

Narrative Skills

Narratives Skills Develop in Five Stages:

1. **Labeling**—child names items, uses repetitive, similar sentence structures in random order.
2. **Listing**—stories are topic-centered, child uses verbs that list actions of characters and connecting words.
3. **Connecting**—stories focus around a central topic. Character actions link to related characters or events. Events are not sequenced in a specific order.
4. **Sequencing**—these stories answer “when” and “why” questions using “but” and “because” answers. Events are sequenced in time.
5. **Narrating**—includes all previous levels as well as developed plots with evidence of planning to reach the end of the story.



Narrative Skills is the ability to describe things and events, and to tell stories.

Use Props to Develop Narrative Skills

Children will enjoy using props to tell stories. Here are some ideas:

- Pictures/photographs
- Sequences of pictures
- Wordless picture books
- Puppets
- Miniature items
- Dramatic play “scenes”
- Items that are valued by child
- Blocks and other constructive play materials
- Drawing, painting and stamping materials
- Flannel/felt boards

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Strategies to Support Stages of Narrative Development

	Labeling	Listing	Connecting	Sequencing	Narrating
Modeling, Questioning and Dialogue	Child (pointing to book) “dog” Adult: “Yes, a brown dog.”	Ask closed questions “What was at the park?” and open questions “Tell me about the park”.	Invite children to dictate stories about a fire fighter after visiting the fire department.	Ask cause and effect questions “What happened when the boy kicked the ball?” and sequencing questions “What happened next?”	Tell stories and demonstrate story elements with puppets, hats and miniature objects or story apron. Children draw pictures while listening to stories. Use questions to prompt prediction.
Adult-directed activities	Use a mystery bag for child to feel and label objects. Ask child to explain objects and paintings.	Review activities at the end of the day. Use the child’s words to make a newsletter.	Designate a “story writing person” to record children’s stories in writing centre. Make characters and props with play dough.	Encourage kinaesthetic activities such as drawing, painting or stamping.	Provide trays with miniature items representing elements of a story. Create pictorial story maps. Use wordless picture books. Provide story starters Write class stories.
Reading aloud or shared book reading	Label and respond to pictures based on child’s interests.	Read themed books of varied genres. Ask questions to link characteristics of characters to child experiences.	Ask questions to connect characters with events.	Share cumulative books (i.e., I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly) and circular stories (i.e., If you Give a Mouse a Cookie)	Read folktales with predictability, sequencing and cause and effect.
Guiding Symbolic Play	Prompt child with questions, “What’s that? What are they doing?”	Encourage grouping of related concepts and objects (e.g. restaurant vocabulary)	Incorporate miniature items into the constructive play area.	Use miniature objects with question prompts (e.g. What happens next?)	Provide props in dramatic play area to act out stories read aloud in class.
Personal Narrative Construction and Providing an Audience	Sharing time— allow children to bring in special personal items and talk about them.	Send home a stuffed animal over a weekend with a note to parents to write about the animal’s adventures. The child will then tell the story.	Talk Time—teacher sits with children at the snack table, presents a topic and invites each child to contribute. Adult expands and links children’s contributions.	Encourage show and tell with objects that are hand-made, collected or researched. Prompt with “when, why, how” questions.	Encourage telling stories about personal experiences such as vacations, seasonal activities or a class trip which can be shared in pairs, small groups, or at circle time.