

# Storytelling can make your child smarter!

What's the most beneficial thing you can do to help boost your child's learning and grades at school? Extra tuition for them? Parental training or coaching for you? According to National Literacy hero, Ofsted Outstanding Schools practitioner, and award winning author Richard O'Neill – it's storytelling skills.

He says 'Storytelling boosts curiosity, imagination, creativity, listening skills and overall communication. All skills that are not only really useful for younger children to have, but for older ones too, as they are ones which future employers will want and need. Sharing stories with your children can not only improve their reading, but studies show it can vastly improve their writing too. There are other benefits too, not least the opportunity for you to share quality time with your child.

Children love stories, and by sharing good ones with your children you are allowing them to gently learn meaningful messages, as well as qualities like wisdom, courage, and honesty.

Telling children stories from your childhood and about various activities and celebrations from your past will make them more familiar about the different customs and traditions prevalent in your family. Sharing stories about various family members will help them learn about their lineage better, as well as understanding some of the challenges family members have dealt with, and overcome.

Reading stories out loud with your children helps to them acquainted with language as well as learning new words and phrases. This is also a great way to teach your child new words and pronunciation on a regular basis.

It helps to improve their attention span, many children find it difficult to concentrate on something for long, being used to the fast pace and quick reward of TV and computer screens. Storytelling is more engrossing and has slower and better rewards which ensures that they are not only more attentive, but are also keen to listen and understand.

Listening to stories helps children imagine the characters, places, plot etc. Everyone knows that the mind makes better pictures than TV. This also enhances creativity, making them more imaginative and open to new ideas and encourages free thinking.

By using certain smart ideas, you can use storytelling to help increase your child's memory. Once you have read out the story, you can ask them to repeat the same after a few days. Alternatively, you can ask them to describe the story up till the present. This is a fun way to increase their memory and encourage concentration. I am always amazed how children in the schools I visit can remember a story I told them months, or even a year before. Teachers often report that this skill helps their students in tests.

Young children may not always be exposed to the different cultures and countries of the world. Through the medium of storytelling, you can make them familiar about various places and cultures, which in turn broadens their knowledge of geography. Letting them experience stories from different countries and cultures gives your child a broader understanding of the world, as well as the world around them, their environment, the

people they know, and how it all compares to other places, it often also helps them to be more appreciative of what they have.

Storytelling for children is a stepping stone for academic learning. Many children have the habit of learning by rote, without understanding the subject. Storytelling, as a regular activity, can help children to enjoy and better understand what they are reading. This helps them in learning their subjects better. Sometimes, teaching school subjects as an interesting story (for example, a boring history lesson can be turned into an interesting historical story) can help them understand better, and fuel their curiosity for further study.

Sometimes, children are hesitant to ask a question, even though their mind is filled with curiosity. Storytelling helps children in learning the art of asking the right question. It also shows them how to strike a perfect conversation, and builds their confidence. Regular reading and listening can make them better orators too.

Difficult situations can often end up leaving children feeling confused. Stories about various characters facing difficult situations, and how they are resolved, can help them understand this concept better. Try and tell stories that teach children that pain and suffering are a part of life, as much as happiness and fun times are. The right stories can help your child become well-equipped to face life and various situations.'

### **The best approach for Storytelling:**

As much as storytelling is important, it is also important to make sure that it is being told in the right way. The 7 successful storyteller points mentioned below will help you understand these techniques and become a better storyteller:

#### **1. Length Of The Story:**

A story should neither be too short nor too long. A short story might not be able to deliver the right message, while a long one might become boring and uninteresting. So, decide the length by keeping your audience in mind.

#### **2. Comfortable Setting:**

Choose a comfortable space to tell or read out the story. The place should create the perfect mood and ambiance for storytelling.

#### **3. A Proper Introduction:**

If you are telling it from memory, let your child know where you heard the story or who you heard it from. Tell them how it helped you, and how you think it will benefit them. Try to create an interest right from the start.

#### **4. Proper Expressions:**

While narrating a story, make sure to use proper hand gestures and facial expressions. You can also make different sounds or ask your child to do so to make storytelling as interesting as possible.

### **5. Speak clearly:**

Make sure you speak clearly, and vary your pace. Your voice should be able to depict the right kind of emotions as mentioned in the story. Vary your voice, tone, pitch and pace as per the requirement of the characters in the story, and use pauses at appropriate places.

### **6. Involve your listeners:**

Try to involve your child by using various phrases or by asking them questions like 'Do you know?' Why do you think the character did that? What do you think that character was feeling when? You can also ask them to find out the message conveyed through the story, thereby making them more involved.

### **7. Be natural:**

It is important to evolve your own style of storytelling. This will ensure that it does not become monotonous for your child or for you. Make sure you enjoy what you are reading, or telling.

Storytelling is very crucial for your child's development. Don't let your child miss this simple yet extremely important part of childhood. Happy storytelling!

**Richard R O'Neill is a master storyteller, children's author, and National Literacy hero. He runs storytelling course for educators and for parents. See more at [www.richardthet storyteller.weebly.com](http://www.richardthet storyteller.weebly.com)**