



WHALE CLASS

# Circle Time Guide

*Everything you need, one page per day.*

## Week 14 • Tools & Transportation

7–11 December 2026 • 13 minutes a day • ages 2.5–6, English learners

大雪 (Major Snow) falls on Monday 7 December — met on day one, carried to Friday's helmet

# Week Overview

 Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week.

## FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

tool

wheel

car

bus

train

### Littles (2.5–3)

One word + a gesture is a win: **“Wheel!”** (both hands turn a big circle), **“Car!”** (steer, brrm), **“Train!”** (elbows pumping, choo-choo).

### Bigs (4–6)

Sentence frames: **“A hammer is a tool.”** · **“The bus has six wheels.”** · **“I go to school by car.”** · **“The train goes on the track.”**

## THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

**2 min Magic Box hook** — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.

**4 min Teach** — the object used for its real job. Get it wrong once on purpose.

**3 min Song** — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.

**3 min Game** — one named game, tied to the day's word.

**1 min Close** — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

## IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

**Mon** a real hammer, screwdriver and pliers — the heaviest box of the year; two children lift it · **Tue** a real bicycle wheel: spin it, listen to it, roll it across the mat · **Wed** a toy car and a Beijing 公交卡 bus card · **Thu** two train-track pieces that click together, a wooden train and a photo of the 高铁 · **Fri** a bicycle bell and a helmet, with every prop of the week underneath.

## THE RULE ABOUT THE TOOLS

Real tools, handed over **handle first**, one child at a time, held in two hands **sitting down**, and back in the box before anybody stands up. The ceremony is the lesson. A plastic toy hammer teaches nothing and they know it.

## THE WEEK'S CLOSE

**EVERYONE** **“Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!”**

## THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1 · Nuts and bolts — five bolts, five nuts, one segmented tray; only one nut fits each bolt.
- 2 · Rolls / doesn't roll — a ramp, two signs, twelve real objects; the ramp is the control.
- 3 · Tool-to-job matching — hammer↔nail, screwdriver↔screw, saw↔wood, spanner↔bolt, brush↔paint.
- 4 · Transport three-part cards — 汽车 · 公共汽车 · 火车 · 自行车 · 飞机, Chinese and English.

## CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 a day beside the day's object: **工具 · 轮 · 车 · 火车 · 路** — and they will spot 车 hiding inside 火车 before you finish saying it. Beijing's own transport is the lesson: 汽车 · 公交车 · 地铁 · 高铁. 儿歌《小汽车》— 小汽车, 滴滴滴, 开到东, 开到西. **大雪** on Monday: 下雪了, 慢慢走, 慢慢骑。

## BOOKS

*The Wheels on the Bus* (as a finger-play, so it never competes with our own song) · *Freight Train* — Donald Crews · 《谁的本领大》.

## DARK PHONICS THIS WEEK

**r** — *Rrr Goes the Engine*. “Run, run, red rat!” Every wheel this week went **round**, on the **road**.

*Never ask a little for a sentence. They will get there by watching the bigs.*

# Tools in My Hands

Today's words: **tool**

**Grab:** a real **hammer**, a real **screwdriver** and a real pair of **pliers** in the Magic Box; one block of soft wood with a nail started in it, and one loose screw; the 工具 character card. Today is 大雪 — have the snow line ready.

## 2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is the **heaviest of the whole year**. Carry it in with two hands and let it land on the mat with a thud. Whole class chants:

**EVERYONE** “What's in the box? What's in the box?”

Let **two children** come and try to lift it. They can't do it easily — that is the point. Shake it: a deep, serious *CLUNK*. Sniff it: it smells of metal.

**TEACHER** “It's heavy... it's **cold**... and it smells like metal. These are not toys.” (*lift out the hammer with both hands and hold it flat across your palms*)

Hands up like a hammer. **“Tool!”**

## 4 MIN TEACH · TOOL

One tool at a time, out of the box, used for its real job, then straight back in. Nothing else is on the mat.

The **hammer** goes BANG. (*three real taps on the nail — let them hear it*)

The **screwdriver** goes round and round. (*turn the screw slowly, wrist twisting*)

The **pliers** go squeeze. (*open and shut them right in front of your nose*)

A tool helps my **hands** do a job. (*hold both empty hands up, then take the hammer again*)

Littles do the gesture and say the one word: **“Tool!” “Bang!”** Bigs take the frame: **“A hammer is a tool.” “The hammer hits the nail.”**

Then it goes round: each child holds **one** tool for ten seconds, in both hands, sitting down, while everybody watches. You pass it **handle first** and you take it back yourself. Nobody swings anything.

**Teacher fails:** try to bang the nail in with the **screwdriver**. Hard. Twice. Look genuinely baffled at the nail, then at the screwdriver, then at the children. Wait for the shouting.

**Chinese moment:** lay the 工具 card beside the three tools. 工具 = tool. Say it once, point along the row, and leave it there. No drilling.

## 3 MIN GAME · WHAT DOES THIS TOOL DO?

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” The three tools lie on the mat in front of you, out of reach.

**TEACHER** “What does **this** one do?” (*hold one up high, then mime its job hugely — big slow bang, big slow twist, big slow squeeze*)

Everybody copies the mime with empty hands and says the sound: **“BANG!” “Round and round!” “Squeeze!”** Bigs give the sentence: **“The hammer hits the nail.”**

Then a Big holds a tool up and the class mimes it back — six children get a turn. The tool never leaves their two hands.

*Mime is safer than practice and just as good: twenty pairs of hands hammering the air is twenty children rehearsing the word without a single bruised thumb.*

## 1 MIN CLOSE

Hands out flat, ready to turn. Whisper → normal → shout:

**EVERYONE** “Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!” (*both hands turning enormous circles over their heads on the shout*)

**大雪 today.** One sentence, no lesson: “Today is 大雪 — the big snow. When it snows, the road is slippery. 下雪了, 慢慢走。” Walk two exaggerated slow-motion steps and let them copy you out of the door.

**Got 3 spare minutes?** 《谁的本领大》 — who is more use, the wind or the sun? Read it and ask them which tool they'd pick.

**Today's song moment:** chorus → **Monday's verse** (Bang goes the hammer, twist goes the screw) → chorus. Finger-play only the first time — the hands teach the words.

# Round and Round the Wheel

Today's words: **wheel** (*tool comes back every day*)

**Grab:** a real **bicycle wheel** in the Magic Box (or leaning beside it — it will not fit); a plank for a ramp and two books to prop it; a basket of things that roll and things that don't (ball, marble, tin, orange, wooden block, book, shoe, key); the 轮 card.

## 2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is **far too small** and the lid won't go on — something round is sticking out of it. Chant anyway:

**EVERYONE** “What's in the box? What's in the box?”

Try, seriously, to shut the lid. Fail. Try again. Then lift the whole wheel out and **spin it** in your hands, close to their ears.

**TEACHER** “Listen... *ticka-ticka-ticka*. It's round, and it never stops being round.” (*hold it flat, then stand it up and let it roll across the mat to a child*)

Big circles with both hands. **“Wheel!”**

## 4 MIN TEACH · WHEEL

The wheel stands on the mat. Turn it with one finger while you say it:

A wheel is a **circle**. (*draw a circle in the air, then round the rim with one finger*)

A circle has **no comers**. (*run your finger round and round — nowhere to stop*)

So it **rolls**... (*let it roll away and catch it*)

and it takes you **with it**! (*walk two steps beside it*)

Now the corners. Put a wooden **block** beside the wheel. Push the block — it scrapes, it stops. Push the wheel — it goes. Do it twice more without saying a word.

Littles turn their hands and say **“Wheel!”** Bigs: **“A wheel is round.” “Round things roll.” “The bus has six wheels.”**

**Teacher fails:** *announce that you have found a much better wheel, and hold up the book. Try to roll it. Try harder. Ask them, sincerely, what is wrong with your wheel.*

*Count the wheels on things: a bicycle has two, a car has four, a bus has six. Count them on fingers. That is Tuesday's maths and they will do it all week without being asked.*

The 轮 card goes down beside yesterday's 工具. 轮 = wheel. Point at the wheel, point at the card. Once.

## 3 MIN GAME · ROLLS OR DOESN'T ROLL?

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” The ramp is propped on two books. The basket of objects sits beside it.

**TEACHER** **“Predict first.** Will it roll... or will it stop? Hands up for ROLL.” (*hold the object up high and wait for every hand to commit before anyone tests it*)

Then one child sends it down the ramp and the whole class watches. Littles shout the answer: **“Roll!” “Stop!”** Bigs: **“The tin rolls because it is round.”**

Eight objects, eight predictions. The two baskets at the bottom of the ramp fill up as you go: **rolls** and **doesn't roll**.

**The ramp is the control of error** — *it either rolls or it doesn't and nobody can argue with it, including you. Never say “no” to a prediction; just send the object down. Guessing wrong out loud and then seeing is the whole tray.*

## 1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody standing, hands turning. Whisper → normal → shout:

**EVERYONE** “Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!” (*spin right round on the spot on the shout*)

**Got 3 spare minutes?** *The Wheels on the Bus — do it as a finger-play only, no singing, so it doesn't compete with this week's song. The wipers, the doors, the horn, the babies.*

**Today's song moment:** chorus → **Tuesday's verse** (A wheel is a circle, round and true) → chorus. Hands fast on “fast”, almost stopped on “slow”.

## Cars & Buses on the Road

Today's words: **car** · **bus** (*tool · wheel come back*)

**Grab:** a **toy car** and a Beijing 公交卡 bus card in the Magic Box; three big circles of card — red, amber, green — on a stick; a line of chairs set up as a bus with one driver's chair at the front; the 车 card.

### 2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box rattles **twice** and quite differently each time — one little wooden knock, one flat plastic tap. Chant, shake, tip your head, shake again.

**EVERYONE** “What's in the box? What's in the box?”

**TEACHER** “Two things. One goes *knock...* and one goes *tap.*” (*out comes the little car — roll it along your arm — then the 公交卡, held up flat between two fingers*)

“A card? What do you do with a **card**?” Beep it on your palm. **“Bus!”**

### 4 MIN TEACH · CAR AND BUS

The car runs along the floor in front of them while you talk. Count its wheels first: one, two, three, four.

A **car** is small. (*hands close together, steer, brrrm*)

It takes my family. (*four fingers up*)

A **bus** is BIG. (*arms right out wide*)

It takes **everybody**! (*sweep both arms round the whole circle*)

Now the chairs. You are the driver; six children get on, each one *beeping the 公交卡 on your hand* as they board — 滴! Everybody else is waiting at the bus stop.

Littles steer and say **“Car!”** or wave the card and say **“Bus!”** Bigs: **“I go to school by car.” “The bus is big.” “The bus has six wheels.”**

**Teacher fails:** try to get on your own bus by beeping the **toy car** on your hand. Nothing happens. Beep it harder. Look at the driver's seat, which is empty, and ask it what's wrong.

**Chinese moment:** the 车 card joins the row — 工具 · 轮 · 车. Then name Beijing's own three: 汽车 · 公交车 · 地铁. Sing one line of 《小汽车》 — 小汽车, 嘀嘀嘀, 开到东, 开到西 — one line, then stop.

### 3 MIN GAME · RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody lines up at one wall. You stand at the other with the three card circles. **You are the traffic light. They are the cars.**

**TEACHER** **“GREEN!”** (*green circle up — everybody drives forward, steering and brrrming*) **“AMBER...”** (*slow motion*) **“RED!”** (*freeze*)

Anyone still moving on red goes back three steps, cheerfully. Littles just run and stop — that is the whole skill. Bigs call the colours for the second round while you drive with the class.

Three rounds. On the last one, hold amber for a very long time.

*This is a listening game wearing a car costume: stopping fast when the word comes is the same self-control they need for “one, two, three — eyes on me”. Bank it.*

### 1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody sitting, hands on an imaginary steering wheel. Whisper → normal → shout:

**EVERYONE** “Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!” (*two big beeps on their own noses on the shout*)

**Got 3 spare minutes?** Park the chairs as a bus again and let two Bigs run it — one driver, one conductor with the 公交卡. They will play it all afternoon.

**Today's song moment:** chorus → **Wednesday's verse** (Brrrm goes the car down the busy street) → chorus. Freeze completely on STOP; count two silent beats.

# The Train on the Track

Today's words: **train** (*tool · wheel · car · bus come back*)

**Grab: two pieces of train track** that click together in the Magic Box, plus one wooden train; a printed **photo of the 高铁**; three station signs on chairs round the room (write them with the children's own names for places); the 火车 card.

## 2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box makes one hard wooden **CLACK** and then nothing. Chant, shake once, then open it in front of one child's face.

**EVERYONE** "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

**TEACHER** "Two pieces of wood. That's all. Just two boring bits of wood..." (*hold one in each hand, look disappointed, then click them together loudly*)

Click. "Oh! They **join**." Stand the train on them and push. Elbows pumping. **"Train!"**

## 4 MIN TEACH · TRAIN

The two track pieces stay joined on the mat, with the train on top.

A car can go **anywhere**. (*drive the toy car in wild loops all over the floor*)

A train goes **here**. (*run the train along the track — and off the end, where it stops*)

On the **track**, on the track, (*finger along the rails*)

chuff, chuff, chuff — and chuff back! (*elbows pumping, then reverse*)

Then the 高铁 photo. Hold it up. "This train goes **faster** than a car. Faster than a bus. Faster than anything you have ever sat in." Let them tell you if they have been on one; several will have.

Littles pump their elbows and say **"Train!" "Choo-choo!"** Bigs: **"The train goes on the track." "The train is long."**

**Teacher fails:** put the wooden **train** on the carpet, well away from the track, and push it. Push it again. Announce that the train is broken and look very sad until somebody drags the track over.

The 火车 card joins the row: 工具 · 轮 · 车 · 火车. Point out that 火车 has 车 inside it — they will spot it before you finish saying it. Then 地铁 and 高铁, once each, pointing at the photo.

## 3 MIN GAME · THE CLASSROOM TRAIN

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Everybody lines up behind you, each child's hands on the shoulders in front. You are the engine. The three station chairs are already out.

**TEACHER** "All aboard! Next stop... **the window!**" (*chuff off round the room and stop dead at the first sign*)

At each station: everybody stops, the whole train says the station's name, one child gets off and one gets on at the front. Three stations, then back to the mat, which is the depot.

Littles just hold on and chuff. Bigs announce the next station themselves: **"Next stop, the book corner!"**

Let the **last** child be the engine on the second run. The train is a beautiful accidental lesson in staying joined — the moment somebody lets go, the train breaks, and they fix it themselves without you saying a word.

## 1 MIN CLOSE

Still in the train, hands on shoulders. Whisper → normal → shout:

**EVERYONE** "Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!" (*the whole train chuffs one step forward on the shout*)

**Got 3 spare minutes?** Freight Train (Donald Crews) — one colour per carriage. Read it once slowly, then again fast, and let the train go through a tunnel with the lights off.

**Today's song moment:** chorus → **Thursday's verse** (Chuff, chuff, chuff on the shiny track) → chorus. Starts on the **Am**; "All aboard!" is shouted, not sung.

# How I Get to School + Big Review

Today's words: **tool** • **wheel** • **car** • **bus** • **train** — the whole week

**Grab:** a **bicycle bell** and a **helmet** in the Magic Box with every prop from the week underneath; four column headings taped on the floor — walk  • car  • bus  • bicycle ; the awards (print pack page 17); the 路 card.

## 2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out fat and bulging and won't quite shut.

**TEACHER** “Today the box is FULL — it's got our whole WEEK inside it!”

Pull each prop out and hold it up in complete silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The hammer → **“Tool!”** The bicycle wheel → **“Wheel!”** The little car → **“Car!”** The 公交卡 → **“Bus!”** The track → **“Train!”**

Last of all, right at the bottom: a **bell**. Ring it once. Then the **helmet** — put it on your own head and do the strap up under your chin, slowly, in front of all of them.

## 4 MIN TEACH • RIDE SAFELY, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

Everybody stands. We tell the whole week with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

**Tool** — bang, twist, squeeze! (*hammer, screwdriver, pliers*)

**Wheel** — round and round. (*both hands turning*)

**Car** — brrm! (*steering*)

**Bus** — everybody on! (*beep the card, arms wide*)

And the **TRAIN** goes chuff, chuff, chuff! (*elbows pumping*)

Then the helmet goes round the circle: every child puts it on, does one *ring* of the bell, and hands it on. While it travels, the sentence: **“Helmet on. Slowly, slowly.”** 下雪了，慢慢走，慢慢骑。”

Littles do the five gestures and shout the five words. Bigs owe you a sentence each: **“A hammer is a tool.” “The bus has six wheels.” “The train goes on the track.”**

**Teacher fails:** *put the helmet on backwards, or better, on your knee, and do up the strap with enormous satisfaction. Announce that you are ready to ride. Wait.*

**Chinese moment:** the 路 card completes the row — 工具 · 轮 · 车 · 火车 · 路, the whole week on the mat. Point along it and let them say what they can.

## 3 MIN GAME • HOW DO YOU GET TO SCHOOL?

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Four columns are taped on the floor: **walk** • **car** • **bus** • **bicycle**, with a picture at the top of each.

**TEACHER** “Go and stand in **your** column. How do *you* come to school?”

Everybody moves. Then, column by column, count the children out loud, touching each head: one, two, three...

Littles just stand and be counted, and shout their word: **“Car!”** Bigs: **“I go to school by bus.”**

Which column is the **longest**? Which is the **shortest**? Say the numbers again in Chinese while you're standing there.

**This is a real graph made of children.** *Take a photo from the doorway looking down the columns — that photo is Friday's parent report, done, and the class will read it off the wall all next week.*

## 1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a “You are a STAR!” award to take home. Then, standing in their columns, with all five gestures:

**EVERYONE** “Car... bus... TRAIN! Round and round the WHEEL!” (*the bell rung once, hard, on the very last word*)

**Got 3 spare minutes?** *The Wheels on the Bus again — but this time the children choose what goes on the bus. It will end up with a hammer, a helmet and a train on it, and that is exactly right.*

**Today's song moment: Friday's verse** (Ring, ring, ring goes my bicycle bell), then the WHOLE song top to bottom — chorus, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, chorus — with the bell rung once on the very last word. That run-through **is** the week's review.

# ★ Theme Song · “Round and Round the Wheels Go”

The one song of the week — sung at every circle. Same chorus daily, one new verse each morning, full song on Friday.

**C (0003)**

**F (2010)**

**G7 (0212)**

**Am (2000)**

**Strum:** Down · Down · Down-Up (“sing — song — sing-a”). Can’t manage it yet? Four slow downs per bar works fine — the kids only hear the fun.

**Tempo:** rolling and steady, like a bicycle on a flat road — not a march. The **Am** turns up twice in the whole song: on “a helping hand” at the end of the chorus’s third line, and at the top of Thursday’s train verse. Everything else is C, F and G7. Chant it without the uke first; add chords once they know the actions.

## CHORUS — SING IT EVERY SINGLE DAY

- C** Round and round and **F** round they **C** go, (both hands turn big circles)
- F** Wheels on the **C** road, fast and **G7** slow! **C** (fast circles, then very slow)
- C** A hammer, a **F** spanner, a helping **Am** hand, (hammer / twist / open palm)
- F** Tools and **C** wheels all **G7** over the **C** land! (arms wide)

Sing the chorus twice each time. The actions are the whole point — a two-year-old who turns both hands fast on “fast” and almost stops on “slow” has understood the week, whether or not a single word comes out.

## ONE VERSE A DAY — FOUR OF THE FIVE USE ONLY C AND G7

### Monday · Tool

- C** Bang goes the hammer, twist goes the screw, (bang, then twist)
- G7** A tool in my hand **C** helps me do! (hand closed round an imaginary handle)

### Tuesday · Wheel

- C** A wheel is a circle, round and true, (draw a big circle with one finger)
- G7** Give it a push — **C** off it flew! (one sharp push, then both hands fly away)

### Wednesday · Car

- C** Brrm goes the car down the busy street, (steering round the corners)
- G7** Red light — STOP! **C** Green light — beep! (freeze completely, then two beeps on the nose)

### Thursday · Train

- Am** Chuff, chuff, chuff on the shiny track, (elbows pumping, slow then faster)
- G7** All aboard! **C** And chuff, chuff back! (hand cupped to your mouth — shouted, not sung)

### Friday · Ride

- C** Ring, ring, ring goes my bicycle bell, (three rings on the real bell)
- G7** Helmet on tight — **C** I ride so well! (pat the top of your head, then pedal)

**The build:** each day sing chorus → today’s verse → chorus. By Friday they know five verses without ever “learning” the song — and Friday’s finale, sung standing in the four columns of the how-do-you-get-to-school graph with the bell rung on the last word, doubles as your review of the whole week.

## IF YOU'RE BRAND NEW TO UKULELE

Practice this loop for five minutes tonight: **C** (4 strums) → **F** (4 strums) → **C** → **G7** → **C**. That is nearly the whole chorus. Add **Am** last — it is one finger on the same string as F, so slide **Am** → **F** → **Am** until it stops feeling like a change; you only need it for “a helping hand” and the first line of Thursday. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down and do the finger-play instead: the class will not notice, and the turning hands carry the meaning either way.