

Storytelling Games for Families

Six quiet story games. Your child can join in as much or as little as they like; the grown-up takes the last turn at bedtime, so the story ends calmly.

1. One sentence each

You need: Nothing at all.

How to play: The grown-up starts with one sentence about a character. Then you take turns adding one sentence each, carrying on from the last one. Keep going until someone says the story's last line.

Easier: Let your child add just one word, or one sound, each time, and you fill in the rest.

At bedtime, finish like this: At bedtime, the grown-up takes the last turn and brings everyone home to sleep: "And the hedgehog curled up in her bed, and that was the end."

2. An object's day

You need: Any object in the room: a sock, a cup, a toothbrush.

How to play: Choose one ordinary thing together, then tell its day from morning to night: where it went, who used it, what it saw. The object is the main character.

Easier: Hold the object while you tell its day, and let your child show where it went.

At bedtime, finish like this: End with the object back in its place for the night, just like your child in their bed.

3. This place or that place?

You need: Nothing, or two pictures from a book.

How to play: Offer two places, such as a lighthouse or a treehouse. Your child picks one. Tell a short story set there, and every so often offer another small choice: a cat or a dog? Rain or stars?

Easier: Offer just one choice, the place, and tell the rest yourself.

At bedtime, finish like this: Make the last choice a calm one, such as which blanket or which star, then end the story there.

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4. A familiar friend

You need: A character you've already made up together, or one from a favorite book.

How to play: Choose a character your child already knows. Ask what they might be doing tonight, then tell a new small story: same friend, same home, a new little task.

Easier: Retell the same story you told before, exactly as it was. A favorite story again is still storytelling.

At bedtime, finish like this: End with the familiar character back in their familiar bed, and say goodnight to them by name.

5. Three drawn things

You need: Paper and pencils, or the story idea cards from the story-making guide.

How to play: Each draw one thing on a small piece of paper, or take turns until there are three. Turn them over. Then tell a story that includes all three, in any order.

Easier: Draw the three things yourself, and let your child choose which one comes first.

At bedtime, finish like this: Use the calmest drawing last: the moon, a bed, a lamp. Let it be where the story ends.

6. A toy's journey

You need: One favorite toy.

How to play: Pick a journey the toy really made today: to the shops, to nursery, around the garden. Tell it as if the toy is speaking, describing what it saw from its small, low point of view.

Easier: Let the toy just say three things: one place it went, one thing it saw and where it is now.

At bedtime, finish like this: End with the toy in bed beside your child, describing how soft and quiet it is.