

Rabbits in the Hole: A Story for Preschool Earthquake Drills



Once upon a time, there was a school for bunny rabbits.



They all lived and played together in a big green meadow.

These rabbits lived in a part of the world that sometimes has earthquakes – times when the ground suddenly starts to shake. Sometimes it trembles for just a moment and the bunnies barely notice the shaking, but sometimes the ground shakes really hard for a long time. The bunnies need to know how to stay safe if this happens.



So, their teacher taught them how to be safe. They would practice their drill sometimes so they would remember how to act if an earthquake happened.

We want you to learn how to stay safe too, and to know what to do if you ever feel the ground shaking.

The teacher told them that if you're standing up on two legs, you're all wobbly, and it's easy to get knocked over.



So, the first thing you should do if you feel the ground shaking is drop to all four feet.



For humans, that means get down on your hands and knees.



Then the bunny rabbits were told to find cover – something to hide underneath.



Look around you now:
can you find something to hide under?



If possible, crawl under a desk or table,
and hold on to the table leg.

If there's nothing to hide under, crawl away from things that could fall on you, then cover your head and the back of your neck with your hands.



Stay safe like that till the ground stops shaking and a grown-up tells you that it's safe to move.

Now the bunny rabbits knew just what to do to stay safe.



Anytime their teacher called "Rabbits in a Hole" or any time the bunnies felt the ground shake, they knew to drop to all four feet and find cover.

You may never experience an earthquake. Most adults have only felt a few earthquakes in their whole lives.

But, we need you to know how to be safe just in case the ground starts shaking.

Let's practice now.

When I say "Rabbits in a Hole", I want you to:



That means, drop down to your hands and knees. Try to find a table or desk to hide under and hold onto.

If you can't find a table, cover the back of your neck with your hands.

OK, ready? Rabbits in a Hole!

How to Use: Read this story in your class at least once a year, but ideally once a month so children remember it better. Each time you read it, have them practice being rabbits in a hole, using these earthquake safety tips. You can also play the "rabbits in a hole" game from time to time without any warning to serve as an earthquake drill.

To do the drill, call out loudly "rabbits in a hole." Then calmly remind them to "Drop, find cover, and hold on." Once they are under the tables, or have their head and neck covered, have them stay there for a minute or two. Talk to them about how they are safe there, and what a good job they are doing. You can sing a song or tell a story while they're there.

You may have a time when too many children are trying to fit under the same table. This is why we practice. You can help them problem solve how to handle this. Can they all scoot close together to make more room? Is there another table nearby? If not, then remind them that if you can't find a table, you need to use your hands to cover the back of your neck and head. Be sure to practice outdoors sometimes, so they know to drop and cover outside too.

Outdated Recommendations (i.e. what we've learned NOT to do): Don't hide in a doorway. In modern buildings, doorways are no safer than the rest of the room. Don't try to run outside. Don't try to run to an interior room. It is safer to drop and cover where you are.

Copyright note: This book is written by Janelle Durham, www.GoodDaysWithKids.com, but it is not my original idea. A "rabbits in the hole" story is referred to multiple web pages about earthquake preparedness, but the only text I've found is at: <http://thechildcareconsultinggroup.com/pdf/RabbitsInTheHole.pdf>. Their story is good, but they recommend using it in other emergency situations, such as intruders. I would recommend using it for only earthquakes. For other emergencies, you might tell other stories, and teach other games that go with them. But, for earthquakes, we want to teach one simple ritual so that if we ever have to use it, the response comes quickly, with no confusion.

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