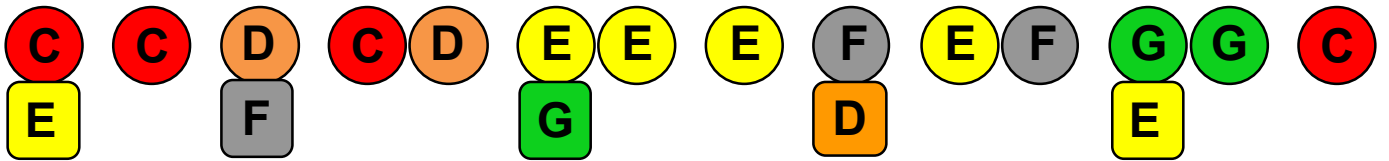
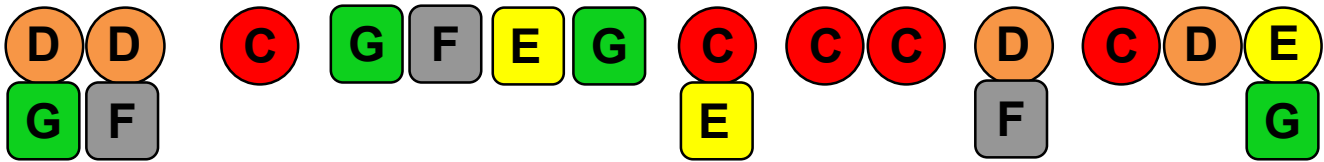


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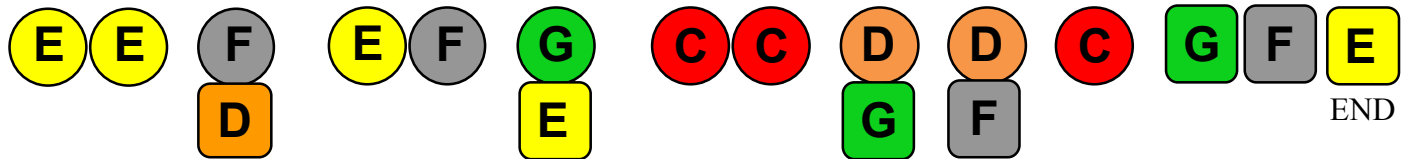
# Old King Cole



OLD KING COLE WAS A MERRY OLD SOUL AND A MERRY OLD  
 EVERY FIDDLER HE HAD A FIDDLE AND A VERY FINE



SOUL WAS HE HE CALLED FOR HIS PIPE AND HE CALLED  
 FIDDLE HAD HE OH THERE'S NONE SO RARE AS



FOR HIS BOWL AND HE CALLED FOR HIS FIDDLERS THREE.  
 CAN COMPARE WITH KING COLE AND HIS FIDDLERS THREE.

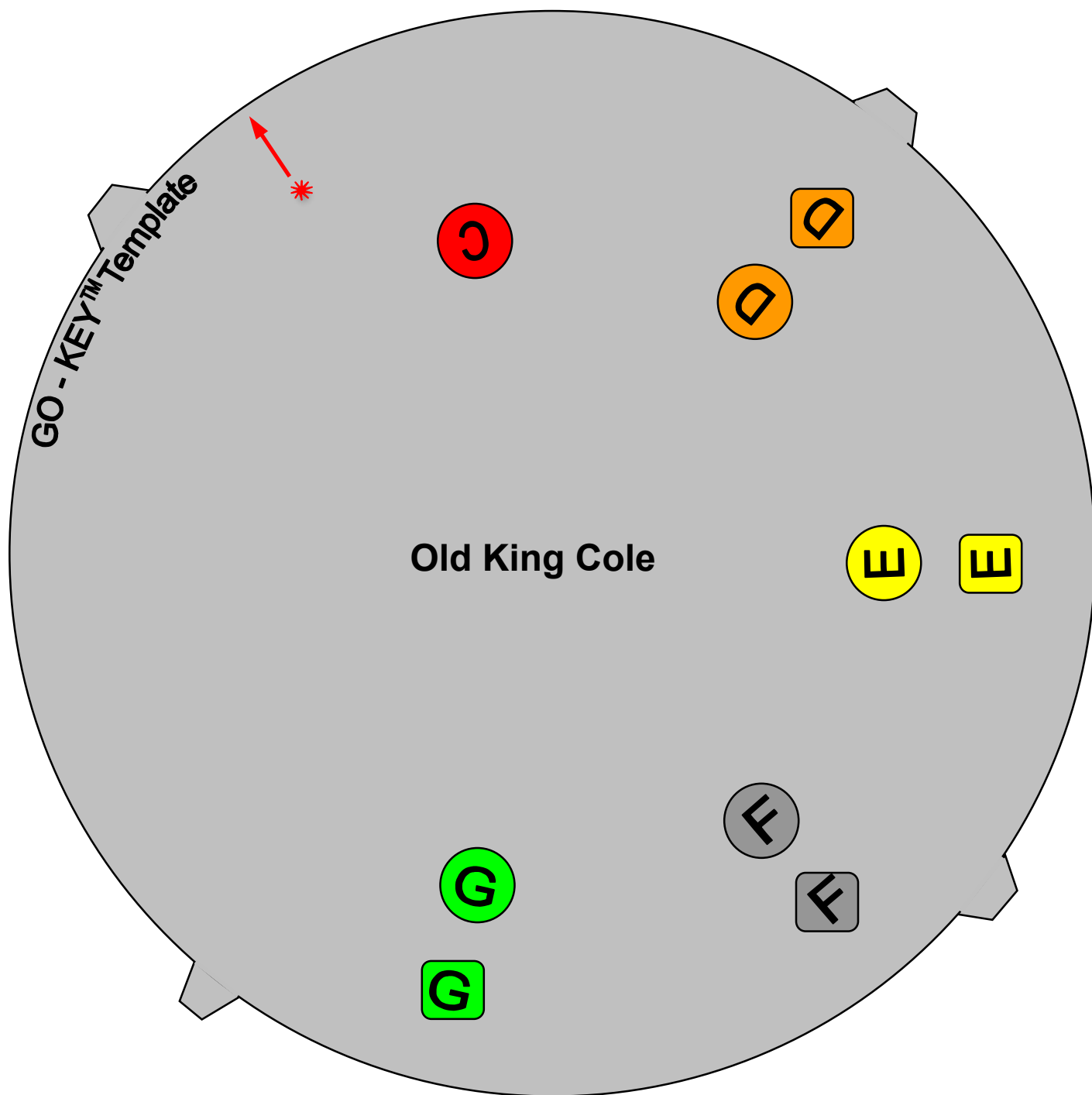
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## Lyrics

The most common modern version of the rhyme is in song above.

The song is first attested in William King in his Useful Transactions in Philosophy in 1708–9. King's version has the following lyrics:

Good King Cole,  
 And he call'd for his Bowle,  
 And he call'd for Fidler's three;  
 And there was Fiddle, Fiddle,  
 And twice Fiddle, Fiddle,  
 For 'twas my Lady's Birth-day,  
 Therefore we keep Holy-day  
 And come to be merry.



## History and Origin

**"Old King Cole"** is a British nursery rhyme first attested in 1708. Though there is much speculation about the identity of King Cole, it is unlikely that he can be identified reliably as any historical figure. It has a Roud Folk Song Index number of 1164. The poem describes a merry king who called for his pipe, bowl, and musicians, with the details varying among versions. The "bowl" is a drinking vessel, while the "pipe" may be either a musical instrument or a pipe for smoking tobacco.

### King Cole references;

- One of the world's smallest books is about Old King Cole. It measures 1mm x 1mm and was printed in Paisley, Scotland in 1985. There are only 85 known copies.
- In 1927, Moshe Nadir (1885–1943) published a Yiddish adaptation of "Old King Cole", "Der Rebbe Elimelech". It has since become a popular Yiddish folksong.
- The progressive rock band Genesis included a version of the traditional rhyme on their song "The Musical Box", from their 1971 album *Nursery Cryme*.
- Queen paraphrased the rhyme in their song "Great King Rat" on their 1973 self-titled album:
- The rhyme has appeared in children's television. For example, it was sung on the television show *Barney & Friends*, but with the last few lyrics simplified.
- It has also been used repeatedly in *Sesame Street*, using the fiddlers as a way to illustrate principles of basic addition (with Ernie taking the role of Old King Cole), and again with William Wegman's dogs on the show (with Chundo as Old King Cole).
- Pop singer Nat "King" Cole (actual surname Coles) said his nickname was inspired by "Old King Cole". The "King" in Nat Cole's name was usually used in quotation marks during his lifetime, but today it is often seen as though it were part of his name. Cole Alexander of Atlanta punk band Black Lips has also adopted the name, and performs solo as Old King Cole Younger, a name also partially derived from Confederate guerilla and later Old West outlaw Cole Younger.
- The Old King Cole theme appeared twice in 1933 cartoons: Walt Disney made a Silly Symphony cartoon called "Old King Cole", in which the character holds a huge party where various nursery rhyme characters are invited. Walter Lantz produced an Oswald cartoon the same year, entitled *The Merry Old Soul*, which is in reference to the nursery rhyme.
- "Farmer Giles of Ham" (1937) by J.R.R. Tolkien is stated (despite anachronisms like blunderbusses) by the author to take place "after the time of King Cole, but before king Arthur".
- The Three Stooges' 1948 short film "Fiddlers Three" features Larry, Moe and Shemp as musicians in King Cole's court who must stop an evil wizard from stealing the king's daughter.
- In the *Fables* comic book, King Cole was the long-time mayor of Fabletown, a secret community of "Fables" or fairytale characters, who were forced into exile in our world by a conqueror in their own alternate reality. He was defeated in an election by Prince Charming and was no longer mayor. He then became ambassador of Fabletown to the Arabian fables. After deciding to plan war to win back their homelands, he returned to Fabletown, assuming first the post of deputy mayor and then mayor respectively, after the resignation of Prince Charming. The gist of this storyline is reprised in the 2013 *Fables* video game *The Wolf Among Us*
- Characters based on Cole have featured in other video games. In *Banjo-Tooie* (2000), there is a boss opponent named Old King Coal whom the duo battle over control of a steam train. After King Coal states he wishes to battle Banjo and Kazooie, Kazooie replies "But you're supposed to be a merry old soul!", further referencing the rhyme. In the online game *AdventureQuest Worlds* (2008) there is also a non-player character called Old King Coal.
- In the 2009 animated movie *Happily N'Ever After 2: Snow White—Another Bite @ the Apple*, Old King Cole (voiced by Cam Clarke) is amalgamated with the king who is Snow White's father.
- Paul Reakes wrote a stage pantomime adaptation, also called *Old King Cole* (2012). It is a farce about the king choosing a queen from among his household staff, intended for school plays.