



The Rattle

Contributed by Anne Pitcher

The Rattle is an American Indian tale about growing up told to me by Frances Logan. Before beginning the story, hand out shakers for each participant to hold. Explain that they will need to listen carefully to know when to use them. Do a wee rehearsal, count them into it – 1, 2, 3, shake! – and then ask them just to hold the shakers still.

Sammy was a young rattle snake. He had no rattle like his Mum and Dad - he didn't know that rattle snakes do not grow their rattles until they are adults. Most nights his Mum sang him to sleep with a special song.

[To the tune 'Frere Jacques', encourage listeners to repeat each line after you]

Verse1

Sammy the snake
Is such a sneaky snake *[wiggle hand and arm like a snake]*
He hides behind a rock,
And starts to shake *[shake shakers]*

Verse2

He shakes up high *[shake shakers high]*
And he shakes down low *[shake shakers low]*
Then a wriggling and a giggling *[wiggle hand and arm]*
And away he goes *[one hand disappears under other]*

Listening to the song Sammy began to want a rattle, so he wriggled over to his Mum and said

'Mummy, I've been a really good boy, haven't I?'

'Yes Sammy' said his Mum

'Then can I have a rattle please, just like in the lullaby you sing to me at night?'

'No!' said his Mum 'You'll only get into trouble!'

So what do you do when Mum says no, - you go to your Dad. So Sammy wriggled over to his Dad and says

'Daddy, I've been a really good boy, haven't I?'

'Yes Sammy' said his Dad

'Then can I have a rattle please, just like in the lullaby Mum sings to me at night?
'No!' said his Dad 'You'll only get into trouble!'

So what do you do when Mum says no and your Dad says no – you go and ask your
Granny. So Sammy wiggled over to his Granny and said
'Granny, I've been a really good boy, haven't I?'

'Yes Sammy' said his Granny

'Then can I have a rattle please, just like in the lullaby that Mum sings to me at night?'

'What did your Mum and Dad say?'

Sammy looked very sad and hung his head and said

'They said I'd only get into trouble! But I promise Granny I won't get into trouble.

Please, please.' He pleaded and opened his eyes wide and smiled a big, cute smile

'Well' said Granny, 'If you promise to be a good boy and don't get into trouble, I shall
get you a rattle from my special cupboard'

[Have a basket or little box with a shaker in it, to reach into]

She came back with a rattle and gave it to Sammy. Sammy fixed it on his tail and gave it
a good shake [encourage listeners to shake their shakers]

'Thank you Granny! I love you!' said Sammy

'Remember, you must keep your promise to be a good boy!'

'I will Granny!' and so he set off to show his friends his rattle.

He looked everywhere for them – he looked, and he looked and he looked *[encourage
listeners to put hand up above eyes when looking]* but couldn't find them. He went to
the top of the hill where there was a big rock, a favourite place for snakes to hide under
or to bask on top of. But they weren't there.

'Oh ho, I could have some fun here!' thought Sammy and he hid behind the rock

Up the hill came old Grandfather Tortoise – *[move hands slowly on thighs]* 1 step, 2
step, 3 step, 4 step then he stopped for a rest *[take in big deep breaths]*, 5 step, 6 step,
7 step then he stopped for another rest *[take in big deep breaths]*, 8 step, 9 step, 10
step and he stopped at the top of the hill for a rest. Sammy jumped out and shook his
rattle. *[Can sing the song at this point]*

'Ayee!' shouted the tortoise in fright, and he pulled his head and his legs into his shell
and rolled and rolled and rolled *[make rolling actions]* to the bottom of the hill

When he stopped at the bottom, he came out of his shell and shouted, shaking his fist
[do actions]

'I'm going to tell your Mum and Dad!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Sammy. He didn't want to stop, he was having too much fun and
he hid behind the rock again to see who else he could scare

Up the hill came Rabbit – hippety hop, hippety hop, hippety hop *[hands up in front,
curved and bounce up and down]*. She stopped on top of the hill and Sammy jumped
out and shook his rattle. *[Can sing the song at this point]*

'Ayee!' shouted Rabbit in fright, she jumped about 6 feet in the air *[do actions]* and then
rolled and rolled and rolled *[make rolling actions]* to the bottom of the hill. When she got
to the bottom, she stood up and shook her fist and shouted

'I'm going to tell your Mum and Dad!'

The Chief's daughter, the Princess heard about this and she marched angrily up the hill
– stamp, stamp, stamp *[actions of hands on thighs or stand up]*. She is strong, she is
proud and she is not afraid of ANYTHING! Sammy jumped out and rattled loudly but

instead of being afraid, she looked really cross and did a great big karate chop to his tail 'Aaaa!' and broke his rattle.

'That will teach you to be so mean to the other animals!' she shouted crossly and she stamped back down the hill – stamp, stamp, stamp *[actions]*

Little Sammy the snake slithered, sadly down the slope of the hill, crying because his rattle was broken *[encourage listeners to show a sad face and make snake movement with hand and arm]*

He slithered sadly to his Mum, lip trembling, showing her the broken rattle
She said 'I told you if you had a rattle you'd only get into trouble!'

He slithered sadly to his Dad, lip trembling and showed him the broken rattle
He said 'I told you if you had a rattle you'd only get into trouble!'

He slithered sadly to his Granny and showed her the broken rattle. She swept him up into a great big hug, shook her head, smiled and said:
'What a shame, wee Sammy, I hoped you wouldn't get into trouble. I guess you'll just have to wait until you grow up to get your rattle, my wee darling'