Top tips for storytellers
Telling a story to the children at your group can be a nerve-wracking experience. Not everyone is a born storyteller or likes to be in the limelight! Here are some ideas to ensure that you tell a story competently and retain the children’s interest from beginning to end!

Some practical tips
• Signal ‘story time’ in the same way each time, for example by rolling out a story mat or ringing a bell and putting away toys which might prove a distraction.
• Storytelling involves communication between teller and listener, so sit on a low chair to allow everyone to see the different expressions on your face.
• If you are reading from a book, look up often and involve the children in the story: ‘What do you think happens next? Shall we turn the page and see?’
• Hold everyone’s attention by varying the volume and speed at which you speak. Denote excitement or danger by speaking quickly; a whisper to tell of a wonderful surprise; a booming voice for a giant or a bear!

Practise your story
Your story should only last a couple of minutes, so practise it out loud several times the day before. Say it as you sit in the bath; tell it to the cat; sit on a chair and imagine the children listening at your feet. Are you really telling the story in a way that they can understand and enjoy?

A child’s experience
Young children have a limited vocabulary and experience of life. In the main, use words and situations that are familiar to them. However, they do love to hear and repeat new fun-sounding words, as long as the meaning is clear from the context; a ‘hullabaloo’ in Old MacDonald’s farmyard, perhaps!

If your story involves an unfamiliar situation, lead into it with something they will recognise. For instance, if the story is designed to introduce the children to baptism, you could begin with a small child helping to bathe and dress a baby brother or sister in readiness. In The Chronicles of Narnia, the children discover the unfamiliar Kingdom of Narnia through a familiar piece of furniture - the wardrobe.

The main character
As adults, we often enjoy a story more when we identify with the main character. Children are no different. That’s why so many children’s books feature stories about a young child or a baby animal (which really represents a small child!).

If you are retelling a Bible story, tell it from the point of view of a child or animal. That might be the boy who shared his picnic in the Feeding of the five thousand; or the little donkey in the story of Palm Sunday. If no such character exists in the original, you can always make one up!

Using a soft toy
If you don’t much enjoy being the centre of attention, bring along a soft toy such as a teddy bear, and tell a simple story about him each week. Everyone’s eyes will be on teddy rather than on you! You only need to practise a few simple actions with him in front of a mirror at home.
Your stories could cover a range of first experiences such as teddy’s first swim, day at school or visit to hospital. Teddy could ask all the questions which the children might be too shy to ask.

**Using a story basket**

Visual aids are a great help in keeping the children’s attention, so pack an old picnic hamper with a few colourful items that you can bring out to illustrate your story. Intrigue the children! ‘Teddy has brought one of his friends along to meet you today. Would you like to see him? He has pointed ears ... and a long, long tail ... and look, he’s peeping out of the basket. He’s a mouse!’