

PARENTS

Understanding & Telling Stories

What does 'Understanding and Telling Stories' mean?

Children need to learn to tell stories so that they can begin to create written stories later on. It is also essential for children to understand other people's stories.

Stories are important in making friends, as they are the way in which we tell people what we have done and engage in imaginative games.

Strategies to develop understanding and telling of stories

General Strategies

When telling stories or encouraging your child to tell them, try and remember to keep the story interesting by:

- Choosing something interesting to talk about
- Stress words to get a sense of expectancy e.g. "and **then....**" Or to emphasise something dramatic that has happened e.g. "... a big hairy **spider** came out!"
- Use words to describe how someone felt e.g. "... I got a big birthday cake. I was so happy"
- When your child is telling stories show that you are attending keenly. Encourage them to do the same.
- Get them to tell you about events that you don't know about e.g. a party

Understanding stories

Get your child to listen to stories told by an adult.

- **Keep it simple:** Keep your stories to this simple format i.e. introduction (who? where? what doing? when?), event (what happened?), conclusion.
- **Use variety:** Try and tell stories that have a variety of events e.g. personal experience (*e.g. On the weekend, my son was playing football in the house. He broke the table. I was very cross*) or fantasy (*One day a wizard was mixing spells in his castle, a bat came in the window and knocked over the spell pot. It went all over the wizard. The wizard turned into a frog and jumped out of the window*).
- **Ask questions:** See how much your child can remember of the story. You could use a story plan to help (see last sheet). Ask simple questions like the ones below. Start with the easiest question (listed below) and then try the harder levels.



Children's Integrated Speech & Language Therapy Service for Hackney and the City

Set the Scene.....

Who?
Where?
When?

The Events:

What happened?
How did it happen?
Why did it happen?
What was done about it?
How did she feel?
What might happen next?

How did it all end up?;

How were problems solved?

How did the characters feel in the end and why?

Why did that happen?

What would have happened if...?

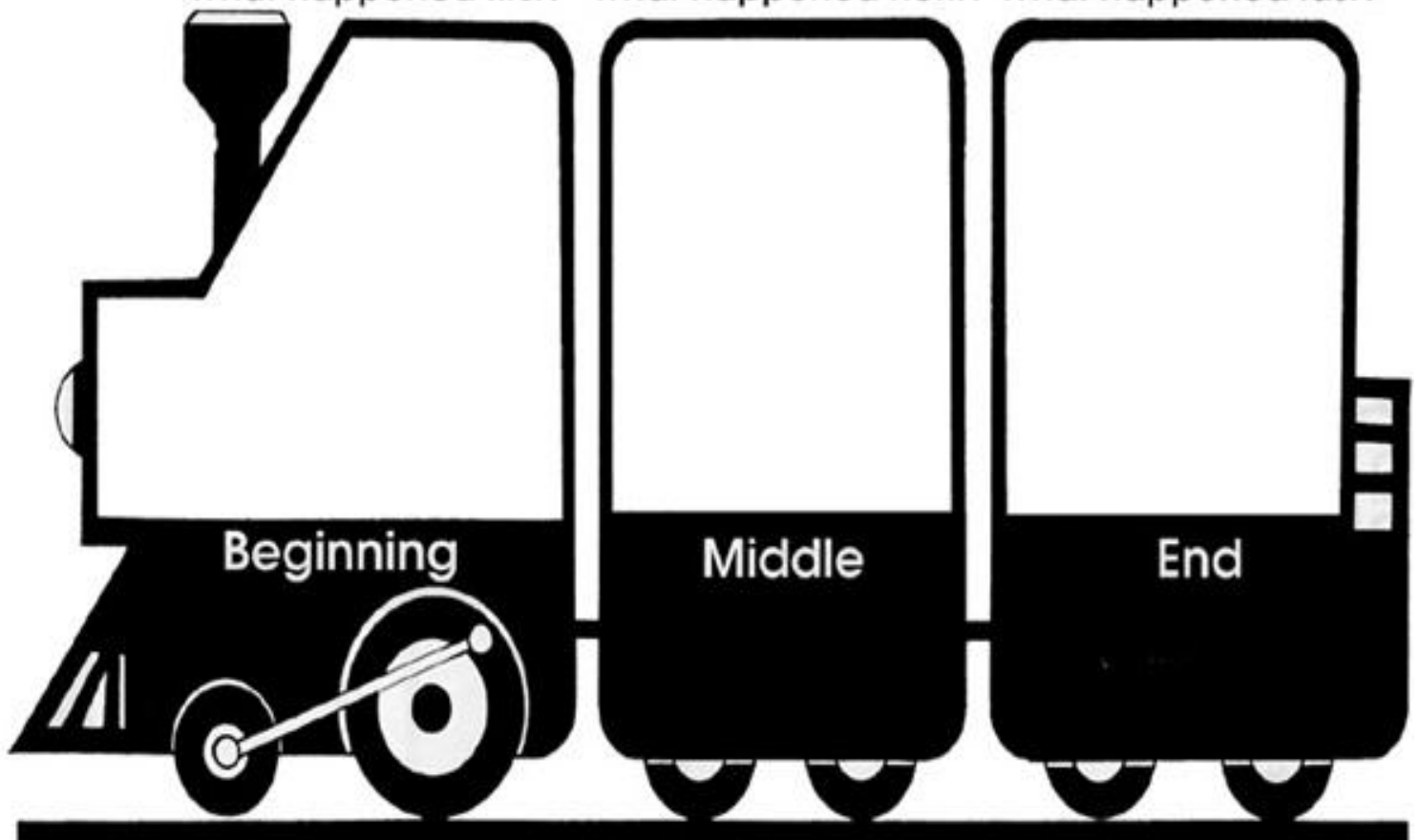
What could she have done?

Name:

Title:

Story Train

What happened first? What happened next? What happened last?



Description:

Children's Integrated Speech & Language Therapy Service for Hackney and the City

How to tell a story

Using the 'story plan' (see last sheet)

- **Think of a story:** Help your child to choose a story to tell. They could tell a made up story or tell about events that have happened to them. If you can, help them to share about an event that you don't know about (e.g. a party). This makes for more interesting story telling. If they are stuck for ideas, get them to draw pictures of people, places or someone doing something on separate pieces of paper. Pick one or more of these to help make up a story.
- **Going through the first few boxes:** Work together with your child and look at the first few boxes on the story plan, thinking about the story you are both telling. You can start off the story by giving one or two elements e.g. *Who? What doing?* Or just by giving a title e.g. *The day I lost my mummy*.
Help keep the child focused on the story you are making up by going over the parts you have already decided.
- **The main idea:** See if your child can say what the "main idea" of the story is. Talk about the "main idea". The "main idea" should be short and simple e.g. *It's all about the girl getting lost*. If your child starts adding irrelevant information, talk again about the "main idea". This skill is learnt just through repetition and discussing the story.
- **Retelling:** When you have filled in all the pictures get your child to retell the story. Try not to interrupt them but listen attentively and any siblings/family members to do the same. If they need help try just to repeat the last thing that they said with a rising intonation (indicating that the sentence is not finished). Save direct questions as a very last resort. Direct questioning tends to stop children telling good stories.
- **Retell the story yourself:** Keep your story simple and to the point. Make sure you include "and then" frequently as this will help the story flow clearly (you can move on to using "so" and "because" later on), e.g. "One day there was a girl called Nina. She was playing with her toys in her bedroom *and then* all the lights went out. *And then* she felt really scared. *And then* mum came with a candle *and then* they played together. *In the end* the lights came back on."
- **Making it interesting:** Keep the story interesting but make sure that you tell it in an interesting way. Have dramatic pauses, exaggerate e.g. "a huge spider" or repeat words e.g. "a big, big, big..." and vary your intonation.
- **Variations:** You can also try and get your child to tell a story without talking the story through first. Draw in the details of what they told you, in the relevant boxes. Talk about the missing information **after** they have told the story and get them to retell the story including the additional information.

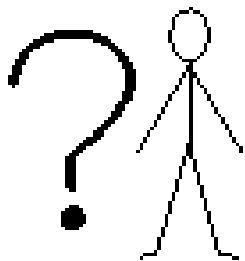
Activities to develop understanding and telling story skills

Visual prompts children who struggle to organise their thoughts or express their thoughts concisely:

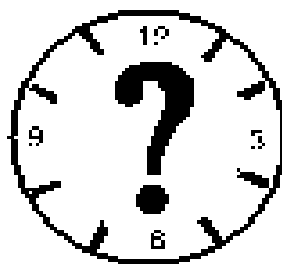
- The aim of this is to prompt your child to include all key elements in the narrative.
- This can be used during story planning.
- Information can be filled in on the sheet (full size copy attached).

Symbol prompts children with poor understanding:

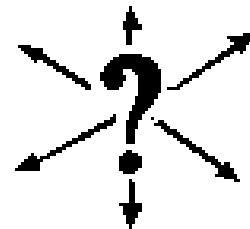
Using pictures and symbols provides extra explanation and helps pupils with stronger visual memory .



Who?



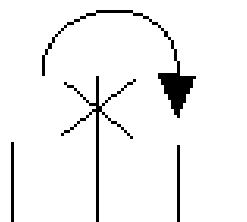
When?



Where?



What happened?



next?



Was there a problem?



why?



How did the people/characters feel?

Children's Integrated Speech & Language Therapy Service for Hackney and the City

Who?

What doing?

Where?

and then.....

.....in the end

