

Skill Building
(exercises for the developing storyteller)

Giving Directions

Telling a story well requires that your listener understand what is going on. Who is talking? Where are we? What just happened? If a listener becomes lost in the story, the storyteller will have lost the listener. For this reason, it can be helpful to practice giving directions.

I Task: Give directions to some location.

Action: The storyteller stands before the class using words and gestures to give clear directions.

Examples:

1. Explain how to get to the lunchroom from the classroom.
2. Explain how to go from your bedroom at home to your backyard/playground/neighbor.

II Task: Give instructions for some common task.

Action: The storyteller stands before the class using words and gestures to give clear directions.

Examples:

1. Explain how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
2. Explain how to brush your teeth.

III Task: Direct someone around the room.

Action: One person is to be blindfolded. Two others are to “spot” the “blind walker” so that he/she does not come to harm. The storyteller uses words to direct the blind walker to a destination such as a chair, a window, or a door.

Ear Training

Storytellers need to think of words as made of sounds, not letters.

I Task: Match the initial sound of a given word.

Action: Everyone is seated in a circle. One person suggests a word. Progressing around the circle, each person speaks another word with the same initial sound.

Example: “Flute”

Matches: “Fun” “Fire” “Physical”

Note: Some words have the same sounds using different letters.

II Task: Match the final sound of a given word.

Action: A word is suggested. Progressing around the circle, each person speaks another word with the same final sound.

Example: “Dot”

Matches: “Pit” “Boat” “Parrot”

Note: Rhyming is not required. We are only matching the last sound, not the last syllable.

III Task: Match the final sound with an initial sound

Action: The first person speaks a word. The next person matches the final sound of that word with an initial sound from a new word. The following person must match the final sound to an initial sound, and so on around the circle.

Example: “Car” - “Rat” - “Turtle” — “Lamp” - “Please” - “Zebra”

Mental Pictures

A storyteller uses words and gestures to help the listener picture a setting.

I Task: Describe a picture,

Action: Holding a print of a photograph or painting, the storyteller describes the scene to the listener. Afterwards, the print is shown to the group. Compare and contrast the image the storyteller created with the print.

II Task: Describe a setting from memory.

Action: The storyteller describes a place from memory. The listener draws a picture based on the description. The storyteller then compares the drawings with the memory.

III Task: Describe a familiar setting.

Action: Without naming the setting, the storyteller describes a place familiar to all the listeners. The listeners then attempt to guess the setting.

IV Task: Co-create a setting.

Action: One storyteller describes a place. Another storyteller adds more description. More storytellers add description in turn. Finally one storyteller attempts to describe the entire co-created setting.