

Suggestions to encourage **WRITING** during storytime

Children must have a lot in their personal toolkit before they can begin writing words. They begin with scribbles, then progress to drawing and simple shapes and lines, before eventually moving on to their names and then other words. It requires a combination of the Six Skills plus the ability to hold a writing utensil. All of this generally doesn't come together in the form of word-writing until around age four at the youngest, and up to age 6. For children younger than that, we can help them with pre-writing skills like Vocabulary and Letter Knowledge, as well as hand-eye coordination, hand muscle strength, and fine motor skills.

Crafts

There is no more common, easy way to help children develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and muscle strength during storytime than crafts! Using glue sticks, coloring, placing cotton balls on paper, etc....these all develop those fine motor skills.

Manipulatives

When you use rhythm sticks, shakers, scarves, bells, bean bags, etc.—really, anything the children can grasp with their hands—they are developing hand strength. Shaking, waving, and moving those objects lets them work on fine motor skills! Try doing it to music for an added Phonological Awareness benefit.

Shapes

When children learn to see the differences between shapes, it's the first step in being able to see the differences between letters. Encouraging children to play with shapes—blocks, flannel boards, drawing shapes in shaving cream or pudding—is an easy way to encourage this development.

Alphabet Letters

With older kids, focus can begin to turn to the letters themselves. Sing the “Alphabet Song,” set out magnetic letters for play after storytime, feature a Letter of the Week—all of these can begin to help children with Letter Knowledge. To make the experience tactile, consider setting up a letter tracing station with shaving cream, hair gel in a bag, or letters die-cut out of sandpaper or textured foam.

Name Writing

A child's name is usually one of the first words they learn to read and write. If you offer nametags for storytime, encourage parents to allow children to write their own names if interested. You can also encourage families to let the child write their own name on the back of their craft, when possible.

Fine Motor Skill Builders

It's great to make activities such as lacing cards, dot-to-dot sheets, coloring sheets, puzzles, and other fine motor building activities available. While not all of these lend themselves to storytime, you could offer them before/after or even all the time in your children's space.

Parachute

As with other manipulatives, using a large parachute in storytime and having each child take hold of it while shaking it to music is a great way to encourage hand strength and fine motor skills—and Phonological Awareness—and to have fun!