

Telling Stories: 'Whys and Hows'

Why tell stories?

- Stories are fun!
- Stories improve language and speech, talking and listening, and two-way conversation
- Stories (especially told from memory) fuel the power of imagination
- Stories improve concentration span, and give children confidence in participating
- Stories from picture books stimulate an appreciation of art, and 'ways of seeing'
- Stories expand experience - other people, other places, other ways of behaving
- Stories develop a bond and affection between teller and listener
- Stories bring objects, people and places to life
- Stories provide therapy - facing issues safely 'second hand', sharing with others

Choosing a story

Look out for...

- An inviting opening sentence
- A quickly-moving narrative, with plenty of action
- Pictures which extend and complement the text
- Direct, colloquial speech
- Opportunities for joining in (choruses, animal noises, actions, etc.)
- A satisfying ending

Choose stories that *you* like; you'll tell them better! Librarians and teachers can help you, by recommending titles that 'tell well'. If you are planning a whole session, use a mixture of stories, with perhaps simple poems or rhymes between them.

Practising and Telling

- Read through the story first. Look for high points in the story, or for where pauses could be used. Look for the 'three Rs': rhythm, rhyme and repetition. Choruses, refrains, and animal noises are great for children to join in. Are there opportunities for children to predict? Are there difficult words, to explain in advance?
- Think of a way to introduce the story. "Do you have a pet? Well here's a story about a boy, who had a pet dog..." Is there opportunity for using a 'prop' of some kind, or a puppet?
- Practice a read-through first. You could read to your own child, or a friend, to gain confidence.
- Don't rush the reading. Many people read too fast; some children may need a slower speed than others – especially if they are following the text itself. Speak clearly, and make eye contact.
- Try to use a sense of drama, echoing the tone of the words as you speak them; *you* should sound frightened, for example, when you're saying: "We might wake the giant..!"
- Think about using different voices; this is particularly useful in dialogue, to separate different characters speaking, and you could deepen your voice for an elephant or giant, and raise it for a queen or a fairy.
- Vary your voice from loud to soft too, and from fast to slow. Don't be afraid of pauses, for dramatic effect!
- Have a choice of stories; if one isn't working, just try another. If it works really well, be ready to tell it again!
- Keep the story moving – don't stop to ask questions about each picture, or it will seem like a quiz
- Let any follow-up flow naturally from the story. Announce it later - just enjoy the story together first!