

Tips for a successful storytime



Make things clear from the outset: for the first few weeks of each session, remind parents that when they are excited and involved, their kids will be too. Tell them when they will be able to visit with other parents (during craft or playtime following the program), and ask them to join you in the noises, singing, and activities along with their kids during the actual storytime.



Follow the arc of a child's attention span by reading longer books at the beginning, and leaving the shorter books and more active songs for the end.



We usually do at least two songs or activities between each book. If the crowd is large, young, mixed-age, or squiggly, we often do more.



For handing out items, especially in a large crowd, walk around and scatter the items on the floor. It's much faster than handing out one to each child, and will cause less stampeding than simply putting the items in one spot.



For pick-up, place a hard-sided container (i.e. a box, not a bag) on the floor. With a bag you have to hold it while they put the items away and a box you can just set out on the floor. Sometimes it seems like they enjoy putting them away more than using them! This gives you a minute to get ready for the next activity.



If things are especially hairy, there is no shame in ending early. It is better to end on a high note than to try and make the kids pay attention to one last story.



If you are using a lot of recorded music, consider burning a storytime disc with the songs you use the most—or create a playlist and play songs with an ipod and docking station. That way, you will spend less time fumbling with individual discs and/or cassettes.



To disinfect musical instruments: "Clean with baby wipes or wash in a solution of ¼ teaspoon of bleach to 1 quart of cool water" (*Baby Rhyming Time* by Linda L. Ernst p. 119).



If there is a particular story that you really like but feel is too long, don't be afraid to shorten it or just do parts of it. The same is true of songs -- if a song is too long, you can edit it. Use a free audio editor such as Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> to shorten pre-recorded music.