

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: How do I develop my child's story writing skills?

Stories play an important part in a child's language and literacy development. The better your child understands the structure of stories and the difference between written and oral language, the better stories they will write.



To help your child understand the structure of stories and the characteristics of written language, try these ideas:

Encourage your child to read widely. Offer books about your child's interests but also offer good quality, well written books. Ask your local or school librarian for good books suited to your child's age, ability level and interest. If your child does not like to read, read aloud to them. Children can't read at the level of their understanding until around ten years of age so keep reading to them even when they are learning to read themselves. Read aloud books which are more complex than the ones your child can read themselves. Try books on tape or CD too, which you can borrow from libraries.

Talk about the structure of stories as you read. You can also talk about the structure of stories in things like movies and TV shows. Talk about:

- the beginning, middle and end
- the characters and settings
- the central problem of the story
- the character's reaction to the problem
- their plans, intentions and attempts to solve the problem
- cause and effect relationships between parts of the story, what happens and how does that effect what happens next



Talk about the differences between written and spoken language and look for examples as you read. Perhaps compare a book and a movie of the same story. Some of the differences are:

- written language uses more complete sentences
- written language uses words to provide detail and context, because the reader cannot see what the writer is experiencing
- written language needs referencing of information such as if a person is talking or thinking "he said" or "thought the girl" is used to reference the speech or thoughts
- stories are usually told in past tense. Conjunctions (joining words) provide important information about how the different parts of the story tie together in time (next, suddenly, later, before that) and cause effect (because, even though, however).

To help your child to write stories try these ideas:

Use a story map to plan the story first. Your child probably uses these in class and your child's teacher may be able to give you a copy of the ones they typically use. You can download free printable story maps and other planners for writing from this site <http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/graphic-organizers.html>

Use a visual to help your child generate ideas. This might be a picture or series of pictures, a video clip, a picture book, an interesting photo or cartoon. Wordless story books work well and are available at libraries. Your child could draw a picture or take a photo themselves to help them think of ideas.

Try talking through your child's story first. Put the ideas on a story map as you discuss them. Ask your child to tell you the story before they begin to write. Perhaps record the story as you go. Most mobile phones have a voice recording function.

Help your child to brainstorm, plan, draft and edit their story. Brainstorm ideas about the topic first. Write down all the ideas until you can't think of any more then mark the ones you like the best. Next put the ideas onto a story map and fill in the gaps with extra information. Draft the story. Don't be too fussy at this stage; rather try to keep the ideas flowing. Next read your draft aloud together as you edit and make changes. This helps your child hear any bits that don't make sense and any mistakes with grammar. Remember to edit for meaning as well as grammar, spelling and punctuation. Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Is there a better or more interesting word that could be used? Are there a range of different sentences rather than lots of sentences that are similar? Can you add some extra descriptive words or phrases to make it "sparkle"?

Present your story in an interesting way and share it with others. Try a voice recording; a video of your child reading their story; type, illustrate and print it with a computer; make a power point display.

To encourage reluctant writers:

- use topics around your child's interests such as favourite movie characters or sporting stars, topics such as space, dinosaurs, superheroes
- use your child's real life experiences and add a little imagination "remember when you went fishing with Dad, let's pretend you caught a whale"
- break it into manageable steps, "let's just write the first three sentences"
- don't start with a blank page, use the story maps and visuals
- reduce the amount of handwriting needed. Perhaps take turns to write one line each or let your child dictate the words and you type or write them down
- use a variety of interesting ways to present stories as listed above
- use literacy aides such as frequent word lists, spell checkers and word processors to help your child. Your child's teacher may be able to suggest suitable software to help your child write and spell if this is an area of difficulty
- publish, display and share your child's work

