

## 5 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE READING AND STORY-TELLING

Caroline, our Early Childhood Director in the UK, shares five simple ways you can support your child's reading and story-telling at home, building on their nursery experiences and sparking their imaginations...



Sharing stories and making up their own narratives is essential for young children of all ages; even if they can't yet read for themselves. What we aim to do at nursery is to give your child the 'story bug' so that they will be inspired to make up their own stories and read books for themselves.

Here are five ways you can encourage your child to read and enjoy stories:

### 1. STORY STONES

You will need:

- Medium-sized smooth or pebbles
- PVA glue
- Stickers, magazines and/or paints

**Step 1:** Let your child add stickers, or cut out suitable sized pictures from magazines or catalogues to stick onto the stones using PVA glue. Alternatively, your child might prefer to paint pictures on the stones.

**Step 2:** When they're dry, go over the stones with a coat of PVA glue to hold the pictures in place better and help to seal the paint.

**Step 3:** Put the decorated stones into a basket or box

**Step 4:** You choose a stone from the basket and pop it on the table. This is the starter for your story. For example: "Once upon a time there was a boy, he had a red cap and his name was Bob."

**Step 5:** Your child chooses a stone and adds to the story, for example: "Bob was walking down the road when he found an apple lying on the ground."

**Step 6:** Next person chooses a stone: "Bob decided that the apple was a magic apple. So he took a bite of the apple and made a wish. He wished that he could see a dragon. Hey presto, the dragon appeared, right there in front of Bob!"

And so the story continues.

Remember for very young children, a story doesn't have to be long. Three or four stones to make a story will be plenty. Older children in preschool will take the story much further.

You can make lots of [sets of story stones](#) and theme them, or if you'd prefer, there are several companies that sell them, such as [Rocky Starts](#) or [A Pebble and a Paintbox](#).

## 2. STORY SACKS

Make some props for your child's favourite story, to bring it to life. For example, 'Wow, Said the Owl'.

You can put all the resources into a bag along with the book so that your child can 'play' the story and read it over and over again.

For our 'Wow, Said the Owl' example, you will need:

- Toy owl
- Scarves or scraps of material in colours noted in the book (yellow, orange, green, blue, grey, white, black with stars)

You can buy story sacks, but it is so much more fun to make your own and lots cheaper. You probably have lots of bits and bobs around the house that you can use to illustrate your child's favourite stories.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar is a firm favourite and can involve real fruit and vegetables - great if you have young children that you're trying to encourage to eat more fruit!

Check out sites like [Pinterest](#) for more ideas.

## 3. RHYMING STORIES

Children love stories with a strong rhythm and rhyme. They like the predictability and guessing what the rhyming word might be. This helps them to discriminate sounds, ready for hearing initial sounds and sounds of letters within words.

Books such as 'Hairy Maclary' stories are excellent for rhyming. You should read the first sentence in the rhyme, then read the second sentence, emphasising the word that rhymes.

- For example, Hairy Maclary... from Donaldson's DAIRY.  
At the next rhyming couplet, emphasise the first rhyming word then wait for your child to finish off the second sentence.
- For example, Hairy Maclary from... (wait and help if necessary)  
As your child becomes more skilled, they will be able to complete more of the rhymes.

Other good strong rhyming stories are can be [found here](#).

#### **4. MAKE UP RHYMES AND SILLY SONGS**

When your child becomes more skilled at rhyming stories, you can make up your own silly rhymes. Be prepared for some funny words to come out though...

Billy, Silly, Milly, Willie (that'll cause a giggle!)  
Sun, Bun, Run, ...

#### **5. SOUNDS IN THE ENVIRONMENT**

Until your child has developed good listening skills, it will be really hard for them to hear the difference between letter sounds in words or at the beginning of words. So, to help, you can go on listening walks - in the garden, in town, to the park - anywhere. Every now and again, close your eyes and listen - what can you hear?

Birds singing, cars driving by, a police car siren... anything.

You could draw pictures of all the things you can hear or make a list. See if you can hear more things tomorrow or at the weekend.

Keep listening. It's good for school readiness.

As always, the most important thing is to make learning fun!