

Grown Up's Guide: GATHERING IDEAS

#1

The trick with gathering ideas for your child's story is to combine their wild imagination with real-life experiences that will provide detail and power to their writing. One way to do this is to encourage your child to write down impressions of what they see, emotions they feel and real events in their lives. Writing them down allows us to capture and reflect on these moments, and use them in future stories. The 'Gathering Ideas' StorySheet can be downloaded to provide a framework for organizing their thoughts. A regular notebook will also work well. Or, if your child prefers the use of technology, perhaps an App such as Evernote or Audionote will be useful to them.



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On the StorySheet, you will see that we have separated these ideas into three categories, further explained below.

Experiences: Encourage your child to think about big moments or events in their life. For example: a big family trip, winning a championship game, welcoming a new sibling, or moving to a new place. Perhaps they have struggled to make a team, or remember a fall or accident. All these things can become significant events in stories for different characters.

Emotions: Have your child think about times in which they felt big emotions. What was happening at the time and what reactions did their body have to the emotion. How did it feel to be alone or afraid? How did their bodies express sadness when they lost something? When we describe these emotions in stories, readers become more connected to the characters.

Examples: Ask your child to list their favourite books, movies or television shows. We are easily influenced by the things around us that we enjoy the most. If your child is struggling to think of a story idea or character, encourage them to take parts and pieces from stories and movies that they love to create something new of their own. For example, if your child loves Pokemon, have him or her create a new Pokemon that has the best parts of all their favourite characters.

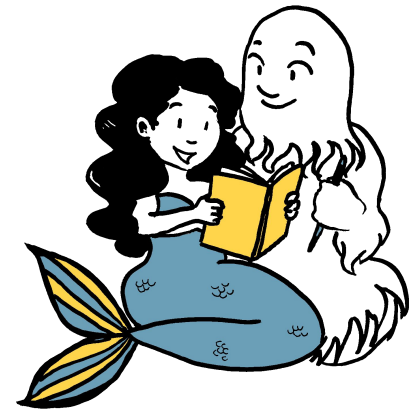
This should be a very fun and light process for your child. If they are having trouble thinking back on their experiences and emotions, encourage them to go outside with their notebook or to a quiet place on their own to think. Encourage them to ask family and friends about their experiences and emotions, or questions if they can't remember things. Most of all - have fun, and maybe you'll learn something new too!

GETTING STARTED

Getting your child started on writing a story can seem like a very daunting task. You may wish to begin by reading a story together - an old childhood favourite or one they know well. Talk about the character in the story and the problem they have. Discuss what you learn about the character throughout the events in the story.

You can find a few of our favourite stories at:

<https://www.storystudio.ca/yourstories/>



StorySheet: *GATHERING IDEAS*

#1

Gathering ideas for a story can seem like a big task. The trick is to combine our imaginations with what we experience in the world around us-then stories will jump right out! One way authors come up with their story ideas is by carrying a notebook with them all the time. They write down impressions of what they see, emotions that they feel and real events as they occur. Our whole lives are filled with moments that will make fantastic stories. It's just a matter of catching these moments by writing them down. In each box below, list things and moments that are significant or important to you.



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EXPERIENCES

Big events in your life

EMOTIONS

Big emotions you have felt

EXAMPLES

Books, movies that you love

Date:

Name:

Every story needs a great main character. Encourage your child to be creative in their thinking - their character can be absolutely anything. Story Studio writers have told stories featuring leading characters who range from a superhero taco to a half narwhal/half puppy.



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Have your child draw or design their character with details, and help them answer key questions (below) about their character to develop a background or biography. You may also choose to use the StorySheet to record this information and design the character.

1. What could this character be?
2. What is their name?
3. What is this character good at/ not so good at?
4. What are they afraid of?
5. Most importantly, what could this characters' goal be? What is something they want to happen?

Have fun and get creative to help your writer dig into their main character! You may have your child dress up as their character, or build the character out of recycled materials, Lego/plasticine or other items from home. Interview your child as they take the role of their character. This allows your child to develop a deeper understanding of their character. You might ask questions such as: *What is your proudest moment/greatest accomplishment? What is a secret you never told anyone? What do you hope to do with your life? What might stop you? What would you do if you had a million dollars?* These extra activities will help your child get to know their character really well, which will help in brainstorming the rest of the stories events.



ONE-OF-A-KIND CHARACTERS!

We strongly encourage characters that are the learner's own creation, simply because their ideas are often the best. Their characters should be unique to them, and not taken directly from a movie, show, video game or other book. Of course, it's natural for kids to want to imitate the stories they love (eg. 'I want to write a story about a school for wizards!') Encourage your child to think 'outside of the box' of typical characters. If your writer is stuck on rewriting an existing story, try getting them to combine ideas from their favourite movies or books to create brand new characters. (For example, what about a school for dinosaur magicians?) Often combining a few different elements can help 'unstick' a young writer from repeating a story that's already been told..

MORE THAN ONE MAIN CHARACTER?

We're writing short stories, so we encourage kids to just focus on one main character, who might still encounter other characters along the way. Ask your writer, "If this were a movie, which character would the camera be focused on most of the time?" That's your main character.

StorySheet: CREATE A CHARACTER

#2

Your main character is going to be the focus of the story, so you want them to be interesting. You want your reader to care about what your character wants. You want your reader to be scared if your character is in danger. We're going to help you make an awesome character. Start by answering some of the questions below and doodling a picture of your character. Remember, these are just rough notes and ideas - you can't go wrong, and you should be as crazy and imaginative as you want. How about a taco spy? A talking pencil? Dream it up!



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DRAW ME HERE

Here are a few words to describe where I live:

Here are a few words to describe what I look like:

I'm, afraid of...

My name is:

My best friend is:

because...

Shh! My secret is:

Something I'm awesome at:

In this story, I really want to...

Something I find hard:

Date:

Name:

Grown Up's Guide: HOOK YOUR READER

#5

Now that your child has brainstormed their character and setting, as well as some of the events for their story, they are ready to begin writing their story. It is important to guide students writing- especially at the beginning stage of their stories - so that students aren't simply stating what happens in the story. For example, we want to avoid a list of events: "This happened, and then this happened, and then..." Instead, we want to learn about the character, where they are and what it's like to be there. You may choose to start with the attached handout, where your child can brainstorm their story beginning.



GETTING STARTED

Every story should start with a BIG ACTION sentence, something that the character is doing in the setting they are in. For example, "Fred was fearlessly running across the red sandy mountains on Mars searching for signs of life." This action sentence acts as the 'hook' to grab the reader's attention. You can read a variety of our student stories to get an idea of what the first sentence in a story could be.

<https://www.storiystudio.ca/yourstories/>

Will was swimming faster than he had ever before. He was a blue whale and he was nine years old. He was very fast and a quick thinker. Will was always excited to learn new things in the ocean.
(from 'Will the Whale' by Lucas)



KEY QUESTIONS

1. What big action is your character doing at the start of your story?
2. Who is your character and where are they?
3. How does your character feel to be there?

Once readers are 'hooked in' with the action sentence, have your child stop, or take a break in the action, to introduce their character and where they are, or how they got there. Remind them to look at their character and setting descriptions from earlier StorySheets - how can those details can be added into their story? Use the key questions below to help guide your child in writing the introduction to their story.

Once your child has introduced their character and setting, they can continue with the events of their story that they created in their story map, developing their problem and then adding in suspense (as outlined in the next Guide.) As your child writes, remind them not to worry about the spelling and grammar, but rather focus on their ideas and the details of their story. Editing and revising can come later in their story writing. Right now, the focus should remain on their creative ideas.

SENTENCE STRETCH ACTIVITY

This activity is especially useful to early elementary age children in order to add more information to their sentences and make them more interesting. Start by sharing a very simple sentence such as, "The boy ran." To stretch out the sentence, have your child think about the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* that could be included to add more details. You may wish to share a list of adjectives, or describing words with them, or read through the ones provided on the '[Details Matter](#)' StorySheet. Explain that by including more of these words we can learn more about our characters and events. This can all be done by following along on the StorySheet, where there is an example, as well as one for your child to complete independently. After completing the activity, look back through your child's story with them, and find one simple sentence to stretch.

StorySheet: HOOK YOUR READER

5

Now that you have thought through all the parts of your story, you are ready to put them together. You want to write an exciting story that your readers will enjoy. To do that, you want to go fishing and hook them from the very first sentence – don't let your reader swim on by! Start with a big action to get your readers excited. Then you can describe who your character is and where they are.



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Remember, adding details and descriptions will help to keep your reader hooked!



FIRST SENTENCE:

Think of a BIG ACTION sentence. Something exciting your character is doing at the start of your story:

PAUSE: Describe who your character is. Use your setting descriptions to introduce where your character is:

Stretch your sentences to add more details:

The boy ran.

Think about **where, how, or why** the boy was running:

The little boy ran as fast as his legs would take him, rushing through the forest and away from the giant bear.

Give it a try. Try and stretch the following sentence:

The boy ate.

Write **where, how,** and **why**:

Date:

Name: