened she climbs up a tree. He wants to shoot a little bunny, but the little bunny is so scared he rushes into a hole. He wants to shoot a big goose, but the big goose dives into the river out of fear. He wants to shoot a small bird, but the terrified bird flies up into the sky... Great Tiger runs in all directions in haste, trying to take a picture, but in the end he couldn't take any photograph.

Notes

- 照 means TO SHINE but associated with 相 becomes TO TAKE (a picture). The verb TO SHINE is descriptive of the technical process of taking a picture.
- Familiarize yourself with some of the most common Chinese punctuation marks such as …… or 。

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