

## STORYHOUR SUGGESTIONS

### SET UP

Give the children their own space by using carpet squares or pillows if you can. The floor works better than having them in chairs. We make our own pillows using old bed pillows, which we cover in fleece. The covers are not fancy but have Velcro so they are easily removable for washing. This helps to define the listening area of your room, especially if it is a large one.

If you are doing crafts, save old shower curtains or vinyl tablecloths to cover tables. Cleanup goes much faster! Always try out your project before attempting it with the children to make sure it isn't too difficult to do and that you have all the necessary materials ready. Keep the sample to show the children so they will understand what you want them to do, but never insist that they have to make theirs look just like yours. Be sure to find something to praise about each child's creation (e.g. What a good idea you had to use that piece for ... ; I like the colors you chose; you are such a neat worker, etc.) Think simple. If it takes you all day to prepare, it's too complicated for storytime. Children like to use markers, glue, and glitter. Choose projects that don't require expensive supplies, have only a few steps and easy to follow instructions, or are open-ended activities with no right or wrong results.

### OPENING AND CLOSING

Give your storytime a predictable opening and closing so the children will know what to expect. This usually helps to settle them down so you can move right into your activities without a lot of discussion. I like to open and close with the same song each time. Some people also do an attendance check of some sort which helps you to learn names and figure out who is present. Name tags can be made out of construction paper and laminated or covered with contact paper so they can be re-used many times. Put the child's name on a piece of light colored tape with black magic marker. Make simple block letters so you can prompt the child to find his own. "Look for the red cat with a name that starts with a T" works even for pre-readers. Make sure you use enough distinctive shapes and colors that each tag is unique, or it will be frustrating for everyone. If you make a board of poster board or plywood and put strips of Velcro on the tags and on the board, the children can hang their tags and then take their seats ready to begin. A simpler alternative is to cut envelopes in half to make pockets which can be pasted on a large piece poster board. Have the child insert the tag in the envelope marked with his/her name. Another possibility is to write the children's names on a large poster board and give them a small sticker each week to put next to their name.

Other opening and closing suggestions:

Sing a song like Hap Palmer's "So Happy You're Here Today" from *So Big* or "Willoughby Wallaby Woo" from *Singable Songs for the Very Young* by Raffi (a fun one because it incorporates children's names). End storytime with "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star."

Let each child put the first letter of his/her name on a flannel or magnetic board.

Sing the song *The More We Get Together* with a couple changes in the second verse. Before singing the second verse, ask the kids to put their hands together to look like a book, then sing the second verse with "read together."

Verse 1:

The more we get together  
Together, together  
The more we get together  
The happier we'll be  
Cause your friends are my friends  
And my friends are your friends  
The more we get together  
The happier we'll be

Verse 2:

The more we read together  
Together, together  
The more we read together  
The happier we'll be  
Cause your friends are my friends  
And my friends are your friends  
The more we read together  
The happier we'll be

At the end of storytime, stamp each child's hand with a theme or library related rubber stamp.

## CRAFTS

Activities provide opportunities for interacting with the children and talking about stories but need not be elaborate. Don't forget to write the child's name on his project so he'll get the right one to take home. Ask first if they can do it themselves and help with spelling if needed. Demonstrate, assist, but don't do anything on a child's project that he can do himself – remember, it's his project, not yours.

### Night Skies

Give each child a piece of black construction paper. Put drops of glue on the paper and sprinkle on silver glitter for stars. Let each child have a few glow-in-the-dark stars (available at Ben Franklin and hobby stores) to place in his/her picture. Turn out the lights to admire the night sky. This is a very simple project with no preparation required, and the kids love it.

### Rain Pictures

Each child needs a piece of white construction paper, a paintbrush, and some water. Cut colored tissue paper into small pieces about two inches square. Place the tissue paper on the white paper, put a drop of water on the paintbrush, and apply it to the tissue paper. Presto! You have colored raindrops. Two year olds can do this, but older children also enjoy it. Older children can use strips of color and make a rainbow by placing several narrow strips of color in a row. Watch how much water is used, as too much will turn the pictures a muddy brown.

### **Wallpaper Picture Hunt**

Ask your local hardware store for an old wallpaper book. Decide on an object that can be made out of a few predictable shapes (dinosaur or other creature with a body, head, tail, legs; person with a torso, arms, legs, head; truck with a cab, box, wheels). Cut one set of the shapes out of a different kind of wallpaper for each child, making sure that the wallpaper pages you choose are quite distinctive so each child can recognize the objects in his pattern. Scatter the pieces around the room. Give each child a sample of the wallpaper he is to find. Let them search for the shapes that match their sample. When all have found their pieces, make a picture on a piece of construction paper with the shapes. Tell the children the shapes can be anything, and let them create whatever they wish with the shapes. If they want more help, say something like "I was thinking about dinosaurs when I cut out these shapes because of the stories we just read. What do YOU think they could be?" I always make a picture of how I envisioned the craft, which I show to the children and then put away so they will use their own imaginations.

### **Fuzzy ducks**

This one takes a little advance preparation. Trace a good sized foot on white construction paper. This will be the duck's body. Trace a hand, fingers spread, for the wings; each duck needs two. Provide extra orange paper for the children to cut out beaks and feet. Glue pieces together to make the duck. Give each child a white tissue and tell them to shread it into small pieces (they won't believe you are really telling them to make this sort of mess). Glue the small tissue pieces on the duck's body for a bird with fuzzy texture.

### **Giant Sized Art**

Think big. Trace each child on a piece of brown wrapping paper or newsprint for a life sized paper doll to color. Make sure to have help when you do this, since the children won't want to wait very long for a turn to be traced. This makes a great parent/child activity during a family storytime.

### **Rubbings**

Staple a piece of white copy paper to a piece of sturdier paper such as construction paper. Remove the wrappers from dark colored crayons. Collect leaves of various shapes and sizes to slip between the two layers of paper and show the children how to use the side of the crayon to rub over the leaves and leave an impression on the white paper. Be sure to have more leaves than you have children, since some will want to do one leaf at a time while others will choose to put several in at once before applying any crayon. Don't choose leaves that are so large there is not room for a child to do more than one rubbing on a page. Other fun things to trace come from the circulation desk: paper clips, rulers, keys, business cards.

### **Plastic Bag Butterflies**

Cut bright colored construction paper or tissue paper into pieces about ½ big. We throw in tiny circles cut with our paper punch, glitter, or anything else small and colorful we have around. Give each child a one-gallon plastic baggie to use as the wings of the butterfly. Bags with no zipper closing work the best; if they have one, cut it off.

Scramble the colored paper and have the children drop a couple of handfuls into the bag. Sprinkle in glitter if a shiny effect is desired. Fold the top of the bag over a few times and staple

shut. Use several staples and secure well. Each child needs a wooden clothespin with a spring for the butterfly body; decorate with markers and wiggle eyes. Scrunch the baggie in the middle and secure with the clothespin body. Use a chenille pipe cleaner for antennae and stick it in the top of the clothespin. These will stick on the refrigerator if you put a magnetic strip on the clothespin, or use the clothespin to hang them on a curtain in the window.

### **Halloween Ghosts**

For a Halloween take-home activity, make puppet ghosts. Each child gets two white paper napkins and a rubber band. The first napkin is opened up and crumpled into a small ball (head). The second napkin is opened and spread out on the floor. Place the head in the center. Pull the first napkin around the head and use the rubber band to hold it. Put a finger inside the head and the whole arm becomes a ghost. With a dark crayon, make a face.

### **Sponge Prints**

A bag of cheap sponges cut into shapes can be dipped in poster paint for printing – sponges hold less paint than do potatoes, so it's much less messy. Put paint out in shallow containers so only a little gets on the sponge to start with.

### **Blow Art**

Mix food coloring with a little water to make a thin paint. Give each child a small amount on white construction paper. Using a straw, blow the paint around the paper to create a picture. Great fun!

### **Pizza**

Cut paper plates into fourths. Let children glue pre-cut pizza toppings like a red glob shape for sauce and a smaller yellow one for cheese, orange circles for pepperoni, green strips for pepper, fish shapes for anchovies, etc.

### **Puppets**

I do a lot of puppets because they are a great way to extend the story. The puppets can be as simple as photocopying the characters of a particular story, coloring them and gluing them to a craft stick to more elaborate ones from different craft websites.

[www.daniellesplace.com/html/puppets.html](http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/puppets.html)

[www.dltk-kids.com/type/paper\\_bag.htm](http://www.dltk-kids.com/type/paper_bag.htm)

[http://familycrafts.about.com/od/puppets/Puppet\\_Craft\\_Projects.htm](http://familycrafts.about.com/od/puppets/Puppet_Craft_Projects.htm)

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Sorting**

Let the children sort a bowl containing various shapes and colors of pasta. Sorting can be done with so many items - buttons, plastic animals, rocks. Sort by color, shape, or by size. Possibilities are endless!

## **Hunts**

Draw a map of your story time room. Hide a basket of treasure (like stickers) somewhere in the room. Draw a red lined “path” on the map that goes over, under, and around the furniture in the room, ending at the treasure. Give each child a map and have them follow the path (and you) to the treasure. Make sure to use the terms around, under, etc. on your “journey.”

For a fun summertime activity, hide a whole watermelon in your meeting room before storytime. Read books about dinosaurs, then tell the children to hunt for a dinosaur egg. After the watermelon is found, cut it up for a special treat.

## **Bubble Cup**

From Trudy Nichols *STORYTIME FOR TWO YEAR OLDS* (ALA, 1998. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)

This is the all-time best activity we’ve ever used in storytime! You will need 5 oz plastic cups for each child (Dixie paper cups are not sturdy enough). Punch a hole in the side of the cup one inch from the top. Insert a plastic straw in the hole; it should fit snugly. Cut squares of cotton fabric large enough to fit over the top of the cups and secure with a rubber band. With a spray bottle, moisten the cloth with water. Smear a little liquid dish soap on the fabric and blow. No mess, lots of bubbles, nobody swallows soap by mistake, and it can be rejuvenated with more soap and water as needed. If it doesn’t blow well, check to see if the straw is bent or if more soap and water is needed. For best results, do not use fabric with a very tight weave.

## **Noisemakers**

Martin Waddell’s *THE HAPPY HEDGEHOG BAND* (Candlewick, 1992) is an easy story to act out, but everyone will want something to use as a noisemaker. Good sounds are wooden spoons on a metal pot, two tin cans with ridges (put a smaller one inside a slightly larger one and pull apart and push together with a rapid motion); and two wooden sticks to hit against each other. Be sure to have enough things so everyone will have something to make a noise with. Read the story aloud first, distribute instruments, and then read it a second time as you lead the “parade” on a noisy romp around the room.

## **Pockets**

Eve Rice’s *PETER’S POCKETS* (Greenwillow, 1989) is a favorite story for us. Give each child a pocket made from a brown paper lunch sack with a pie shaped wedge cut off one top corner. Hide things around the room for children to hunt for and keep in their pockets. Stickers, feathers, unusual stones, leaves, bookmarks, or other goodies left over from other events are all interesting finds. Tell the children they are hunting for one of each item and be prepared to supervise, as somebody always tries to scoop up all the items. The pockets can be colored first with markers or crayons and can be pinned on their clothes with large safety pins.

## **GAMES**

### **The Bakery Shop Game**

Cut out construction paper doughnuts of several different colors. If you expect to keep them to play this game more than once, cover them with contact paper. Spread them out on the floor in front of you and explain to the children that when you do the chant, you will use the name of a

child who is present. That child may come up and select one doughnut to hold onto until the game is over. Store doughnuts in a bag and have the children return their doughnuts to the bag when done.

### **Bakery Shop Chant**

Down around the corner	<i>Point to the right</i>
In the bakery shop	
There were ten little doughnuts	<i>Hold up ten fingers</i>
With sugar on top	<i>Make sweeping motion over an imaginary doughnut</i>
Along came (name) all alone,	
S/he grabbed a (color)	<i>Clap hands together once</i>
And ran on home.	

### **Who's That Knocking at My Door - Guessing Game**

From Trudy Nichols' STORYTIME FOR TWO YEAR OLDS. (ALA, 1998. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)

Find pictures of animals small children will know in coloring books, books on farm animals, advertisements in magazines, or trace cookie cutters. Glue to uniform size sturdy paper (old file folders are great for this). You can also use flannel board animals that the children can place on the board.

### **Who's That Knocking at My Door?**

Who's that knocking at my door?	<i>Make knocking motion</i>
Who's that knocking at my door?	
Who's that knocking at my door?	
Guess who is out there?	
<i>Chant and clap – KNOCK, KNOCK!</i>	
<b>WHO'S THERE?</b>	
<i>MEOW! (Make the sound of an animal whose picture you are holding facing you so the children can't see)</i>	
<i>IT'S A ... (let them guess).</i>	

Repeat with other animals. You can also use sounds of a ghost, a train, or anything else with a sound you can make. Toddlers love this. About six guesses is enough; leave them asking for more and repeat the game next time.

### **I See Something**

Save easily identifiable pictures from old magazines. If you want to use them more than once, paste to construction paper backs. Attach to the walls of your storytime room where all the children can see them. Explain to the children that you will be using words to describe one picture and you want them to look around and tell you what that picture is. Caution them not to

leave their seats as this requires using only their eyes. Easy things to use include food, animals, and vehicles. The best pictures are colorful and do not have a lot of detail.

## MUSIC

Children love to sing and don't care if you can't. Play recordings if you want, but singing it yourself is better. Try to do a book that is a song almost every week with toddlers. Talk it through the first time so everyone knows what the story is about, and have the grownups sing it with you the second time. Weeks you don't sing a book, do singing games such as the Hokey Pokey or I'm A Little Teapot. Think back to your days at camp and make up words to go with tunes you can sing. I'm A Little Teapot can be adapted to any theme imaginable; change teapot to spaceship, dinosaur, or snowman and ask the children to give you ideas. Mother Goose songs are particularly suited for this re-working.

Carol Chatfield (with ideas contributed by Karin Gottshall and Cheryl Eling),  
Ilsley Public Library, Middlebury, VT  
August, 2001

With updates from Cheryl Cox of the Springfield Town Library, and Kathy Dulac of the Milton  
Public Library, 2013

StorytellerSurvivalKit/StoryhourSuggestions13



This publication is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services,  
a federal agency, through the Library Services and Technology Act.

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