

Top 10 Tips of Storytelling





Once upon a time there was a storyteller and he used stories to pass on knowledge and wisdom.

Storytelling has been used for generations and it is just as relevant today as its ever been. It can be a powerful tool to teach concepts and to give an appreciation of times and places.

By putting the listener in the story they get to see, smell, touch and feel those times and places. It helps to put subjects into context and fix them in the mind. A good story lasts long in the memory. After all we can all recall stories from our childhood.

Traditional storytelling involves reciting a story from memory rather than reading a book. Storytelling gives the listener the opportunity to conjure up images of the story in their own minds rather than be influenced by the illustrations; which after all are only how the illustrator has visualised the story. This provides a good exercise in using their own imagination which is important for them to write their own stories. Whether you are storytelling or reading a book or even maybe even a mixture of the two (prompt cards can be a first step to storytelling) then these tips are equally relevant to you to keep your audience's attention.

The following tips are just our top 10 of things we have learnt and developed whilst storytelling in schools and nurseries there are many more we could of added.

On some of the tips we have added how we have used them. My main tip is:

Enjoy it and your audience will enjoy it to! Go for it!





Tip 1

Write down the 1st and last lines of the story.

Take a piece of paper at the top write the 1st line of the story at the top and at the bottom write the last line of the story.

Tip 2

Break down the story into 10 steps

Read the story through, close the book, close your eyes and step through the story. Then write down on paper used in tip 1 the story in 10 steps. These will act as prompts as to the main points of the story. If your not confident about doing the story from memory this sheet can be all you need to keep you on track.

Tip 3

Visualise the voices of the characters

Think about each character in the story and how they speak. Some of this may come from the dialogue in the story. You don't have to tell the story in those voices but it will help you when you are reading their dialogue and you may find yourself slipping into their voice. For instance when I think of Wanda from our Harry the Hapless Ghost story I start to cackle. Although my husband does say that I do that anyway.

Tip 4

Practice! Practice! Practice!

Practice aloud whether its to your own children, in the mirror or recording it into your phone. You will put more into it each time.



Tip 5

Set the scene

Before you start telling the story to an audience set the scene, explain what the story is about. I like to kick off by asking a question. It wets their appetites as to what is to come. Just remember to settle them down before you start the story.

Tip 6

Vary the tone of your voice

We've all experienced death by Powerpoint. Remember to change the tone of your voice to reflect the mood of the story. If you use tip 3 then this should happen more naturally. Your voice is a bit like the soundtrack to a film, it can denote tension in the story.

Tip 7

Look at the audience

The trouble with reading a book is that it can be very boring for the audience to look at. Look at the audience let them see your facial expressions. Look at individuals this helps draw them into the story. It helps to create an energy in the room.

Tip 8

Choose stories with a hook

I like to keep an audience on their toes. So stories with a repeating phrase or a sequence they can hook into really helps. Such as in our Chest of Dreams story the characters have to say 'finicky fish, finicky fish, finicky fish' to make a wish. It is good to encourage



audience participation, it keeps them engaged and helps them remember the story. At the very least it keeps them awake.

☺ Tip 9

Use your hands

Hand gestures are a great way for the audience to see where things are in your mind's eye. For instance if something is far away put your hand out to the distance. If there is an action to pull such as in The Enormous Turnip story then mimic pulling. This is a slightly difficult one because if you over do the hand gestures it can be a bit distracting. This is why it is a great idea to video yourself telling the stories. Many phones these days have the facility to take pictures and videos of yourself. My advice is to have a laugh at yourself but if you look a bit manic then you need to tone it down. Don't forget once you have told the story you can also delete the video of you practicing.

☺ Tip 10

Don't be afraid to improvise.

The story is not a script so don't worry about it being word perfect it is more important to get the meaning of the story over than to get every piece of dialogue correct. This is how stories have evolved over the years. There are so many versions of all the fairy tales but the essence of them remains.

THE END