



Outdoor Education Tip: Telling Engaging Stories

Want a good trick to get children’s attention? Just say, “Who wants to hear a story?” Little ones and big ones alike will be eager to get comfy and hear what magical tales are up your sleeves. “But I’m not a good storyteller,” you may say...

Here are a few tips we’ve picked up along the way to help you become a fun, increasingly dynamic storyteller, at home or in a virtual learning space.

Share Your Own Nature Connection Stories.

You have 15+ years of nature connections and kids want to hear about all the details that make you who you are today. Curiosity and taking an interest in nature is contagious!

Structural Repetition. Stories often become more engaging when they have a chorus section that keeps repeating. For example, the wind went “voosh! voosh!” and the rain went “drip, drip, drip!” This can be particularly engaging for younger audiences and a great way to get them involved.

Sounds Effects. Using strange sounds can be a great way to bring out everyone’s silliness. To encourage children’s involvement, you can also ask them to mimic sounds after you make them.

Volume. Many of us might remember the teacher from Charlie Brown who just mumbled in monotone – we don’t have to be like that! Use your full range of sound as you move through the peaks and valleys of a story. And don’t forget the quiet sounds! Sometimes the most engaging part a story is when the storytelling goes down to a whisper.

Levels. Jumping up, laying down, crouching, moving from side to side, your living room or computer screen is a stage when you’re storytelling! Try to experiment with occupying high, medium and low places which can make your story all the more fun to watch.

Voices. Using different voices can be a super fun part of storytelling, but it can also get out of hand. We like to keep it simple and use 3 different types, a high, regular and low voice to help distinguish between characters and to avoid attempting difficult voices we can’t maintain.

Ask Questions. Putting the story on pause and asking a question out of character can be a great way to reinforce learnings or emphasize different parts of the story. Kids can also feel more part of the journey if they’re asked the same questions as the characters!

Use Attention Grabbers. Groups can get a bit wild, we’ve all been there! Use attention grabbers such as “If you can hear me clap ___” and “If you can hear me show me your fox ears” to refocus groups and bring them back into the story. Ask groups to take deep breaths, quiet your voice and slow your pace to help encourage a more relaxed learning space.

Try Group Stories. Take turns asking kids for a nature sighting or a question that relates to a theme. Try a one word story where each person contributes a word. Our favourite is the “Fill in the Blank Story” which we’ve included a description of on the next page!

HOW TO TELL A FILL IN THE BLANK STORY

This type of story is a great way to get kids involved in story creation, that can be done at home or in a virtual learning space.

1. Ask “Would you like to hear a story?”
2. Say “I am going to need your help with this story. When I pause, I want you to shout out what should go in the blank.”

Q: Once upon a time there lived a...? **A:** “Pig”

Q: Once upon a time there lived a pig. And the pig was feeling...? **A:** “Hungry!”

3. The key to this activity is **repetition**. Every time you add a 2-3 new parts go back to the beginning and say the whole story together. It's also a great way to get children more invested and build energy!

Repeat to the group and let them fill the blank together: Once upon a time there lived a...? “Pig!”
And the pig was feeling...? “Hungry!”



Play this game until it comes to a natural end, or if the story starts to get too off track, you can just say “The end!”. With older children or additional facilitators, you can also split into groups (this can be done in breakout groups virtually, too!) to create a story and come together at the end to share.

Happy Storytelling!