

Staories don't exist only in books. Children also love the stories that you tell. When telling a story (without a book) you can retell a story that you remember or make one up, just for them.

Story-telling can go anywhere – it can happen in the grocery store line-up, on a walk to the park, or at nap time in a darkened room.

Stories are different from just having a conversation, as a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Something happens in the story that is worth telling. Hearing stories helps a child learn the structure of stories. In writing, “narration” (or story format) is the framework for the stories and books children listen to, read, and write. Many children with language delays or learning disabilities do not learn to use the rules of storytelling for speaking, listening, reading, and writing. As a result, their oral and written stories are often confusing to their parents, teachers, and friends.

It is important for children to be exposed to the rules of narration (story telling) at an early age because we use these rules daily. At the simplest level, all narrations or stories have:

- ✦ **a beginning** - to introduce who is in the story, what the story is about, where, and when the story takes place.
- ✦ **a middle** - the action of the story tells what happened.
- ✦ **an end** - this explains how the story finished.

You can use your story-telling to help your child first, understand storytelling rules and then, to tell their own stories. When you tell a story, it can be adjusted to suit your child's needs at the time (for example, you can tell a shorter version when your child is tired or restless).

Story-telling can serve a purpose in your child's development. You can make up stories

- ✦ To reinforce a new experience (e.g. after visiting a museum).
- ✦ About a favourite topic (e.g. if your child loves dinosaurs).
- ✦ To help your child prepare for new or difficult experiences (e.g., a new baby in the family).
- ✦ To increase your child's comfort level (e.g. going to the dentist for the first time).
- ✦ To increase your child's creative imagination (e.g. fantasy or fairy tales).
- ✦ To recreate the enjoyment of a special event (e.g. Birthday party, family vacation).
- ✦ To teach a specific concept or language goal (e.g. to encourage use of plurals).



To begin story-telling, you can

- ✦ Re-tell the story from your child's favourite book or TV show, in your own words. Encourage your child to join in for familiar parts.
- ✦ After reading a book, invite your child to make up a story about the main character or make up a different ending to the story.
- ✦ Tell legends, fairy tales or other traditional stories that you remember or that you have read in books.
- ✦ Tell stories about when you were young.
- ✦ Share cultural stories (family stories/traditions that have been handed down).
- ✦ Tell a story about something that your child has recently experienced or will experience in the near future.

Be sure to

- ✦ Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ Be face to face with your child.
- ✦ Use gestures and actions (it's easier when you are not having to hold a book).
- ✦ Talk at a level that your child can understand.
- ✦ Repeat key words/phrases.
- ✦ Use an animated voice. Children love when you use different voices for the various characters in the story and when you make special sound effects (horns that beep, cats that meow).

Make it interactive by

- ✦ Giving your child a chance to take turns or join in.
- ✦ Encouraging your child to do the actions or repeat the repetitive chanting or rhyming parts.
- ✦ Allowing your child to decide what happens next or how the character is feeling. You can also make this a choice (e.g. "What does Carson do next? Does he climb into the fire truck or does he wait for his Dad?" "Does Sophie feel happy or does she feel angry?").

Carry over the creativity

- ✦ By acting out the story with your child.
- ✦ Using props to tell the story.
- ✦ Together with your child, by drawing/painting pictures to go with the story.

Tell a "story of the day"

- ✦ At dinner time (each evening a different family member can have a turn).
- ✦ At bed time (create a sequel with new additions each night).