

Storytelling builds reading and writing skills

For parents of students in the primary, junior and middle grades

The art of storytelling impacts the development of communication skills that are critical to a child's success at school. Storytelling encourages children to listen actively and analytically, improves verbal skills, increases imagination and visualization skills, and boosts comprehension and retention skills.

Begin with a familiar story

Use a story you already know or love—perhaps an old fairytale or folk tale from your childhood. You can also begin with your child's favourite picture book. For more ideas, visit the local public library and speak to a librarian in the children's area.

Take turns to read and relate the story

Choose a quiet time and comfortable place to sit with your child. Read through the story once with your child. Then, take turns telling the story—without help from the book—to each other. Stay as close to the original as you can. Tell the story two, three or four times more. Discuss the details. For example:

- this is a story about...
- the main characters are...
- the events that happen in the story are...

The story will likely change every time it is told so don't worry if you or your child forget some details. Repeat it as often as you like.

Activities enhance literacy skills

With some creativity, children will learn to listen actively and develop their own imagination. To help your child learn, read:

- compare different variations of a story
- the same story over and over to learn it better
- other tales with similar themes
- information to research parts of the story
- using different voices for different characters
- aloud with a dramatic voice

You can also try some of the following activities to encourage your child's creativity. Ask your child to:

- talk about the various settings in the story and have him draw his favourite one
- discuss the events in the story and ask her to list them in the order that they happened
- illustrate a comic strip of the main events
- draw a picture story map and include all the places that are mentioned in the story

- rewrite a story from the comic strip or story map
- label all drawings and maps
- think up a new ending for the story and ask him to write it out
- list characters in order of appearance
- identify her favourite character and have her draw the character
- think of a story he has heard before and write the story from memory

Develop analytical skills by digging deeper

With your child, draw a chart with six sections—*who, where, when, what, why and how*—and fill it out with information from the story. Talk about what problems came up in the story and how they were resolved.

Ask your child "what if..." questions. For example:

- what if it was you or me in the story?
- what if the story happened 100 years ago? today? 100 years in the future? Come up with some of your own.

You can also engage your child in a character analysis. Ask her to:

- identify the personality of one or more characters
- compare the character to herself—how are you the same and how are you different?
- retell the story from one character's point of view

Tell stories to improve verbal skills

- Practice retelling the story.
- Find patterns or repeated words.
- Listen to someone else tell the story.
- Tell it again and again to everyone who will listen.
- Speak slowly and clearly.

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April 18, 2015*