

Group Management

Getting Along in Storytime

One of the hardest aspects of storytime is getting the whole crowd to work together. It's hard to lead a productive storytime over the sounds of yelling children! Although it can be tricky, there are a few things to prepare for in order to help your storytimes run as smoothly as possible. First, transitions are key. Children need to know what will happen and when. Communicate storytime transitions clearly, frequently, and in lots of ways. You can also help your storytimes run smoothly by being flexible. Let parents know that it's okay to take a break and come back. Your flexibility will help parents make good choices with their children.

Things to try

- Create rituals to support your transitions. Try ringing a bell before every story. Sing the same song to open and close every storytime session. These repeated acts help children know what to expect.
- Clearly let children know what the expectations will be. Say, "Now we'll read a story together. That means we all sit down. I'll read and show you the pictures. Don't worry, I'll ask lots of questions so you'll get a chance to talk, too."
- Try a visual schedule so that children can see pictures of what to expect next.
- Don't be afraid to mix it up! If a book just is not working, there's nothing wrong with putting it away and moving on to a song and movement activity!
- Turn parents and caregivers into allies by communicating with them how you would like your storytime to go.
- Have fun! Even the loudest, busiest storytime can be a learning experience for children.

Book Suggestions:

When you have an active crew for storytime, try books that get children involved.

- *The Book with No Pictures* by B.J. Novak
- *Tap the Magic Tree* by Christie Mathieson
- *Can You Make a Scary Face?* by Jan Thomas
- *Press Here* by Hervé Tullet
- *Wiggle* by Doreen Cronin
- *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin, Jr.
- *We're Going On a Bear Hunt* by Helen Oxenbury

Getting Started:

- Be warm and welcoming, but do not be afraid to set limits.
- If a child responds to a question with an answer that does not seem to have an ending, it is okay to interrupt gently to continue storytime.
- Encourage adult participation in storytime.
- Communicate with parents and caregivers about children's needs. If children are consistently disruptive during storytime, you may be able to work with the adults to find a solution.