

How to Tell a Story

The following are a few suggestions I have read from a storytelling book. They apply mainly to story selections that are not being read. However, for those of you who are reading a book many of the suggestions are still valuable. Also, if you are reading from a book with lots of pages (due to illustrations) you may wish to type the text out and tape it to the back of your book so that you will have better eye contact with the children. You may even consider memorizing your book and showing just a few pictures to the children. Generally the emphasis for storytelling is animated facial gestures and vocal variety. Good luck and have fun!

The Storyteller's Start-Up Book by Margaret Read MacDonald

Learning the Story in One Hour.

To begin search for a story that delights you, that can be your own special story. Block one hour to work alone, and begin.

1. Select. Start with a story you are eager to learn.
2. Concentrate. Isolate yourself from interruptions.
3. Vocalize. Read your story out loud. Highlight phrases that are important or memorable.
4. Memorize Key Bits. Memorize key phrases you have marked.
5. Analyze. Note the tale's basic structure. You may wish to write an outline of the tale.
6. Say the Story. Put down the manuscript and begin telling the tale out loud.
7. Repair. After you've told the entire tale, recheck your marked text. Take time to retell aloud those bits that felt shaky.
8. Tell it Through. Tell the tale once more. Try not to stop this time. Force yourself to improvise, just keep telling. {Try taping your delivery on cassette tape and/or deliver it to a small audience like your family or neighbor.}
9. Evaluate. Make notes of areas that still need improvement.

Performing the Story.

You've learned your story. You go to your audience with excitement, for you are about to give them such a delight - a *gift* you have for them.

1. Set the stage. Create a special story space.
2. Prepare your audience to listen. Remove distractions. Make sure you can maintain eye contact with your audience.
3. The Pregnant Pause. You have introduced your story. Your audience is ready. Look your audience over, and *gather* them together as you prepare to begin.
4. The Opening Bridge to the Story. You have carefully crafted your beginning sentence for effect. Deliver it with confidence. Put your audience at ease.
5. Communicate. You are into the story - now all you have to do is *tell* it. This does not mean *recite* it, or *perform* it. This means *communicate* it. Speak *to* your audience. Look in their eyes, read their responses. Your thoughts should be on the communication with your audience ... not your own appearance or performance flaws.
6. Pace yourself. Do not rush through it. Slow gently to a pause, then race into rapid-fire telling as the story suggests. Stop. Let the story fall to the ground like a drifting balloon.
7. Care take Your Audience. Stay in tune with your audience.
8. Revel in Language. Take time to roll lush words around on your tongue. Give each gorgeous phrase its due. You are *performing* a fine language, just as a musician performs a piece of music.
9. Dance your Story. Move your body with your story. Let the story tell you how to move. Stay true to your being, however. Do not attempt wild gestures if these feel unnatural to you. Develop your own style and take confidence in it.
10. End with Confidence. The tale's end should have the sense of a goodbye kiss. The final words must be well-rehearsed and delivered with care.