

Tip: Help a Child Write a Story



Grades 2-4

Why Use This Tip

Writing stories is something every child is asked to do in school, and many children write stories in their free time, too. By creating and telling a story, children learn to organize their thoughts and use written language to communicate with readers in a variety of ways. Writing stories also helps children better read, and understand, stories written by other people. But as much fun as it can be, writing a story can also seem like a challenge to a child (or an adult!). By familiarizing a child with how authors create stories and what the different parts of a story are, introducing visual or written prompts that inspire him or her to think of story ideas, and encouraging him or her to plan before starting to write, you'll help the child make a complete and imaginative story.

What To Do

1. Start by reading some favorite stories together. Talk a little bit about each story's author. If there is information about the author on the book jacket, you might read it together. Help the child understand that the author created or adapted the story and made decisions about what should happen in it.
2. As you read, stop and ask the child to make predictions about what is going to happen next and why he or she thinks so. When you do this, you are encouraging him or her to think about how stories work and how readers understand stories – both important when writing a story of one's own.
3. While you are reading and when you are done, talk about the different parts of the story, asking questions such as:
 - What is the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?
 - Who are the characters?
 - What do you like about them?
 - Where does the story take place?
 - Is there a problem that occurs in the story? If so, how does it get resolved?
 - What do you think about the ending? Is there a connection, either in words or pictures, between the ending and the beginning of the story?
4. Once you've read a couple of stories, talk about how the child might make a story that is similar to one of them. For example, if the book he or she especially enjoyed was a story about the first day of school, ask the child to write a story about her first day of school. Or if the story was a fairy tale, suggest that the child write his or her own version. Use the questions you have asked in Step 3 as a guide to help the child plan the story. For example, you might ask the child what will happen at the beginning, middle, and end of his or her story or where the story will take place.
5. If you find that the stories you read aren't serving as inspiration, you might look for some story starters, which are scenarios or statements that someone else has already come up with. An example story starter might be "One day I woke up and discovered that my dog could speak to me." The child then writes about what might happen next. You'll find examples of story starters for kids at [The Story Starter Junior](#) and [Chateau Meddybemps](#), where each story started is printable and comes with an illustration. The website [Making Books With Children](#) also has some suggestions for story topics.

You might also:

- Suggest three unrelated things—for example, a train, a princess, and a basketball—and encourage a child to write a story that includes all of them.
 - Help a child write about favorite family stories or events, like a funny story that's been passed down from generation to generation, or a memorable vacation.
6. Once the child has chosen a topic, help him or her create a storyboard. These help writers put the events of a story in order using pictures. They work kind of like a comic strip.
 7. You can make a storyboard by having a child draw a series of pictures of the main events in the story on sticky notes and then asking him or her to arrange the pictures in order. Talk about the order and whether it makes sense – since you are using sticky notes, the child can move them around. A photo story is another way of using pictures to organize or create a story. Have a child cut pictures out of magazines or take photos with a digital camera. He or she can then arrange the picture in order and write captions, much the same as with a storyboard.
 8. Once the child has picked a final order for the story ask him or her to write several sentences or even a paragraph for each picture that tells that part of the story.
 9. Ask him or her to read you the story. Stop to ask the same questions you asked while reading stories written by the child's favorite author in Step 3. Encourage the child to fill in any missing information or detail that might make the story funnier or more interesting. If you're working with a storyboard, have the child add connections between the different parts of the story, for example showing how the characters move from one place to another or how much time has passed between one event and another.
 10. After the child has had a chance to read the story aloud and make some changes to it, have him or her write a "final" version of the story that is illustrated and turned into a book, complete with a title, a cover, and the name of the author. Keep this book on the shelf with other stories and encourage the child to read it to you.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/help-child-write-story-a-30593.html>

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