

# STORYTIME TIPS

## Greetings and Welcome

Approximately 5 minutes before program begins:

- **Greet** kids and families as they arrive with a calm but excited voice.
  - Play soft background **music**. This helps families settle in without fear of being too loud or too quiet. Turn the music off to help signal the official beginning of the program.
  - Use your **puppet!** This is a great time to introduce attendees to your sidekick, allowing the kids to lead the exchange and set boundaries.
  - If you use **nametags**, allow families to search for or create their name tags during this time.
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## Introductions and Expectations

- **Welcome** attendees into storytime.
- **Introduce** yourself and your puppet.
- Explain the adult **expectations** for storytime.
- **Preview** the program.

Previewing the program offers kids and families a glimpse of what to expect. It can help **ease anxiety or uncertainty** and help kids **manage expectations**. If kids know what is happening next, they are more likely to participate. Use a **visual outline**; remove items as you complete them.

Encourage adults and caregivers to **participate**. *Children are more likely to retain information when caregivers are present and engaged.* The following storytimes are meant to be for the whole family or adult/child group.

# Hello/Goodbye Song

**Repetition** helps young learners strengthen and develop neural pathways in their brains.

Use the same **hello and goodbye songs** during every program in this series. Many hello songs have a corresponding goodbye song.

Choose a hello song that is **active** and encourages kids to **move** their bodies. This will help them stretch and move before having to sit still for the story afterwards.

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## Felt Game

A **felt game** is a felt storyboard with an interactive element.

Felt games are a great way to get kids ready to **listen and engage** with you and with their peers. It can also be a good way to **re-center the group** later in the program if kids' attention begins to drift.

In your first Storytime in a Box, you will receive a version of *Little Mouse, Little Mouse*. Prior to the beginning of the game, **hide the mouse** under one of the houses and have kids **guess** where the mouse is hiding.

*"Little mouse, little mouse... what color house are you hiding in today? Are you in the blue house? Let's count to three, ready? One... Two... Three!"*

Encourage kids to **raise their hands and take turns**. If kids are especially good at guessing the right house early in the game, try hiding other things under the houses as an added surprise.

# Song Breaks

Use **song breaks** between books to help kids re-center and focus. Song breaks could consist of one song or a few, depending on how active your group is. *Singing helps promote literacy! When you sing, your language slows down and allows kids to hear each sound inside a word or sentence.*

**Repeat songs** often. Remember that repetition is important for **brain development and school readiness**.

Use **manipulatives sparingly**. Shaker eggs, scarves, rhythm sticks, and bells are great tools to use in storytime, but they are not required for every single song break. Bringing out a manipulative for every song break can may cause sensory overload and induce anxiety for children. If using a manipulative, find a **creative way to help kids relinquish their device** after the song is over. Have kids **sing goodbye** to the object or try calling out specific colors to put away in order.

Use a mix of **acapella, rhymes, and musical accompaniment**. If using songs with musical instruments, try to mix in a few acoustic versions versus electric sounds. Using a mix of **different songs** can help your program be **more inclusive**, especially for children with sensory challenges.

Nervous about singing acapella? Use your **puppet!** Have your sidekick take the lead—and the blame if they are really off key! Even let your kids in on the secret. "Joey, the rabbit, is really nervous about singing out loud in front of you. Do you ever get nervous or scared about doing something new? Can you help sing with them so they aren't doing it alone?"

Use songs/rhymes that have **finger plays** or incorporate **American Sign Language**. *Finger plays are a great way to strengthen fine motor skills, which children need when learning how to hold pencils or scissors.*

# Books

Pre-read each book out loud. When pre-reading, look for places in the book that might need more **context** for young learners or could provide a place to stop and **invite questions** or **point things out**. You can also identify places in the book that might be good to **skip** over or cut out if there is a lack of time or engagement.

**Diversity** is key! Find a mix of inclusive characters, authors, and stories to include in storytime. Not every book needs to check off every box, but consider making your selection of books thoughtful and intentional.

Add a twist or **manipulative** to your books. Use **felt boards** to either replace an entire book or encourage deeper thinking and context after reading. **Oral storytelling**, without the use of a physical book, is a great way to engage families in a new type of storytelling that still promotes literacy and reading skills.

Using an **interactive book** is a great way to encourage participation and engagement from young learners. Interactive books can also help re-center a group if their focus has drifted.

**Wordless picture books** provide a great opportunity to engage readers who may not be able to read yet—or support storytime with adults who cannot read the language themselves. When reading a wordless picture book, the reader gets to decide the storyline based on context clues in the illustrations. What's unique about wordless books is that they can be read multiple times with the story being different each time.

Have **backups**! Sometimes your audience won't connect with a book. Don't be afraid to **stop reading** or **skip** the book all together. You can **replace** it with another book, song, or cut the whole program short.