

## Suggestions to Help You Learn Your Story

1. Read your story out loud over and over again.
2. Make a bare bones outline or pictorial graphic organizer of the story to help you visualize the sequence of images and events. Practice telling the story with the help of your story map.  
(Apps and website you could use instead for Bare bones: Popplets, Educreations, Padlet.com)
3. Try recording your voice using an app such as Voice Record Pro (free) or your recorder on your computer. Read your story into it and then listen to it over and over again. Listen to your voice for expression, pacing, pauses, and clarity.
4. The beginning and ending of your story are very important – practice how you will begin and how you will end – place those images in your mind to help you out. My may even want to memorize the first and last lines of your story so that you can begin and end the story with confidence.
5. You must then learn the plot of your story so that you feel very comfortable telling it. We encourage you to tell the story in your own words. Just be sure to choose simple, powerful language that has the same feeling as the style of the story. Write down the vocabulary that will work for you story to help the listeners “see” the story in their minds. Remember to use your 5 senses when telling (smell, hear, touch, taste, see).
6. A big mistake beginners make in telling stories and writing stories is the overuse of pronouns. Example – “He said that they were all playing over there and she was the one who got them in trouble.” I don’t know about you but I don’t know who or what that sentence is about! Make sure you use details and stay away from the pronouns as much as possible.
7. Some stories may have a part where the audience can join in. For Example, there may be a song or verse which is repeated several times, such as, “I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down” from *The Three Little Pigs*. Younger children especially love to participate in a story. If you want the audience to help you, encourage them by saying, for example, “Please join in on this part.” Or “Let’s try that together.”
8. Summary of ways of practicing:
  - a. Tell your story whenever you get a chance and to anyone who will listen. The more you tell, the more it will become a part of you. Telling is the only way to discover the places in your story where your memory fails you. Telling your story to listeners will show you other places where you’ll want to work to improve your telling. Ask listeners to point out nervous habits or any other movements that distract them from the story.
  - b. Try telling into a recording device (apps, computer)
  - c. Try telling with an imaginary audience or set up your stuffed animals – look all around the room, and don’t stop during the telling.
9. Over learn your story! Think it through anytime you have a spare minute – while riding the bus, or walking to school, or taking out the garbage. The story will become a part of you, and you will feel confident when you get up in front of the group to tell it. Practice your story at least three times a day until you know it, and then once a day to keep it fresh in your mind.
10. Enjoy! You’ll find out that each time you tell the story to a different audience, you’ll tell your story differently. I can’t wait to hear you!!

## TELL Your Story: Storytelling Techniques and Tips

### *Voice – use it or lose it*

- Voice has expression. Practice reading sentences with angry, sad, frightened, surprised, excited, and frustrated, confused, and so on. Nothing will make listeners lose interest more quickly than someone speaking in a monotone.
- Although you should always speak loudly enough so that all your listeners can hear you, you must be sure to vary the volume of your voice. You may speak louder for effect while at other times you'll want to have a softer voice. See what works best through out your story. Practice different volumes to see which is most effective.
- Vary your rhythm or tempo
  - Try not to rush or go too slowly when telling the story.
  - When there's a lot of exciting action you'll want to speak more quickly. When events are urgent speak of them with urgency. But there are times when you will want to speak slowly to create a feeling of suspense and anticipation.
  - Be brave enough to use silence when it's called for. This can be the most effective moment in a story. It creates intensity and allows the listener a chance to breathe.

### *Eye Contact*

- It is very important that you look at your listeners as you tell the story. This makes them feel involved in the story and you will be able to see enjoyment of the story in their eyes. If you have a large audience, pan your head from each side so everyone knows you are talking to them.

### *Body Language: Use of Gestures to Enhance Your Story*

- Keep gestures simple. Remember, you are telling a story, not acting one out on a stage. What comes naturally to you when you are telling a story – facial changes, hands move, pointing, etc. Remember that any gestures you use should help listeners create better pictures in their minds, not cause them to focus more on you jumping up and down.
- Here's some examples:

- She pointed to the moon in the sky. (Point over the heads of the audience and pretend to actually see the moon)
- She pulled and she pulled and she pulled until she couldn't pull anymore (bend and pretend you're pulling each time)
- **Beginnings:** Walk up in front of your listeners with confidence, take a breath, look at your audience, and then say "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm going to tell you the story of \_\_\_\_\_," or any appropriate introduction.
- **Endings:** A strong ending will leave your audience feeling that the story had power. Finish the story with assurance. Wait for the audience to acknowledge your performance before returning to your seat. Take a short bow if you'd like, and say, "Thank you." If you feel your story doesn't have a clear ending you may need to pause a second and say "How about a hand for the story I just told?"
- If you forget a part of your story, don't panic. Just pause, picture where you left off, and then go on.

## **Resources used in the Workshop**

*Favorite Folktales from around the World*, edited by Jane Yolen

*Grimms Complete Fairy Tales*

*Len Cabral's Storytelling Book* by Len Cabral and Mia Manduca

*Stories in My Pocket: Tales Kids Can Tell* by Martha Hamilton & Mitch Weiss

*The Storyteller's Guide* by Bill Mooney and David Hold