

Especially for parents of toddlers!

I Wanna Be a Storyteller

Storytelling and Listening

Telling stories is one way to help your toddler learn basic story forms long before he learns to read. He'll get to try out new words and feel good about his own storytelling skills, too. Use the following ideas to boost your toddler's enjoyment of listening to and telling stories.

What is the practice?

Toddlers love to hear stories about themselves or other family members. Family storytelling allows toddlers to learn to listen to and tell stories about important people in their lives. Give your young child many chances to take part in creating, telling, and retelling stories.



What does the practice look like?

When a toddler repeats a story told by another person or a story she made up, it's called *repeated storytelling*. A toddler might tell what happened when playing with a friend. She might retell a family tale about a funny thing that happened at her birthday party. Repeated storytelling helps toddlers see the order of events in a story. It also teaches new words ("Once upon a time") and builds enjoyment of this art form.

How do you do the practice?

When can a toddler take part in storytelling and repeated storytelling? Perfect times and places include riding in a car, and settling in for a nap, or bedtime at home. Waiting for food in a restaurant, attending library story hour, or just snuggling with you on the sofa are good times, too.

- Think about topics that interest your toddler. If your toddler loves trains or has a favorite pet, make up a story about one of those interests. Your toddler is more likely to take part in storytelling if the story is about something that interests him. Young children often like to hear stories about themselves (the day they were born, for example). Or they like stories about their parents ("When I was a little boy like you....").
- Find a time and place likely to encourage your toddler to join in storytelling. Choose a place where you can hear each other clearly. Since toddler attention spans can be short, choose a time when there will be few distractions.
- You could start the story, then ask your child to add to it. When telling a pretend story, ask your toddler to make up details ("How does the dog in our story look?"). If the story is about a real person or event, ask for some details your child knows about them.
- Retell the same story at different times. With each retelling, ask your child to supply more parts of the story. Soon she will be able to tell the whole story on her own!
- If your child finds it hard to retell a story, let her choose between two ways the story might continue. "Now does Suzy go to the zoo or to the beach?"
- Smiling and responding to your toddler's efforts will keep her interested in the story.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your toddler telling more stories?
- Does your toddler seem to enjoy telling stories or helping you tell a story?
- Has your toddler tried to tell stories on her own?

Take a look at more storytelling activities

Storytelling Together

Ben, a 2-year-old, loves to play with his stuffed dog, Ralphie. Ben's dad delights his son by making up and telling exciting stories he calls "The Adventures of Ben and Ralphie." Dad always begins a new story by recalling things he knows Ben enjoys doing, like splashing in water. "One bright day, Ben and Ralphie put on their swimming suits and jumped into their pool," Dad says. Ben's eyes light up, and Dad asks him what the friends would do in the water. Together they weave a story about water fun, with Ben giving Dad the exciting details.



At the Library

Knowing that Dana likes to listen to stories, her mom checks at the library for the next story time. Mom and Dana sit together while a librarian tells and reads stories and teaches songs. Seeing her mom's interest and excitement, Dana becomes interested and excited, too. Mom knows her daughter is enjoying the event. Dana keeps looking at her and giggling and smiling at various parts of the stories.

Photos Prompt Storytelling

Davy is almost 3 years old, but he uses language more like an 18-month-old. Davy's mom decides to take photos of him playing on riding toys with his brother. She uses the pictures to help Davy tell a story. Mom asks which picture he wants first. After he hands her one of the color prints, she starts a story. She asks questions like "Who is in the picture?" to help him add details. Davy answers, "Troy." Then Mom asks "What is Troy doing?" Davy answers, "Riding bikes." Mom moves through the stack quickly, getting Davy to talk about each picture as she goes. She knows he enjoys this form of storytelling. When Davy sees the pictures around the house, he brings them to her and the storytelling starts again.

