

How to learn to tell a story

Storytelling is about having the confidence to tell a story in a way that hooks each listener, draws them in and encourages their imagination to take flight. It is simple to learn to tell a short story and once you've got the hang of simple retelling you'll soon be able to tell longer and more involved tales and invent your own. Simple traditional stories are a good place to start. For example, you'll probably feel comfortable with *The three little pigs* or *Little Red Riding Hood* which have a simple structure.

There are many ways to learn and retell a story – you need to find the way that works best for you. Most people find it is best to remember the main things that happen before practising talking the story through.

At The Story Museum we usually suggest four steps

1. Hear
2. Map
3. Step
4. Speak

1. Listen to the story without making notes, picturing what happens in your mind as you listen.
2. Then 'map' the tale on paper, drawing quick pictures of the key stages of the story with stick-men. Don't worry how the storyteller has described people or places. You just need to remember the characters and the sequence of events. If you can't do this right away then just listen to the story again. Visualising the stages of the story is a great technique, and seeing the pictures helps you to remember it.
3. Next practice 'stepping' the story, physically moving from one story happening to the next so that as you tell the story out loud to yourself you take a step forward for each important event in the story (or picture on the map). Remember the main story steps with a sentence and a movement. Stepping' through a story is a great way to learn to retell a story, especially for learners who like to move their bodies.
4. Once you can step the story you are ready to tell it. Some people prefer to practice alone, others like to share the story with a friend. Then you will be ready to tell it to your chosen audience. The more you tell it, the more it will grow and improve as you make the story your own, describing the characters and settings as you see them in your imagination.

Now, this has become YOUR story and it will be different from the original version. Every time you tell the story you will shape it further and it will change. It will also change according to the audience listening to you. You might also like to try adapting the story or even inventing an entirely new tale.

Happy storytelling.

