

Key Story Time Components

BE PREPARED! This is the #1 rule of story telling. Make sure you familiarize yourself with the books that you are going to read, songs you are going to sing, or finger plays that you are planning on presenting. If you are well prepared you can be more expressive and can point out interesting things in the illustrations.

Selecting a Good Book: Choosing a good book for Story Time is almost as important as being prepared. Try to keep these guidelines in mind when selecting reading materials for story time. Choose books that have:

- Few characters (3-6)
- Simple plots (one main event or idea)
- Familiar objects (describe unfamiliar objects before telling the story)
- Rhyme
- Predictability (with a surprise ending now and then)
- Repetition
- Clear, simple illustrations
- Short, action-filled story line
- Diversity
- Comfortable to read and enjoyable

Transition to Story Time: Getting settled and ready for story time can be difficult for children, so there are many things we can do to help ease the transition. Often it is best to start off your story time with a song or finger play to help keep the children's attention through the transition.

- Singing a welcome or story time song
- Ring a "story time bell" or another sound like a drum, a marble jar, etc
- Clap your hands
- Flash the lights
- Have a designated story time puppet that announces story time

Attention Grabbers: Try using songs, puppets, finger plays, rhymes and flannel board stories during story time to help keep children involved, or bring the group's attention back to you. (You may also want to use these techniques to keep the group calm while you wait for everyone to arrive for story time).

Tip: Plan out what songs/rhymes go with your theme before you present story time and practice them so you'll be prepared.

Talking about the Books: Research has shown that children learn more from a story if they have an opportunity to talk about it. Try talking about what happened in the story, asking the children to predict what might happen next, or talking about unfamiliar words. *Remember to accept and respect all answers that the children give you.*

Examples: What was your favorite part of this book? Do you think this could really happen, or was it just pretend? What do you think will happen next?

Child Participation: Children like to play an active role in story time and doing so helps keep them interested. Try letting the children turn the pages of the story, help you make sound effects, or say or chant a repeating line.

Example: In the book “Me Too!” ask the children to join in each time you say, “Me too!” or have them help you look for the mouse on each page.

Be Flexible: Although it is important to have a well-prepared lesson plan, don’t be afraid to deviate from it to follow the groups’ cues. If the children begin to get restless, sing a song or play a game; if they really like a particular book, read it again!

Take Your Time: Make sure you read slowly and expressively and give the children plenty of time to look at the illustrations. Using different voices and tones and talking about what is going on in the pictures will help keep kids interested.

Transition from Story Time: Sometimes the transition from story time can be just as difficult as the transition to story time. By using some simple techniques, you can make this shift easier for children, parents, and you. Try wrapping up the story time with a closing song, saying good-bye with a designated puppet, or excusing the children individually from the group (if your environment allows it).

Example: If you are wearing red today, you can go find your parent.

Have Fun: ENTHUSIASM is very important! Don’t spend time preparing a wonderful story time and forget to have fun. Your lack of enthusiasm will cancel your effort.

Story Time Starters

Try using one of these songs to signal the beginning of story time

I'm So Happy

(Sung to: "If You're Happy and You Know It")

I'm so happy that you've come to story time,

So listen very carefully to my rhyme.

Stand up straight and stomp your feet.

Clap twice, then take your seat.

We'll begin when I ring the story chime.

(Have the children do the motions with you as you sing them. Continue singing the song until everyone is ready and then ring a bell)

Would Your Like to Hear a Story?

(Sung to: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

Would you like to hear a story,

Hear a story, hear a story?

Would you like to hear a story?

Then come with me.

Time for Stories

(Sung to: "Clementine")

Time for stories, time for stories,

Time for stories today.

Let's be quiet, pay attention,

Wonder what we'll hear today?

If You're Ready

(Sung to: "If You're Happy and You Know It")

If you're ready for a story, find a seat.

If you're ready for a story, find a seat.

Check your hands and then your feet.

If you're ready, find a seat.

If you're ready for a story, find a seat.

On-Line Story Time Resources

Gayle's Preschool Rainbow

www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-rhymes.htm

An extensive collection of action songs and fingerplays arranged by themes. Everything from numbers and bugs, to occupations and transportation. Use this site to find a simple activity to match the theme of the book you are reading to kids.

MoJo's Musical Mouseum- Get Busy! Songs

www.kididdles.com/souseum/busy.html

Here you'll find a wealth of fingerplays and clapping/spinning/circle songs arranged alphabetically by title. Once you've made a selection, click "Play Song" to hear the tune (this is very cool, especially if you don't know the song).

The Perpetual Preschool

www.perpetualpreschool.com

Check out this site for free year round themes, tips, resources and learning center ideas. Each theme includes activity ideas submitted by other professionals in the categories of songs, games, art, science, snacks, and miscellaneous. The site has more than 100 themes available on their theme list, but they change their site with the season to make it more user friendly.

The Real Mother Goose

<http://trmg.designwest.com>

A large collection of the Real Mother Goose nursery rhymes for children. The rhymes are listed alphabetically so you can easily find your favorites.

Hummingbird Educational Resources

www.hummingbirded.com/llp.html

Over 1000 lesson plan ideas, links to teacher friendly resources, and a catalog of materials available for purchase.

Family Crafts

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/blspecdays.htm>

Find out what special and sometimes unusual events and holidays are celebrated every day of the year! This is a great way to find a new theme for story time.

Crayola Mark Your Calendar Page

www.crayola.com/eventcalendar/mark_cal/

This special calendar is designed specifically for educators, and lists holidays, celebrations, birthdays and more for every day of the year.

Story Time Enders

Try using one of these songs to signal the end of story time.

Story Time is Over

(Sung to: "Are You Sleeping?")

Story time is over, story time is over,
Let's go home, let's go home,
I love my books, I love my books,
See you later, see you later.

You May Be Excused

(Sung to: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Look, look, look around.
Look around the room.
I see someone who's wearing _____
(Name a color or pattern)
You may be excused.

Good-Bye Song

(Sung to: "Goodnight Ladies")

Good-bye (child's name), good-bye (child's name),
Good-bye (child's name).
I'm glad that you were here.

We Had a Happy Day

(Sung to: "The Farmer in the Dell")

It's time to go home,
It's time to go home.
Wave good-bye to everyone,
It's time to go home.
We had a happy day,
We had a happy day.
Wave good-bye to everyone,
We had a happy day.
We'll see you again,
We'll see you again.
Wave good-bye to everyone,
We'll see you again.

Guidelines for Reading Aloud

- Allow time for the children to gather and settle in. Make sure each child is comfortable and ready to pay attention before you start reading.
- Make yourself comfortable and be sure that you are situated so that everyone can see the book.
- When everyone is ready, introduce the book. Include three things:
 - 1) A short sentence or two that relates the book to the children.
 - 2) The title of the book.
 - 3) The author and/or illustrator of the book
- Point to the title as you say it, as well as the name(s) of the author/illustrator.
- Move the book around, either as you read it or at the end of each page so that each child can see the illustrations and the words.
- Read with expression. Change the pitch (high-low), tone (gentle-rough), and volume (soft-loud) of your voice to show different characters or create mood.
- Pace your reading to fit the story. Let your voice reflect anticipation. A short pause can create suspense. Do not read too quickly, the children need enough time to look at the pictures and think about what they are hearing.
- Get involved. Let your facial expressions show the story content by smiling, frowning, showing surprise, anger, etc.
- Point to characters or objects in the pictures as you read about them.
- Ask the children to take part in any story that has a repetitive phrase.
- When you have finished reading, ask open-ended questions and be sure to give the children time to respond.

Story Time Tips from the “It’s Never Too Early” Program

To help ensure that you are providing a beneficial story time, use the sheet below. You don’t need to cover all of the points in one story time, but you should cover some of them in every story time.

Directions: Highlight the questions addressed in your story time session. Circle the question that you called attention to for parents.

Print Motivation

- Did I develop the idea that reading is fun?

Language and Vocabulary

- Did I make connections to concepts and vocabulary when reading?
- Did I call attention to the pictures in the story?
- Did I encourage the children to respond through movement or music?
- Did I give the children the opportunity to respond orally by asking simple questions about the story and/or pictures?

Concepts About Print

- Did I call attention to the cover of the book and point to and read the title?
- Did I point to the print and occasionally run my finger along it while reading?

Narrative Skills and Comprehension

- Did I use puppets or a flannel board to have children participate in retelling the story?
- Did I talk about the events of the story?
- Did I help children link the events and characters to what they know about?

Parent Connection

Which of the actions above did I call the parents’ attention to during the story time?
(Chose one to explain quickly and simply during the flow of the activities)

Ex. After reading a book you might want to talk to the children about some of the events that took place in the story. You might say, “Let’s talk about this story so we can all make sure we understand what happened.” This sends a message to parents about why you are doing this activity, without breaking your connection with the children.