

NEVERENDING STORIES



“A story is a
description, either
true or imagined, of
a connected series
of events”





You will find lots of ideas in here, including:

How to find inspiration for stories.

How to find time to tell stories together.

How to create physical spaces for stories.

How to tell a great story.

Some of these will work for you, some of them may not fit into your life in the way you need; these are simply ideas to help bring stories into your everyday routine.

Have a look and choose one that looks interesting and give it a go. You may even find that you are already doing a lot of these things.

Stories are a safe space to explore ideas and issues, play together, create together and be silly together. When creating a story, you and your child are equal.

What is vital for using this pack:

1

Communication
with your child

2

Spending time
together

3

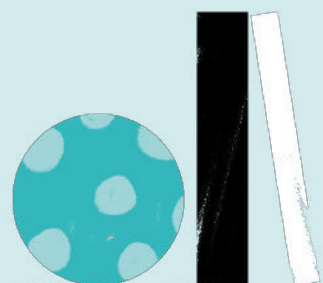
Willingness
to be silly

Stories can be fact or imaginary or both.
They can begin with a real story and
become imaginary. Stories are yours
to shape and change.

"I love when she sits in my lap
with her head resting on my chest,
pointing at random things"

Here are places you
can find them.

1 Story books and
non-fiction books



4 Audio
Books



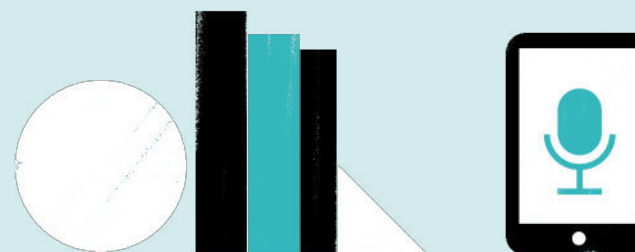
2 Ebooks



3 Remembering and sharing
memories together



5 Podcasts



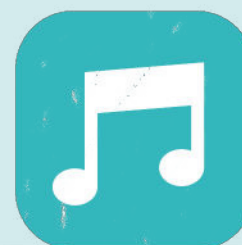
7 Film, TV and
YouTube



8 Your
imagination



6 Songs



9 Plays and other
live shows



TOP TIP

What you do today
is tomorrow's story.
Every activity you do,
every day trip, goes into
your story bank.

A story is made of four key elements:

1



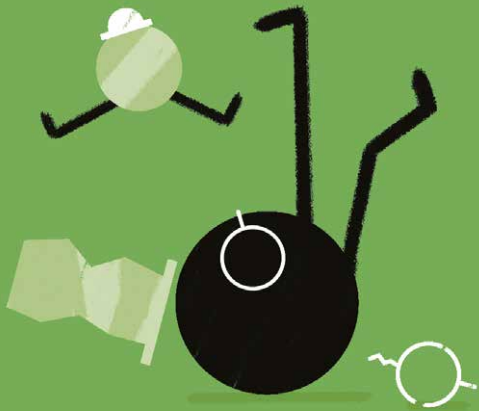
Characters

2



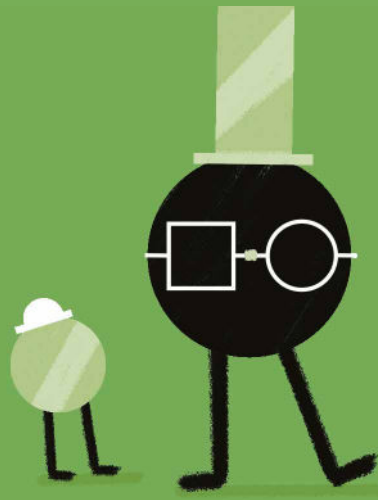
Places

3



Problems

4



Solutions

Early storytelling with your child can teach them about problem solving and help them to realise that if a problem comes up, there is a solution.

Creating a story

1

You can create a story in any way you want to. First, let's start with a character.

Character: A flower who lives in your garden.

Place: Where are they? In the garden, but can you be more specific? In the corner by the other flowers?

Problem: What problem might the plant have? Maybe there hasn't been enough rain?

Solution: The flower asks for help, and you and your child come along and water it.

2

You can also start with the place first.

Place: The shop.

Character: Who would you see there? A customer? An employee? Let's choose an employee for this story.

Problem: They need to put some stock out but they have lost it!

Solution: They look around, down all of the different aisles until they finally find it in the stock room.

3

Or, you can start with the problem first. If you notice your child is struggling with something in particular it can help to use the problem as a starting point.

Problem: Not trying new food.

Character: The character could be the child's favourite animal or character they already know – such as the hungry caterpillar.

Place: Out in the wild looking for food.

Solution: What would happen if the hungry caterpillar didn't try the new foods? He wouldn't turn into a butterfly. Take the hungry caterpillar through the story, telling him why it's important to try the food.

"I have a 6 year old - storytelling is helping him with his speech, it makes him interested in the outside world"

Now you've got your characters, places, problems and solutions, you can build a story with your child.

Here are some structure starters that you can use to tell your story:

- A There once was...
- B Suddenly...
- C Luckily...



1

Just in those three sentences there could be a story:

Beginning

There was once a giant who lived at the top of a beanstalk.

Problem

Suddenly a young boy climbed up his beanstalk and broke into his house.

Solution

Luckily the giant was really lovely and let the boy stay for tea.

2

You don't have to use the story starters – there are lots of other options to keep your stories fresh and interesting:

Beginning

Once upon a time...

In the beginning...

A long, long time ago...

Problem

Unfortunately...

And then...

Sadly...

Solution

Then they decided...

Fortunately...

By happy chance...

As luck would have it...

3

Once your child is used to this you can continue the story with another problem word, and keep going for as long as you can. For example:

Beginning

There was once a giant who lived at the top of a beanstalk.

Problem

Suddenly, a young boy climbed up his beanstalk and broke into his house.

Solution

Luckily, the giant was lovely and let the boy stay for tea.

Problem

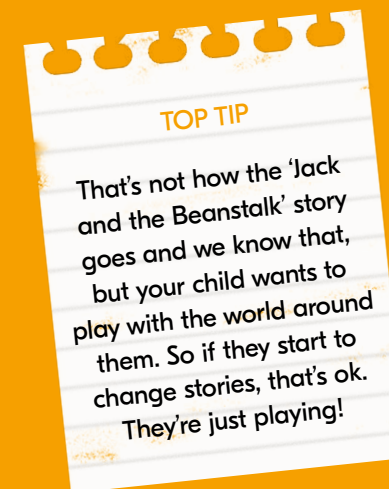
Unfortunately, when the boy got home, he got in trouble for not taking the giant's gold.

Solution

Then, he decided to go back and ask the giant if he could help.

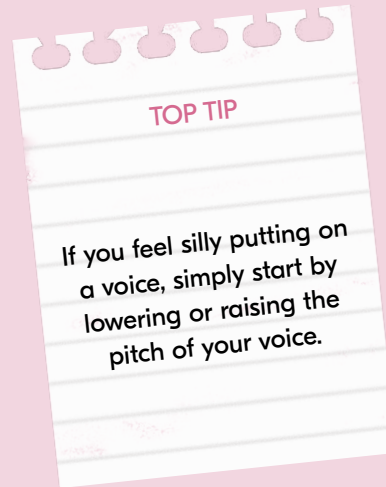
Ending

Fortunately, the giant had plenty of gold and so gave the boy enough to look after his family for a long time.



Characters

There are lots of different characters you can play with in your stories. Here are some examples:



There are a few easy ways to bring these characters into your stories:

Think about how you speak as the characters – you might want to create a whole voice for a character, or simply change your facial expression when they talk.

Compare character types that come up in stories to other stories you have read.

For example if you are reading *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* you can say –

“That witch is just as naughty as the witch in Sleeping Beauty!”

When the hero does something, react happily –

“Isn’t she brave?”

When the villain does something, act shocked –

“Isn’t that witch naughty! Do you think the hero is going to get her?”



The Hero

The good guy! Often the main character who tries to right the wrongs of the world.



The Villain

The bad guy! Often planning something evil and doesn't like the hero.



The Mentor

Someone who helps the hero on their journey.



The Loyal Friends

Friends of the hero who help them on their quest.

Stories can be about anything



As we've already seen, fairy tales like Jack and the Beanstalk can be great starting points for your story. However, there are lots of other places you can draw inspiration from, including local stories and legends.

Norfolk is a place full of amazing stories: we have everything from rumours of underground tunnels under Blakeney to the many stories of Boudicca the warrior queen! We have had Romans and Saxons, and the Kingdom of East Anglia used to be one of the most important in all of Britain. There are so many stories to tell. Not all of them will be suitable but with some slight editing they would be exciting tales to share with your child.

Here are a couple we have found so far -

The King under the Hill

A long time ago, King Gurgunt built Norwich Castle on top of a hill and established the city around it. He was buried underneath it along with all of his silver, gold and jewels. What would you do if you discovered all of this treasure?

The Peddler of Swaffham

A story about a man who follows his dreams and ends up rich! You can change his dreams to anything - perhaps your child wants to grow up to be an astronaut or a train driver?

Several churches, including those in Sheringham and Grimston, are rumoured to have been visited by mermaids!

You can also use stories from your childhood and your memories. Perhaps you have a photograph that you can share to inspire your story?

"I love the time we spend together, seeing her enjoyment, seeing her language and words develop, seeing how her brain pieces it all together."

TOP TIP

Telling stories about what future events may be like and sharing why they happen can prepare your child for them and get them excited.

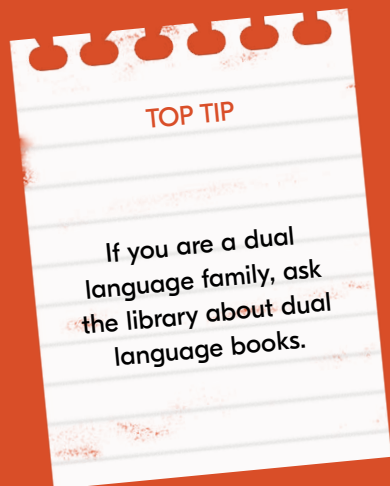
Books & reading

Sharing a book is an ideal way to spend some quality time together. Let others join in — siblings, family members and other care givers.

Find a quiet space — no distractions.

1

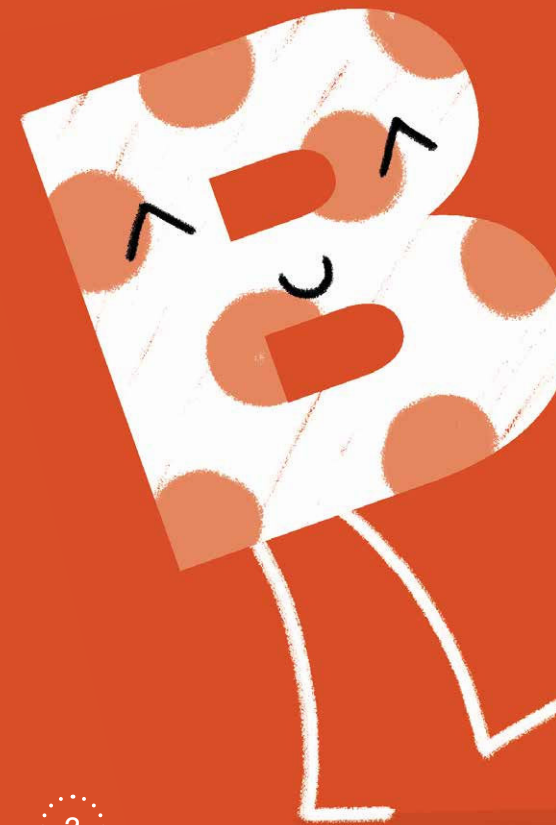
Talk about the pictures. Is there a way of relating it to your life? For example, if there is a picture of a dog, relate it to a dog you know.



“She always smiles at me when I start reading which warms my heart”

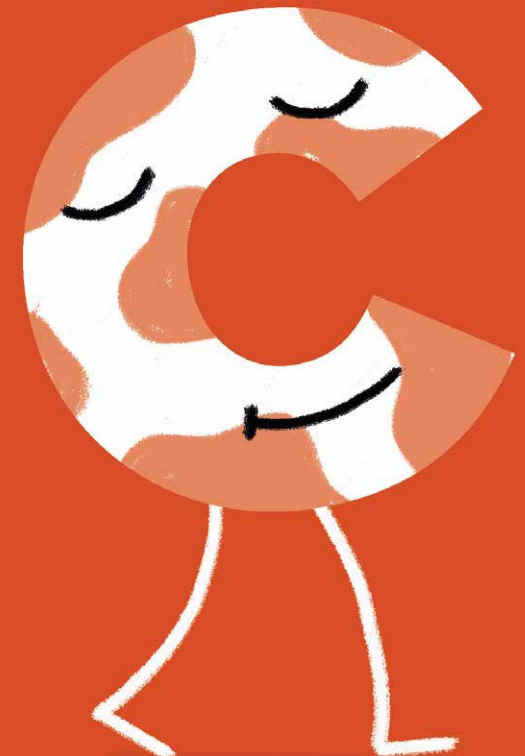
3

When choosing a book, make sure they are part of the decision. If they enjoy a particular book a lot, ask them if they would like to read it again next time. They will look forward to sharing it with you again.



2

If your child isn't talking yet let them interact with the page and point to what they want to. If they point to something tell them what it is and wait until they are ready to continue.



New experiences

Books can be a good way to help you talk about the more difficult things in life with your child. Here are a few that we have read:



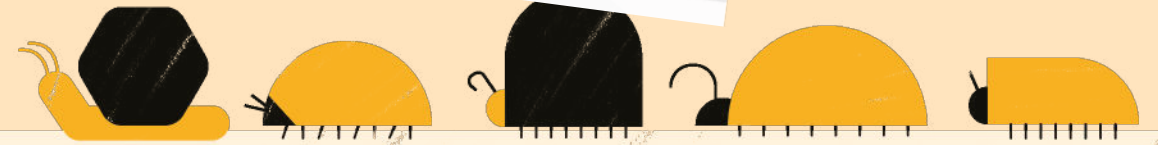
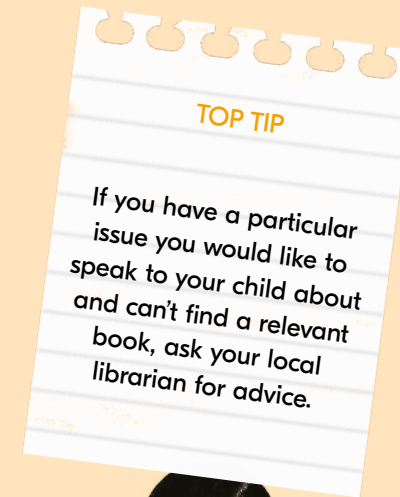
My Name is Not Refugee
By Kate Milner – This book explains the refugee crisis.



The Day the War Came
By Nicola Davies and illustrated by Rebecca Cobb – This is another book about when war comes to a country and people become refugees.



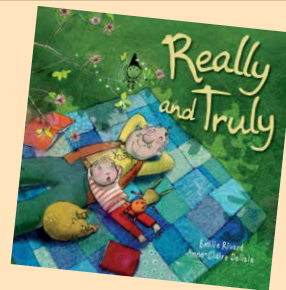
Going to the Hospital
Illustrated by Stephen Cartwright – This book is about what may happen if your child has to go to hospital.



Grandma
By Jessica Shepherd – This book is about elderly relatives and understanding changes they may go through.



Lost and Found
By Jennifer Moore-Mallinos and illustrated by Marta Fàbrega – This is about getting lost in a public place and what you can do as a family to help each other in this situation.



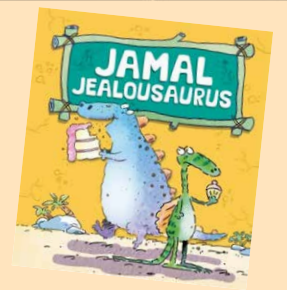
Really and Truly
By Émilie Rivard and Anne-Claire Delisle – This is a story about dementia.



Do You Have a Secret?
By Jennifer Moore-Mallinos and illustrated by Marta Fàbrega – This book is all about learning when it's good to keep a secret and when it's bad to keep a secret.



Heather has Two Mummies
By Leslea Newman and illustrated by Laura Cornell – This book is about a young girl with two mummies, but it also represents lots of other family types.



Jamal Jealousaurus
By Brian Moses and Mike Gordon – This book is about jealousy and how to deal with it.

After stories

After you have read a book together, or watched a film or television programme together, think of ways you can expand on it to keep the story going.

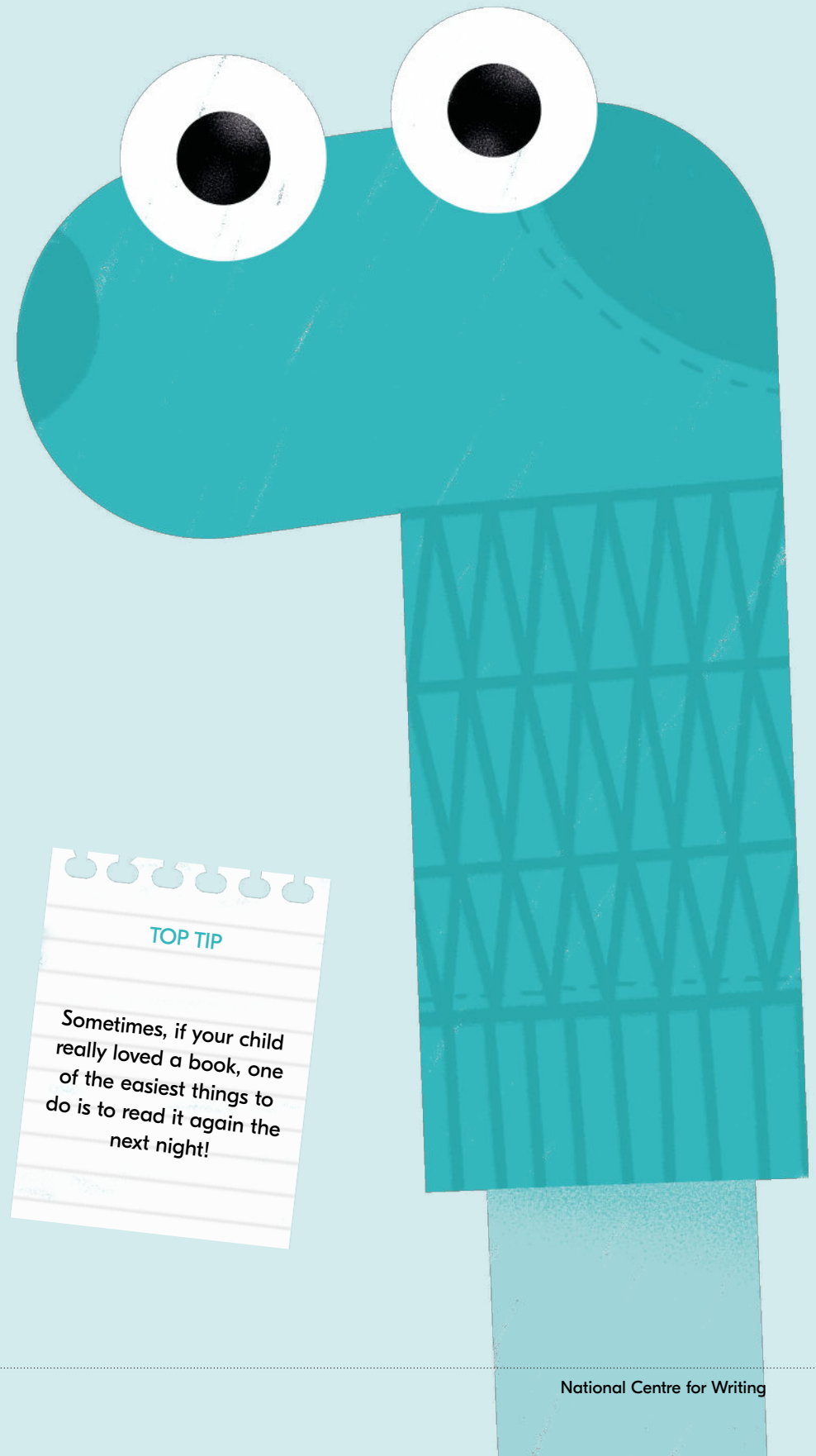
Is there a related book you could read or film you could watch?

Can you create a puppet of one of the characters?

Talk about the story together and see how much you can remember.

Can you re-create part of the story at home? For example, if you read *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, whilst having dinner you could pretend you are in the story and recite the story together.

Each single story can live on with you, even if it's as simple as talking about it.



TOP TIP

Sometimes, if your child really loved a book, one of the easiest things to do is to read it again the next night!

Building spaces

It can really help to create specific safe spaces to have story time together. Making space for stories sends a clear signal to your child that it is a special time where they get to be creative.

Build a Book Nook

What you need:

A few pillows

Some paper or card

Some colouring pencils

You can also get little picnic pop-up tents (often used for going on the beach). These can be ideal, as they pack away very small. On a nice day you can take a blanket or some pillows and create your book nook outside.

TOP TIP

To save space, your book nook can be temporary and live in a box when it's not being used.

1

Talk to your child and tell them that you are going to make a special place for them to read, make up stories together and be creative.

2

Choose a space in the house together.

3

Arrange the pillows and any decorations you want. You could use some paper or card to create a sign saying it's their book nook.

4

Put some books nearby, some drawing supplies, and any favourite cuddly toys.

A special place to keep books

What you need:

A spare shelf or a box

It's nice to give books a place in the house, especially for your child's books. Make room on a shelf or buy a box to put them in. You can decorate it however you want. You might want to cover it with stickers or label it with a sign.

"Bed time was always the best time for my three. We would sit in one place and choose a book and read it together"



TOP TIP

Have a designated space where you can put library books - it can be easy to lose track of them!

Bringing stories with you, wherever you are

It may feel difficult to find time for storytelling, but there are actually lots of ways to build stories into your everyday tasks.

Anywhere

Narrate and tell the story of your day as it happens. Even if you are just getting in the car and popping down the street. Talk about how you are getting in the car, strapping them in safe and sound. Have an audio story or nursery rhyme playing in the background if you're in your house or in the car.

Out and about

Talk about the things you can see. Talk about the season changes that are going on. Build a story into outside play.

Shopping

Talk about the things you are buying and get them to share their thoughts.

Point out details of the shop – look at all of the trolleys sitting there. Look at the baskets stacked up by the door. There are so many interesting things at the shop. Talk about them.

At home

The Messy Gremlin: The Gremlin that comes and makes the house a mess. If a Gremlin is a bit of a scary character, then you could use a fairy or something similar.

You can describe the Messy Gremlin together – what colour is it? Does it smell? How big is it? How does it move? What sound does it make?

Become the Messy Gremlin together. This is a great chance to get a bit silly.

Then you get to become the heroes! Here to fix the Gremlin's mess. You can make capes out of tea towels and be as silly as you like.

Building stories and games into tasks, like shopping and cleaning, might not work for you. This is absolutely fine. If mixing tasks and stories isn't for you then something else will be!

TOP TIP

Start small. Simply narrating your day and telling the story of your lives together is a great way to start. Then later you can say "remember how we went shopping earlier and saw all of those trolleys?"

"As a single mother of two that works a lot we have very little time. I take them to school early and we sit in the car outside and read together."



Time

Story time doesn't have to be sitting down and reading a whole book. It doesn't have to be a certain amount of time. Story time is all about sharing a story with your child, whatever that may be.

Story time can fit anywhere!

Much like finding spaces lets your child know that story time is important, finding time has the same effect.

When it is story time, leave your phone to the side. If that's not possible, tell your child you are putting it on silent. Let them know that they have your full attention.

Routine can be important but isn't always possible and that's ok. If you find a time of day that works, create a routine.

Use support

Think of other care givers and services you use. If your child goes to day care or pre-school, if you use a childminder, grandparents, or other family/friends or any other care setting, think about how they can use their time for storytelling. Let them know what you are doing and how they can support you.

TOP TIP

Don't worry about reading for a set amount of time. If your child tends to lose concentration you may find little and often works well.

"I read to my son as part of his bedtime routine, it's the final thing we do before putting him to bed. It's really relaxing for all of us and my son automatically fetches a book when we get upstairs. If it's a fixed part of your day, it's easier to fit in."



How much time do you have?



Under 1 minute

Describe the nearest object to you – what is it for? Tell them a story of how you got it.

Read one page of a book together.



Under 5 minutes

See how many blue things you can find. How many yellow? What can you smell? What can you see? This is all about building memories so, for example, if you are out one day and smell freshly cut grass, and then you are reading a book and it mentions freshly cut grass, you can turn to them and ask them if they remember how that smells. Remember when we smelt it on our walk the other day?



Under 10 minutes

Make a Bag of Stories

What you need:

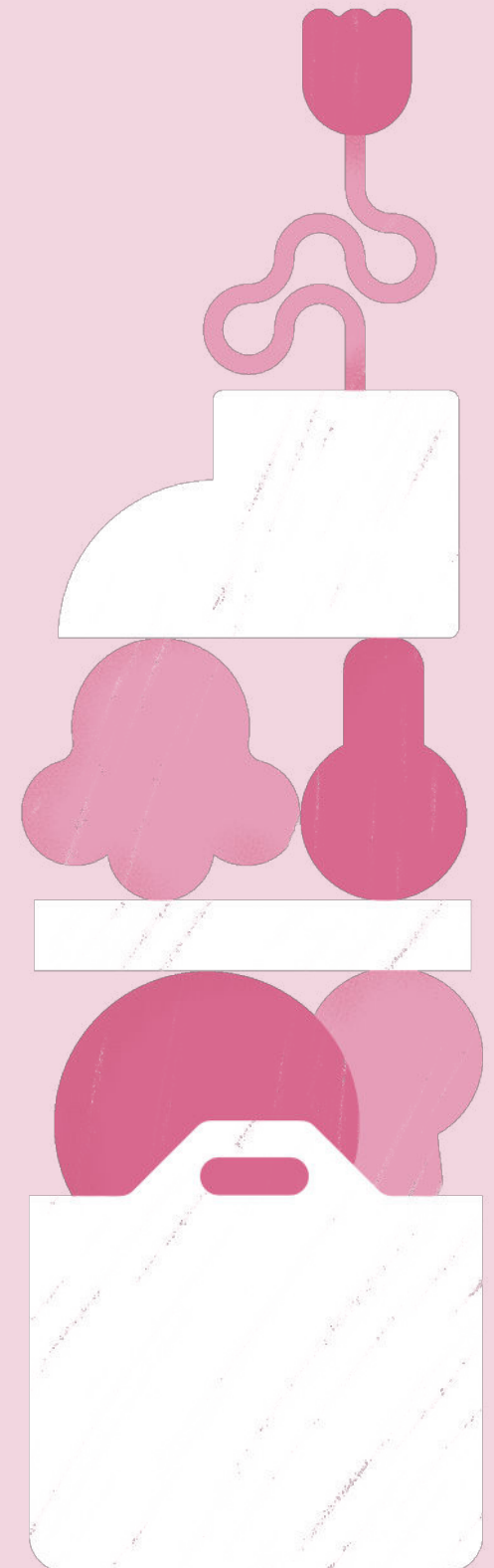
Bag (a cotton tote bag works well)

A few everyday items

How to use your Bag of Stories:

1. Give them the bag and open it together
2. See if you can make a story out of the objects you find inside
3. What kind of character would this bag belong to?
4. What else could the items be used for?
5. What do they feel like? How many ways can you describe them?

With a bit of preparation this is a great exercise to be able to pick up and do together.





Under 20 minutes

Object theatre

Object theatre is a play technique which lets you create characters and stories from everyday objects: from the spoon you eat breakfast with, a flower, a favourite teddy, a photo in a newspaper, anything! This game is all about sharing play together, having a conversation and asking questions.

What you need:

Any object (we'll use a spoon in our example)

How to play using object theatre:

1. The spoon is sitting on the table
2. Point to it and invite your child to play a game with you
3. You hold the spoon and say hello to it
4. Say hello back using a slightly different voice to yours (this will be the spoon's voice)
5. Look surprised!
6. Look to your child as if this is amazing
7. Encourage your child to have a conversation with the spoon



Under 30 minutes

Draw your day

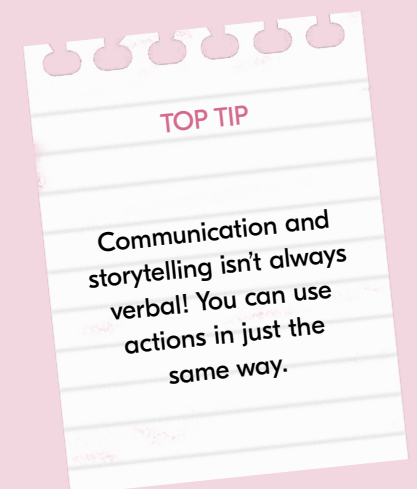
When you get home from any day out, put some paper out and ask your child to draw their day. What did they enjoy? What didn't they enjoy? Who did they see? They can then draw them out and talk to you – this gives you a chance to do odd jobs, like unpacking shopping. You can then put up some string like a clothes line and hang the drawings up there, so when you are eating dinner or relaxing in the evening you can ask them about their day.

When it's time to take the drawings down, go through them together and decide which ones to keep. This teaches them about choosing what is important to keep and thinking about what pieces they are proud of – instead of simply keeping everything they make. If you don't want to display them, you can keep the drawings in your Book Nook or with your box of stories.

Over 30 mins

Visit the library together!

Read a full book about something your child really enjoys. Follow the child's lead and talk about what you can see rather than always reading the story to them.



A day in the life of stories

Wake up time

Ask your child if they had any dreams. Get them to start their day with stories.

Breakfast time (or any meal time)

Tell them the story of when you went to buy the food.

Journey to nursery/ care setting

Talk to them about what they are going to do today. What do they think will happen? What are they looking forward to?

Journey home

Call back to the things your child told you on the way there. Did the things they were looking forward to happen? Get them to tell you about their day. Let them talk about what they have learnt and what they enjoyed.

Letting them tell their story is a great way to find out what they are enjoying so you can start to work that into book and activity choices.

Bath time

Tell stories about fish and mysterious sea creatures. There could be a ruin under the sea that you are exploring together!

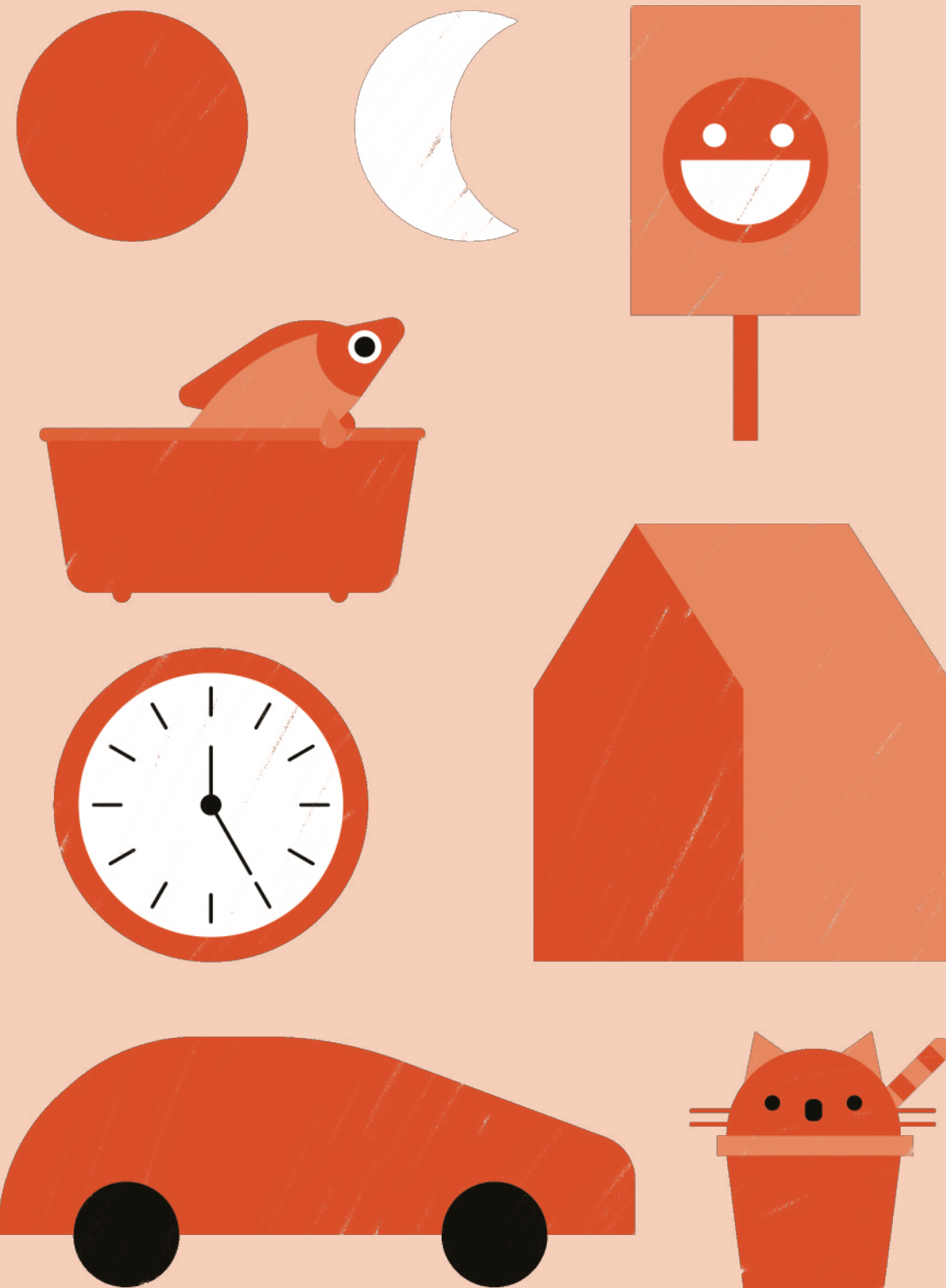
Bed time

A great chance to build routine into your storytelling is to do it at bed time. Choose a book and read it together.

"I find it soothing reading to my baby at bedtime and I hope he does too."

TOP TIP

You can buy waterproof books for bath time.



Build a book

After reading a few books, it's a lovely idea to create a book together. This can be done very simply with a few sheets of paper.

What you need:

A staple
Three sheets of A4 paper
Some pencils and pens

All you need to do is fold each piece of paper in half, open them up and staple them together on the crease. You have a book!

Here are some examples of simple stories to get you started:

1

A story about emotions. Pick a character or draw a simple stick figure together. Pick a few different emotions and put one on each page. On one page the stick figure is happy. Why are they happy? Decide together. On the next page, they are sad. Why are they sad?

2

Use their favourite animal and draw it in different places. If they are silly places like "the giraffe is in Tesco" ask your child questions about this: how does the giraffe feel?

3

Ask your child how they get ready before leaving the house. Then you can use the book as a checklist every morning to make it a bit more fun.

4

If your child is confident, choose a couple of the phrases from our story structure section [p.6-7] and create a story using these – tell the story verbally first and let them draw the images in the book.



Here are some final words from the parents we spoke to whilst creating this pack.

"The excitement with what's on the next page. The things they notice that you don't. Their questioning and use of words that they didn't use before."

"Book sharing is a lovely activity when babies/ children are calm and alert. Reading the story to the child is also a lovely way to unwind together as part of a bedtime routine."

"Make it part of your bedtime routine. Don't feel silly, don't feel like they're too young to benefit."

"Bounce and Rhyme at the library was fantastic when my kids were younger."

"Charity shops have some great bargains for kids books."

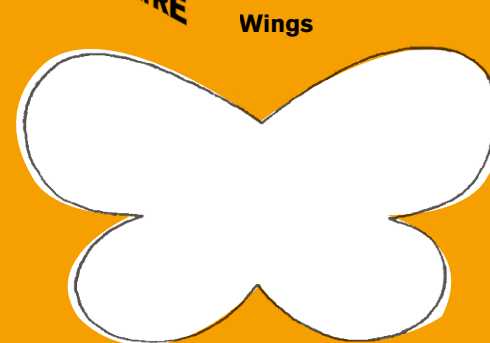
We would like to thank Anguish's Educational Foundation for funding this project.

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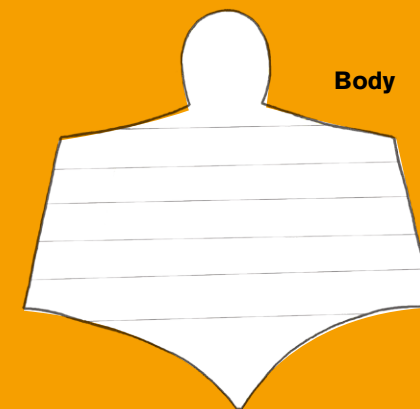
For more information visit nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk



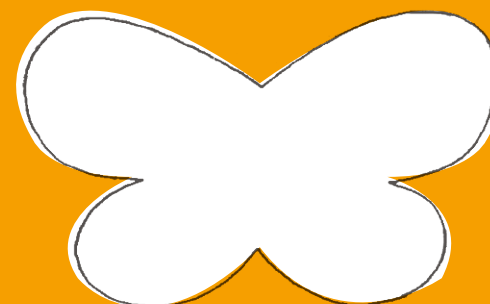
Make a bumble bee finger puppet!



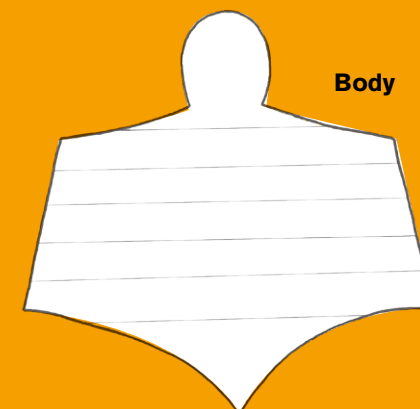
Wings



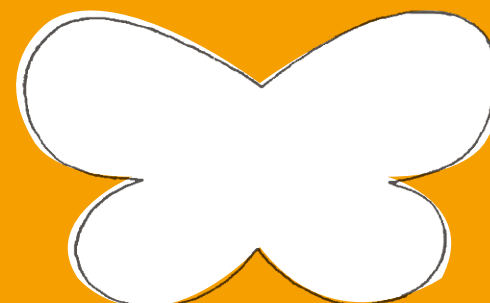
Body



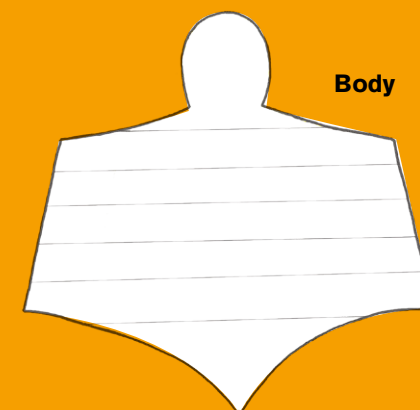
Wings



Body



Wings



Body



1. Cut out your shapes.
2. Decorate the body and wings, remembering to decorate both sides of the wings as the underside will be seen as well.
3. Curve the body around your finger bringing the long straight sides together.
4. Stick the sides together with tape or glue. Get someone to help you with this.
5. Glue along the centre of the wings (on the underside) and stick along the centre of your body.
6. If you want to, gently curl the wings and pinch the head to give your bug more character.
7. Add legs/ antennae or any other accessories.



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