



Early Learning Areas / Literacy

Acting Out & Retelling Stories



Dear Elizabeth,

I have a 2-year-old son & I read to him every day. What else should I be doing to prepare him to learn to read?

– **Raymeesha Dula**

Elizabeth's Tips



Elizabeth Sanchez

Host

- Encourage your child to retell or replay favorite stories or make up his own
- Provide simple props & help your child plan his stories
- Be an appreciative audience

Expert Advice



Faith Polk, Ph.D.

Educational consultant

Children acquire many skills from acting out stories. Children’s oral language skills—vocabulary and narrative understanding—are enhanced. These skills are identified as key predictors in reading skills; they are the basis for comprehension. In addition, children learn about sequencing and story elements.

Retelling stories fosters the same skills. However, for young children acting out stories may be easier, because there are concrete objects and actions associated with the words. Story retelling can be supported with small representations of characters and important elements, for example felt board pieces or dramatic play props. Children find deeper meaning in stories as they retell them. They become part of the stories, interacting with materials, and this engagement creates a deeper, more personal understanding of the story.

Encourage Acting Out & Retelling Stories

There are many things adults can do to encourage retelling and acting out stories. Adults can read and or tell stories that are interesting and repetitive in nature. Providing props and time to retell or act out stories will encourage children to engage in this process. Have fun and engage in the activity with the children.

Making Up Stories

When children create their own stories they are demonstrating their understanding of narrative. This is one way children share about their lives. If teachers record these stories in print, children begin to understand that speech can be written.

Adults should permit innovations to belong to the children. This means that there really are no inaccuracies. The innovation is the child's story from his or her perspective.

Using Props

While props are not necessary, they are certainly useful. The more concrete cues we can provide the children, the more comfortable are in retelling the story. The props assist the children in making the stories come alive.

Positive Feedback

When responding to kids' stories, remember to be positive. Provide children specific feedback about their abilities as storytellers. For example, at the conclusion of the performance, say "What great storytellers you are!"

Child Care Provider Comments



Michelle Jedlick

Taylor, my four-year-old daughter, is really big into the princess thing. She will dress up, twirl around, sing, and make up her own version of those stories where she's the princess and she'll meet a prince. She also has a book about cats that she really likes to act out. She will crawl on her hands and knees and pretend to be a cat. Her dad is a police officer so she will sometimes make up stories about being a police officer.



Verdis Ferraro

Child care provider for 23 years

We act things out so the stories can become three dimensional. One story we act out often is "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." We will get out three chairs, and three bowls. One person gets to be Goldilocks, and the other kids get to play the three bears. When we do "The Three Little Pigs," someone gets to play the Big Bad Wolf. The kids will get three boxes that will be their houses. The wolf gets to blow them down. It makes the story real to them and gives it a new dimension. Instead of a flat page on a book, it becomes dramatic play. They can be characters, and really use their individual personalities to express themselves in new way.



Patsi Simon

My grandkids like to act out stories a lot. They are quite creative. They can't read so they usually retell things from memory, or make stories up. They have really big imaginations. I do an activity with them called "Stories by Starlight." I have a collection of books about the moon. We'll read a story and sometimes they will act it out, or tell one of their own. When there is a full moon, we go outside and tell stories about the moon by the fire. They get to wear their pajamas. They love it – it's pretty special.

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