

How to Write a Children's Story



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Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [How to Write a Children's Story](#)
- [How to Write a Good Story](#)
- [How to Write an Outline](#)

Introduction

Writing a children's story requires not only imagination and creativity, but also the ability to put yourself in the mind of a child. This eBook shows you step-by-step how to write a children's story, from brainstorming story ideas, to making your level of word usage audience-appropriate.

[Contents](#)

How to Write a Children's Story



Brainstorm Story Ideas

The story is perhaps the most important aspect of a good children's book. Consult some of your favorite books (children's or not) for examples, but try to be original. Choose a story that fits your interests and talents, such as action, fantasy, or mystery.

Develop your characters

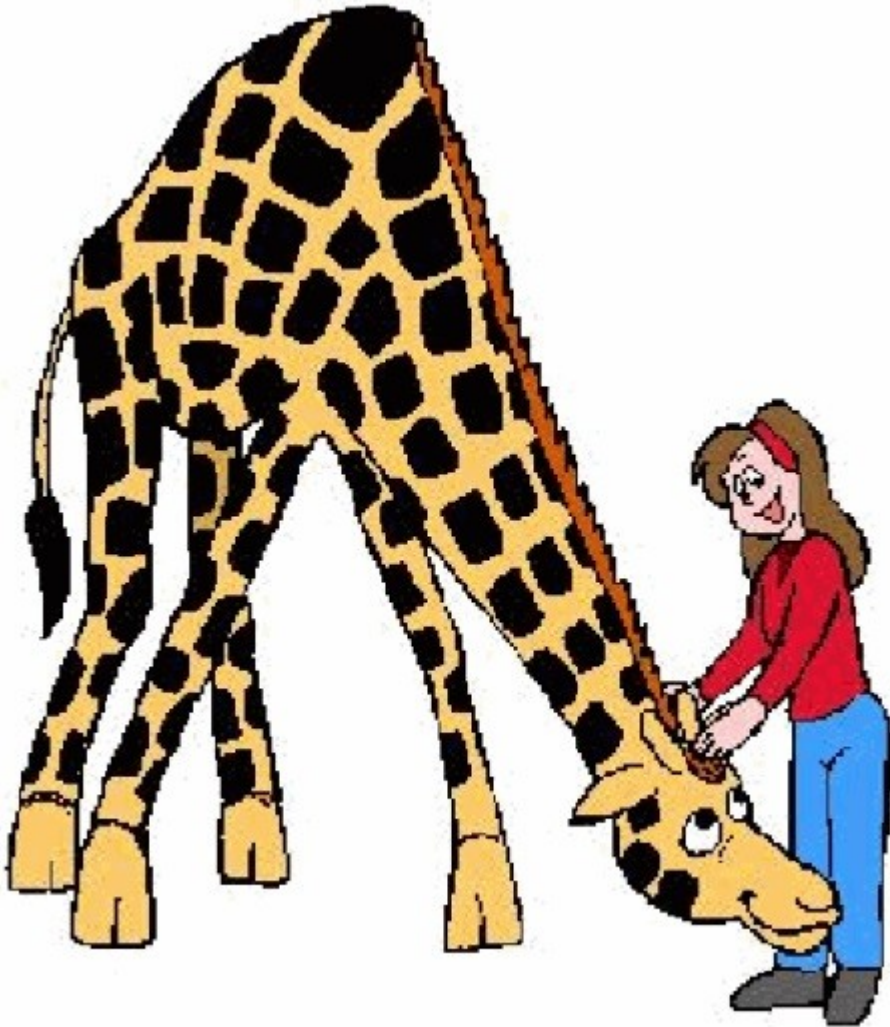
In order to have a good story, you need some interesting characters. Who is the main character of the story? Is there more than one? Are the characters human, animal or fantasy, or do they include elements of all three? Before you begin, it is best to make an outline of the characters and how they fit into the story.

Make a Story Outline

Use notecards, draw it in picture form, or write a standard outline. The important thing is to have a general understanding of the beginning, middle and end of the story, and of how the characters will interact and evolve. A good story usually has some sort of conflict or obstacle that the main

character has to resolve, after which everyone lives "happily ever after". Here's the breakdown:

- Introduce your characters with descriptions of physical and personality traits, their surroundings, and those with whom they come in contact.
- Create a problem/conflict. This could be between two people, an internal conflict, or one in which the main character overcomes an obstacle in the outside world.
- Write the climax of the story, which will include the main character(s) coming face to face with the conflict.
- Show how your character(s) resolves the problem, and what happens next.



Add Pictures

Children love pictures, and adults do, too. They can add to the interest level of the story and make it easier to follow. Try including a few funny cartoons or pictures in your story. If you enjoy drawing, and have the ability, illustrate the book yourself. Otherwise, you can find a friend or colleague to help. Don't know any visual artists? Cut and paste pictures from magazines, the internet, or use stickers.

- childrensillustrators.com is a great source of children's illustrators with a community of 735 illustrators.

Tips

- Keep it simple. Depending on the age group you are trying to engage, you don't want to make

your story too complex and difficult to follow, because younger kids will quickly lose interest.

- If you want to be more daring, play with the standard story formula by leaving the ending open for interpretation (a la J.K. Rowling). You can leave the reader wondering what might happen next. This can be especially useful if you are thinking about expanding the story into a series of children's books.
- Use humour. We all have it. Focus on "silly" things that will have both the child and the adult reader laughing together. Use made-up words, rhyme, and alliteration: Dr Seuss knows, it's much easier and more fun to read aloud.
- Whenever possible, show the character's personality through speech and actions, not bland statements like "Sally is selfish". Try to differentiate between different characters by having them react differently to the same situation, for a start.
- Make sure your diction (level of word usage) and storyline are audience-appropriate:

Age 0-18 months: very simple words, animal noises and names of animals, colours, mommy and daddy. Children's games such as hide-and-seek and peekaboo (which teach children to deal healthily with short-term separation). Bright colours, faces. Learning to use the toilet. Very short sentences, simple ideas that are supported visually.

Age 18 months - 3 years: Fuller sentences with some describing words. Basic concepts such as growing and sharing which require thought but can still be supported visually. Simple emotions: happy, sad, lonely, wanting. Learning to wait. Exploring the world: a forest, an ocean, a preschool, a playground. Everything is BIG at this age. Creativity: building blocks, play-dough, crayons. Knock-knock jokes. Being a big brother/sister. Being a friend (this is a very new concept at this age; children are becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings). Learning to count.

Age 3-5 years: Slightly larger storylines. More complex sentences explaining the motivation behind actions shown on the page. Adventures. Getting lost and finding your way home. Fighting. Being brave in spite of fear. Telling the truth. Thinking of others before yourself. Explaining how you feel. Learning to spell. Learning to add. Telling parents if someone hurts you or makes you feel bad. How to resolve arguments (though they still need a lot of help at this age, they can be introduced to healthy argument resolution, especially the idea of sharing and thinking how others feel). Disappointment.

Age 5-7 years: overcoming challenges. Learning new skills. Understanding good reasons to do something and bad reasons to do something. Magic. Confusion. Books long enough to read over two or three nights. Use bigger words but be careful to explain them, so as not to frustrate new readers.

Warnings

- Avoid using slang words or inappropriate language/situations (remember, this is a children's book!).
- If you want your story to be published and intend to send it to an agent or publisher, DON'T include illustrations unless you are a talented illustrator. Should your manuscript be accepted, the publisher will find the perfect illustrator for your story. Your own clip art, stickers, photos from the internet, etc. will not help at all.

[Contents](#)

How to Write a Good Story



Everyone has a story to tell. There are many factors that can inspire a good story. Here are a few tips to release the writer in you.

When picking story ideas, you should write what you know, even if a little bit. If you know your starting subject then it's easier to branch details from it, and it's so much easier to write about.

On the same note, if said details involve a subject that you're familiar with, but aren't so experienced with, then research it. For example, let's take surfing. Most people know what surfing is, they've seen it on TV or in reality. I'll bet you know what surfing is. I do, but sadly I couldn't surf to save my life. So, if I have a surfer character in my story then I research it. Research the moves, the techniques; interview a surfer about the experience.

Pick your audience. Are you writing for children, teens, or adults? Once you've established those two factors, you will have a better idea of what to write about.

Get inspirations in your everyday life. For example if you want to write a children's book, observe children. See how they act, see the world through their eyes, and then write about something that fascinates them. Listen to the news maybe your brain can conjure up a story just waiting to be written. Everyday life can be an inspiration.

Always have a notepad with you. If you're on the bus, at work, wherever, if something peaks your interest, write it down so you won't forget.

Write down all your dreams. Then maybe you could make a story out of one or more of them. A good way to capture dreams is to set your alarm clock about an hour early than when you usually wake up, and ALWAYS have a notebook within hands reach so that the first thing you can do is write the dream down. Dreams evaporate from memory (possibly forever) at an exponential rate, so get it down at once!

Tips

- There is no such thing as writer's block. Rather, it should be known as "Writer's Laziness". If you wake up one morning and realise that you don't know what to do for that next chapter, don't hang about until "inspiration" sets in. Otherwise you'll be hanging about for a very long time. Instead, simply sit down and start writing with whatever comes into your head first (but don't take what you just wrote too seriously at this stage). Eventually you'll be back on a roll with some good ideas and you can go back and edit/replace what you just wrote to suit your new ideas.
- However, there is a second type of writer's block: the type that kicks you in the teeth just as you're in the middle of writing. You know, when you finish that paragraph and suddenly, WHAM: "What am I gonna do next?!" When this happens, go out for a walk, or listen to some inspiring music, or just take a break. After a while go back and try writing again, and soon it will come to you.

[Contents](#)

How to Write an Outline



An outline is a list of topics, of sentences, or of questions you intend to answer in your essay. The outline is the over-all plan of your essay. It determines what central points your paper is going to make and how they will be organized, to support your thesis.

1. All parts of the outline should be constructed and organized to support your thesis or central point. Therefore, before you begin the outline you have to have a sense of what you will argue in the paper: you have to be clear about your thesis statement.
2. Main Categories. Arrange your general ideas in main categories. These are the main topics of your essay. Arrange your main categories in the order you discuss them. To help you arrange your categories: look at your main categories, with your thesis in mind, try to find a way that the labels might be arranged in a sentence or two that supports your argument.
3. Sub-categories (Paragraphs). Within each general category list and arrange the paragraphs that support the category.
4. Sentences. Within each sub-category list and arrange your specific notes to support the argument made on that paragraph. This is the order of sentences in the paragraph.
5. The arrangement of categories, sub-categories and sentences should present a clear, logical argument to support your thesis.
6. Also, the different sections should relate logically to each other.
7. Organize the outline according to your purposes: Are you attempting to show the chronology of

some historical development, the cause-and-effect relationship between one phenomenon and another, the process by which something is accomplished, or the logic of some position? Are you defining or analyzing something? Comparing or contrasting one thing to another? Presenting an argument (one side or both)?

8. Some methods of organizing: Climactic arrangement: one that works up to your strongest point, which is delivered as a kind of grand finale.

The inductive argument: in which you build up the evidence first, and then draw conclusions. A problem-solution format: involves presenting the problem first and then outlining the solution.



Tips

An outline can be written as a topic outline, in which you use only short phrases to suggest ideas, or as a sentence outline, in which you use full sentences (even very brief paragraphs) to show the development of ideas more fully.

Your paper depends on it! A good outline enhances the organization and coherence of your paper. The outline can help you organize your material, stay focused, be clear, discover connections between pieces of information that you weren't aware of, make you aware of material that is not really relevant to the purposes of your paper, help you fill in gaps, etc.

[Contents](#)

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