

Practice Storytelling with a Plot Potluck!

You'd be hard-pressed to find a soul alive who doesn't love a good story. Help your young child find the storyteller within, by practicing this skill as you go about your daily routine. It's fun, easy and requires no materials, so it can be done anywhere, anytime. Better yet, it works for two people or ten, so the whole family can get involved. Think of this as a potluck of sorts. But instead of bringing a chicken casserole, or a pot of chili, everyone brings an idea. Remember the old "I'm going on a trip" game where participants took turns remembering and then adding on items they would take on a trip? This game offers a different spin, by building a story in a similar fashion.

What You Need:

- Several players

What You Do:

1. Start the story with your own idea or ask for a topic from your child. Young children love to be the subject of stories, so beginning with something personal is a great launching pad. For example, you could start with: "Once there was a little boy named Luke who lived in a giant, purple castle." However you begin, once you've created the first sentence, it's time to pass the torch: let your child create the next sentence of the story. Continue on, back and forth, until the story is complete.
2. While this activity may be difficult for both of you at first, over time you'll find that the ideas come easier and you'll become better storytellers in the process. Even more importantly, you'll be helping your child develop key pre-reading and writing skills, learn the natural flow of a story, and hone critical language skills.
3. Be sure to offer encouragement as you go along and help ensure that the story has a solid beginning, middle and end. Most of all, let your hair down! If you come up with creative and descriptive contributions, your child will follow your lead. Don't be afraid to dabble: fairy tales, fables, tall tales (outlandish explanations of how real-life things were made), mysteries, tall tales (animals acting as humans, usually with a lesson or moral at the end), and stories inspired by real life experiences are all great fodder for this game.
4. Consider recording some of your family's creations for posterity. Your son or daughter will have a lot of fun reading them a few years down the road, and by then, they won't even need your help!

