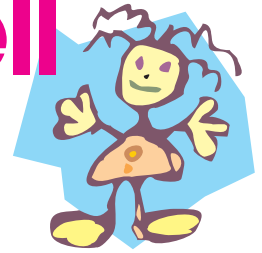




A Story to Tell



| BY ROBIN DEROSA LUNDGREN |

Here's What You Need:

- Paper and pen or pencil to write a story
- Any size and color paper for the pages of the book
- Crayons, markers, photos, glue, paints, magazines to cut pictures out of, etc.

What to do:

1. Talk to your child about his favorite book. What does **he** like about the story? Is it funny or serious? Is it told in rhyme? Ask your child to summarize a story he likes. How does it begin? What happens next? How does it end?
2. Have your child brainstorm what to write about and make a list of ideas. (Parents can do the writing for younger children). Ask your child to identify what she thinks will make an interesting story.
3. Instruct your child to outline the beginning, middle and end of **her** story. Then have your child write the story, filling in details to make it more interesting. Encourage your child by asking questions to elicit more detail. What if this happened? What happened next? (Younger children can dictate their story to a parent.)
4. Help your child decide how to make the book. What kind of paper does he want to use? Will the book be big or small? Ideas and instructions for different kinds of books can be found at www.makingbooks.com.
5. Have your child break her story down into sections, considering what will be on each page. Ask her to read her story and think about how she might illustrate each section.
6. Have your child copy each section of his story onto separate pieces of paper and illustrate each page using markers, crayons, photos and pictures from magazines.
7. Encourage your child to make a cover for the book. She might also want to make a title page and an "About the Author" page. She can even glue a picture of herself on the "About the Author" page.
8. Help your child bind his story pages together using staples, yarn or string.

9. Make it an event. Have your child share his or her finished story with family members and friends.

How this Helps:

This activity can aid in stimulating a child's cognitive skills, the mental process of knowing by developing awareness, perception and reasoning. These abilities are engaged when a child invents his or her very own story, as well as by recalling and retelling an event with a beginning, middle and an end.

Fine motor skills, the use of small muscle movements in the hands that occur in coordination with eyes, are targeted in this activity. These skills are practiced when children explore writing/drawing utensils, write words in a defined space on their book pages and create representational drawings to depict their very own words.

Language, the expressive ability to communicate ideas and needs, and the receptive ability to understand what is said or written, is clearly focused on in this activity. Recalling or imagining an event and then processing the idea into descriptive words to be put on paper are language enriched activities that are great practice for children of all skill levels.

Social emotional development involves a child's feelings of self worth and confidence. This activity is sure to instill a great sense of accomplishment. Not only will children have great fun exploring their imaginations and putting their thoughts down on paper, but they will also have their very own book to read quietly to themselves or out loud to adoring friends and family.

This monthly family activity series, "Hands-on-Kids!" is brought to you by a partnership between the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia (CMNOVA) and FAMILY Magazine. For more activities you can do with your children to spark their love of learning, visit the CMNOVA web site, www.cmnova.org. On their web site you will also find information about the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia and how you can become involved. CMNOVA is committed to building a place where our children can freely explore and develop a lifelong love of learning. Robin DeRosa Lundgren, a CMNOVA volunteer, is Vice President of Aquarian Entertainment and creator of the kids' cooking show "Culinary Kids".

The next time your kids want to hear a story, turn the tables and let them spin you a yarn instead.

Most children love to tell stories about themselves and their experiences. This love of storytelling, coupled with a natural inclination to embellish, makes kids natural fiction writers. A fun way to preserve their elaborate tales is in the form of a homemade book.

Making a book will give your children a feeling of pride in their experiences and point of view. It also gives them the chance to practice writing, drawing and opportunity to explore their unique creativity.

"Storytelling allows students to have an outlet for sharing an experience," says Tara Belke, reading specialist at Forestville Elementary School in Great Falls, Va.. "When a student retells a personal experience, they are working on retelling and aiding in their own understanding of necessary skills."

Skills involved in making a book include brainstorming or coming up with a list of ideas to write about; organizing a story sequentially with a beginning, middle and end; editing and illustrating. These skills really sink in when kids are writing about their own experiences because "they have a personal, vested interest in the project," Belke says.

A homemade book can feature a story, poem, diary, travel journal or cartoon. It can be an accurate retelling of an experience or it can be completely made up. Homemade books can be made on construction paper, newsprint or cardstock and can take a variety of formats. Look through different books with your child, pointing out the differences and similarities. Use this conversation as a starting point for guiding your child in creating a book.

Once your child's story is written, he will enjoy drawing pictures to go with it. "The illustrations bring life to the student's words," Belke notes. Pictures also aid in comprehension. Provide children with a variety of materials such as paints, crayons, markers, photos or pictures cut out from magazines to illustrate their story.

When your child's book is finished, read it together and share it with family and friends. Your child's homemade book is sure to be at the top of your family's personal bestsellers list!