

Let Me Tell You a Story



“Tell me again about the day I was born!”
Children are delighted to hear loving voices describe special times and share funny memories. What’s more, listening to stories (and helping to tell them) builds reading and writing skills like putting events in order, understanding story elements, and using expression.

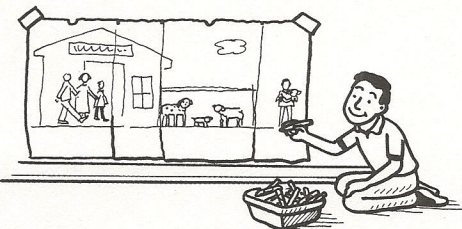
Here are activities to boost each skill, ideas for your own storytelling nights, and quick games that the whole family can enjoy.

Sequencing

Storytellers use a variety of memory tools to keep track of what happens in the beginning, middle, and end of a tale. Try these ideas to help your youngster tell stories in order.

Cave drawings

Long ago, people painted symbols in caves and used the images to tell animal stories. Let your child make his own “cave wall” and tell a tale. First, cut a large paper grocery bag into a long strip. Suggest that your youngster think of a true animal story (getting a pet, finding a rabbit family). He can draw and color a picture for each story event (going to a shelter, looking at dogs, choosing one). Finally, have him use his drawings to tell the story. (“One day, we visited the animal shelter. There were so many cute dogs, it was hard to pick one...”)



Autobiography beads

Some storytellers use beads or charms to tell tales—each item stands for a story event. Have your youngster make charms to tell her life story. You can help her cut several 3-inch cardboard circles and paint each one a different color. When the paint dries, she can draw a symbol or picture on each circle (baby, house, school, soccer ball). Then, let her hole-punch the circles and string them together with yarn. She can hold the chain and use it to remember her story in order—being born, moving to a new house, starting school, joining her soccer team.



Photo memories

Family photographs are ideal storytelling tools. Have your child find or print several pictures from an event (family reunion, pumpkin patch visit). Ask him to put the photos in order and tell a story by describing what’s happening in each

picture. (“We went to a pumpkin patch. It was my baby sister’s first time. Our hayride was so bumpy, but she smiled the whole way!”)

Storytelling night idea: Give someone the job of jotting down stories that family members tell. Collect the tales in a binder.

Comprehension

A strong reader can describe a story’s characters, setting, and plot. She can also identify its point of view—who is telling the story. These hands-on activities let your youngster explore story elements and strengthen her comprehension skills.

Setting the stage

Costumes and props can reveal information about a character or setting and add excitement to a plot. Together, think of a funny event. Maybe a seagull snatched your child’s snack at the beach. Suggest that she wear a swimsuit and collect related items (crackers, beach towel, umbrella, shovel and pail, stuffed bird). Then, she can tell the story while another family member makes the bird swoop down and grab a cracker.

continued

Family treasures

Your child can think about point of view and discover family history with this idea. The next time a relative visits, ask him to bring a special item. Have him explain what it is (baseball), where it came from (flew into the stands), and why it's important (the player signed it). Encourage your youngster to listen carefully and then tell a story from his relative's point of view. ("It was a warm spring day for the first baseball game of the season. Suddenly, a foul ball was coming right at Uncle Philip...")



On location

Encourage your youngster to add details by telling a story in a favorite spot. Perhaps you're watching fireworks or enjoying a picnic at the zoo. She can

look and listen carefully for specifics to include in her story, such as the sparkling lights in the sky or an elephant scooping up hay with its trunk.

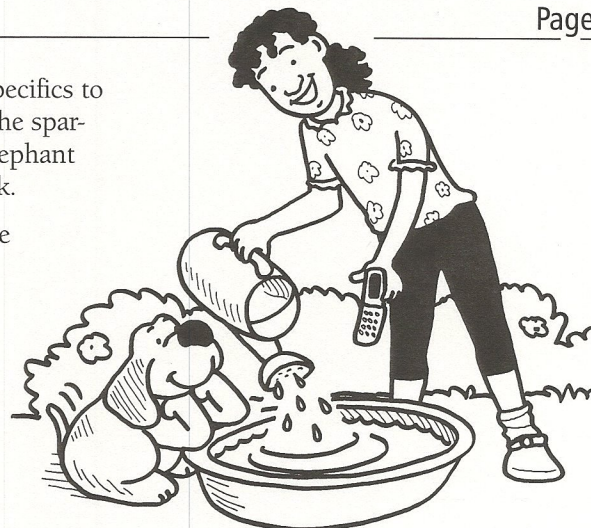
Storytelling night idea: Invite another family to join you, and take turns sharing stories.

Fluency

"Extras" like sounds, motions, and repetition make storytelling more fun and bring tales to life. They can help your child and his audience better understand stories. And he'll learn to tell them smoothly and with expression—skills that will help make him a more fluent reader.

Say it with me

Some stories repeat the same line over and over, which ties a story together and makes it easier to remember. *Example:* "I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!" Suggest that your youngster think of a phrase someone in your family says often ("I love you whole big bunches!") and use it at the end of each section of his story. *Tip:* Encourage



audience participation by having listeners supply the repeating line.

Sound effects

Give your child a tape recorder or a cell phone that has a voice recorder. Have her walk around and tape sounds to use in her story. For instance, if she's going to tell a tale about a thunderstorm, she might run water to represent rain and drag a chair across the floor for thunder.

Storytelling night idea: Videotape stories to watch later. Or share a tale with an out-of-town relative by having your youngster tell it over the phone or on a webcam.

Storytelling games

Try these fun group games to get your family's creative juices flowing.

On the ball

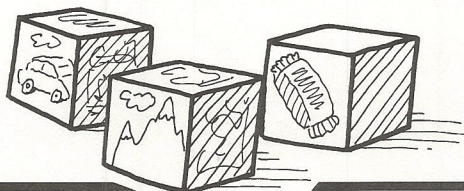
Give each person a strip of masking tape. Tell one player to write a topic (cooking, snow) on his tape. Have a second player write a setting (moon, mall) and everyone else write a character (little boy, turtle). Stick the pieces on a beach ball. Then, sit in a circle and toss the ball around.

As each player catches it, he makes up one line of a story using the ideas on the ball ("When I was a little boy, we had a big blizzard"). Keep tossing the ball until you finish the story. To play again, remove the tape and stick on new ideas.

Story cubes

Collect three cube-shaped tissue boxes to make giant dice. Let your child glue a magazine picture on each side of the boxes. Then, take turns rolling all three boxes and using the pictures to tell a story.

For instance, if you roll a car, a mountain, and a candy bar, your story might go something like this: "One morning, we got in the car and headed for the mountains. At the top, we found the best fudge shop ever!"



Musical storytelling

Line up chairs (one per player), and designate one as the "storyteller's chair." Assign someone to start and stop music (*note:* play songs with lyrics). When the music starts, walk around the chairs. Sit in the nearest seat when it stops.

The person in the storyteller's chair makes up the first line of a story, using the music as inspiration. For "I've Been Working on the Railroad," she could start a story about a train trip your family took. Continue playing more rounds without removing any seats. Whoever ends up in the storyteller's chair supplies the next line.