

Storytime for Everyone

What is your main goal?

Entertainment? Skills enrichment? Education?

Elements of a Storytime

Storytime is so much more than stories. A modern storytime includes things like songs, fingerplays, dances, full body movement, games, and more.

Hello and Goodbye Songs

Children love repetition, and it helps them to learn. Try starting your storytimes with the same song, rhyme, or activity. This is called an anticipatory set, and it is an excellent cue for what you expect from your students.

Choosing Books

Consider your audience

Infants---board books that are short-LOTS of songs and fingerplays. Also consider extra copies for caregivers to read with their babies, since their eye range is much shorter than older children.

Toddlers---Rhythm, rhyme, and repetition! Toddlers are less able to sit and attend than older kids, so have patience for them running about. They're still listening and learning, they just can't sit still.

Preschoolers---Rhythm, rhyme, repetition and ACTION. These kids love to help out, make sounds, and participate in the story. They are more likely to sit and listen, but they are also more likely to want to talk during the story.

Older kids---They can sit for longer periods of time, but they may not be as interested in simpler stories. Give them ways to participate or even help out the younger kids.

Activities!

Ideally, your storytime should include all of these. If you can get to three of these, you'll do well.

Reading

Read together! Have kids read sight words they know.

Writing

Have them spell things in the air with their fingers, trace shapes or letters, or provide them with crayons and paper.

Talking

By asking questions, having the children tell you about the characters, or recapping the story, it gets them talking.

Singing

Sing lots of songs together! It's okay if you can't sing, the kids will appreciate you doing it anyway. Singing along with music is great. (We have MANY children's CDs and lots of downloadable music!)

Playing!

Any kind of hands-on activity will work! Dancing, finding objects around the room, playing follow the leader or Simon Says, or even just allowing the children to explore the space with some toys. This kind of play, structured or unstructured, allows for learning. Mix gross and fine motor activities

Crafts

Product

All the children are creating exactly the same thing.

This can be an easy way to start crafting, but the general consensus is to move away from pure product crafts. They allow for following directions, but not for being creative and original.

Example: Cut and paste crafts, craft kits

Process

Every child is allowed to create in their own way.

You might provide a prompt and some materials, but every child will create something unique.

Example: Stamping, stickers, painting, coloring, building,

Hillary's pro tips:

Themes are a fun way to structure your storytime!

Always save dances and games for the end of your storytime.

Move the book so that the entire audience can see. Pause between pages

Get their brains working. Ask simple things like, "What do you think is going to happen next?" "How is the character feeling?" or other questions that have to do with the story.

Be thoughtful about including diverse characters in your stories, but be aware of cultural appropriation.

Think about printing off a songsheet for your caregivers. It helps them follow along!

Lisa's pro tips:

Practice reading the book aloud before the storytime.

Be aware of how sound carries in the room you're in.

Keep kids moving, especially the young ones.

Make sure your tone is engaging!

Be mindful of your pacing. Don't go too fast, the kids are hearing everything for the first time.

Include the parents!

Stefanie's pro tips:

Movement- Keeps kids moving throughout storytime, they get antsy. Try to do 2 action rhymes and a dance song in your storytime.

Challenge them- I like to tell the kids that I need help with my flannel story. I will ask them if they could help me count and tell me what colors I have, they love to show off what they know.

Interactive picture books are always a hit, they keep kids super engaged and eager to help out.

If they get chatty I always like to tell them to 'put their listening ears on', it usually gets them to quiet down and it also helps with parents/caregivers if they are getting chatty, too.

Repetition- try finding a good welcome and goodbye song to sing every time. They will eventually learn the song and are excited to sing with you.

Use Jbrary as much as you can, they have some of the best resources for fingerplays/action rhymes. My favorite is the welcome song in sign language and popcorn kernels.

Props are always a hit. They love anything that can tap (rhythm sticks), shake (egg shakers), or throw (scarves).

Kim's pro tips: Use online resources! Don't bother reinventing the wheel.

Additional resources!

Online

Jbrary
Sunflower Storytime
Mel's Desk
SparkleBox.co.uk
Twinkl.com
Buggy and Buddy
ModernSmallTownMama
Let's Play Music
Pinterest

Books

Check out our Parent and Educator Central collection!
Alastore.ala.org has a great selection of new storytime books

Sample Storytime Plan

Theme: Monsters: 30 minutes

Welcome Song: If You're Happy And You Know It plus extra roaring verse

Intro: Monsters start with M

(Trace M in the air, talk about other things that start with M)

Book: Monster Trouble by Fredrickson

Book: Romping Monsters, Stomping Monsters by Yolen

Song/fingerplay: Five Little Monsters Jumping on the Bed

Book: Go Away Big Green Monster by Emberley

Song/movement activity: Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, but Horns, Scales, Tails, and Claws

(Goodbye Song Optional) (I tend to do the goodbye song before the final activity so that caretakers can choose to skip it if their child is restless or they can sneak out when they are done)

Activity: Make a Monster

(Hide cut out shapes around the room of various monster parts, claws, tails, scales, fangs, etc. in various colors. Tell children to find three of them but just one at a time with different movement styles like tiptoe, hopping, skipping, crawling, or creeping. Once they find three parts, set them up with paper and crayons so that they can draw their own monster with these attributes)