

NARRATIVE

What are Narrative skills?

- 🚩 The ability to tell a story or series of events with precision and clarity
- 🚩 Narratives can be in either oral or written form.

We need Narrative skills to be able to:

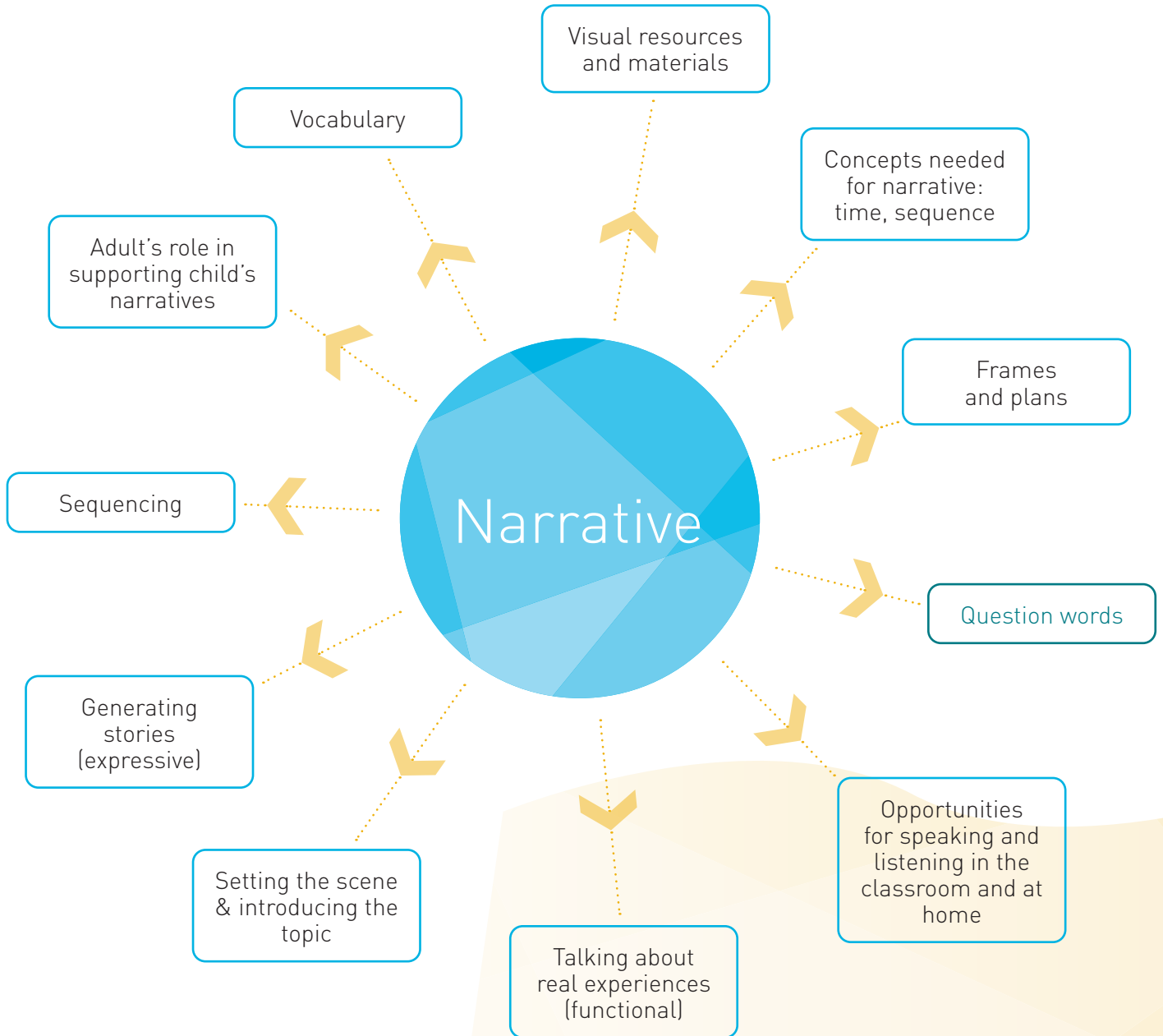
- 🚩 Telling parents about what happened at school today
- 🚩 Talking about what happened at the weekend
- 🚩 Telling a teacher about an incident in the playground
- 🚩 Retelling a story e.g. the plot from a book, film or TV programme
- 🚩 Having a conversation in the playground with friends
- 🚩 Discussing a topic in the classroom
- 🚩 Talking about what happened in a science experiment
- 🚩 Understanding and telling jokes
- 🚩 Making plans or predictions about future events
- 🚩 Being able to apply narrative skills to written work

Children's narrative ability is crucial in developing social skills and accessing the curriculum

The purpose of this pack is:

- 🚩 To provide an overview of why narrative skills are important
- 🚩 To provide information for schools and families on supporting children's narrative skills
- 🚩 To provide practical ideas and resources for use at home and at school
- 🚩 To provide information about further useful resources and how to use them.





Developmental stages of Narratives

Early narratives (from 2-3 years)

- 🚩 Talk about here & now
- 🚩 Present tense
- 🚩 Label objects and actions
- 🚩 Events not linked

Developing narratives (from 4-5 years)

- 🚩 Simple sequences
- 🚩 Start to link events – cause and effect develops
start to tie events and plots together
- 🚩 Develop understanding of simple story structure –
beginning middle and end

True narrative (complex) (8-9 years old)

Established around years 4 and 5

- 🚩 Good understanding of complex story structure
- 🚩 Well developed plots – can jump around in time
- 🚩 Cause and effect linked to overall theme or plot
- 🚩 Start to understand character's intentions,
motives
- 🚩 Understand how the ending relates to the rest of
the story

Difficulties with Narratives

How do difficulties with narratives present?

Narratives are...

- 🚩 Shorter
- 🚩 Contain less information
- 🚩 Difficulties setting the scene (children 'launch' into details without giving background information)
- 🚩 Events not linked together
- 🚩 Story is not organised or coherent
- 🚩 Irrelevancies
- 🚩 Language gaps –vocabulary

Impact of difficulties with narrative skills:

Difficulties with...

- 🚩 Accessing the curriculum at an age appropriate level
- 🚩 Developing social relationships (not able to talk about things that have happened or explain things clearly)
- 🚩 Reading for meaning

Understanding texts:

- 🚩 Poor/ effortful decoding
- 🚩 Poor vocabulary
- 🚩 Other poor language skills
- 🚩 Getting the 'main idea'
- 🚩 Making inference
- 🚩 Referents

Producing written work:

- 🚩 Text planning
- 🚩 Difficulty with more complex grammar
- 🚩 Poor vocabulary
- 🚩 Problems with punctuation
- 🚩 Spelling

Question words

Understanding Question Words – basic story elements

Children need lots of opportunities to listen to stories with adults and to talk about them. When talking about stories with young children, consider what sort of language you are using and how complex the questions are. Think about the questions below and try to ask questions at the right level for the child you are working with:

why, what next, what if,
what would you do,
how do you know,
what makes you think...

Who
Where
When
What happened?





Easy (concrete)








Hard (abstract)

These are the hardest questions and may be introduced as the child's understanding of narrative develops.

Teaching question words helps to develop the understanding that question words relate to story components:

-  Who relates to people
-  Where relates to places
-  When relates to time
-  What happened relates to events

How to teach understanding of question words:

-  Visual symbols – use colour coded question words (Colourful Semantics)
-  Enlarge cards and use in classroom
-  Emphasise which question you are asking and show card at the same time (use Makaton sign too if known – ask your therapist if unsure)
-  Be consistent: ask 'who?' not 'which character?'
-  Repeat across a range of different situations, using the same language and materials – try to reinforce in real-life situations, not just in group work or when reading stories



Activities for question words

Ideas and games to try at home with **who** questions:

- 1 Collect together a range of family photos and talk about who is in each one. Use the 'who' sign as you talk together.
- 2 Using family photos, blue-tack the photos on skittles or empty drinks bottles. Take turns to knock skittles over. **Who** have you knocked over?
- 3 Collect together family photos or family play figures such as Mum, Dad, Grandma, Grandad, baby. Cover all the pictures or figures with a cloth. Ask your child to cover their eyes and adult to remove one of the photos or figures. Child to open their eyes and see if they can guess **who** is missing.
- 4 With play figures and playhouse or farm figures and farm ask the child to follow simple instructions such as "put Mummy in the bedroom", "put the cow in the field". Make the instruction of two parts; a person and a place and see if they can follow the instruction.
- 5 Collect together objects from different family members and put together in a box or bag. For example dads sock, mums purse, granddads glasses, baby's bottle. Child to pull an object out and to respond appropriately to questions "**who** does this belong to?"
- 6 As you read familiar books with your child ask them **who** is in the story, **who** is feeling happy, **who** is sleeping?

Ideas and games to try at home with **where** questions:

- 1 As you ask **where** questions, use the **where** sign to help your child to understand. Hide a wind-up toy or a toy that makes a sound under a cushion, box or table and get your child to listen carefully and find the toy. Ask the question "**where** is it?"
- 2 Using different toys or objects hide them for your child to find. Ask your child "**where's** the teddy?" Try to encourage them to describe **where** it was e.g. "under the table", or "in the box", rather than just pointing or saying "there".
- 3 With play furniture and play house or farm figures and farm put the furniture or animals into a small bag. Get your child to pull an object out of the bag and ask them "**where** does it go?" For example the bed goes in the bedroom, cow in the field, bath in the bathroom. Use the **where** sign to help your child understand the question.
- 4 If you have photos of places familiar to your child, or photos of different rooms in your house mix them up and ask your child, "**where's** this?" Ideas include the garden, grandma's house, the beach, child's bedroom, town centre, the zoo, the park. You could search for some of these on the internet and print them out if you don't have real photos.
- 5 As you read familiar books with your child ask them **where** characters in the story are. For example, in Goldilocks and the Three bears - "**where** is Goldilocks?" Use the **where** sign. Look at lift the flap books and ask **where** things are hiding.
- 6 Ask your child to follow little instructions for you. "Where are your shoes?" "Where is Mum's bag?" "Where's your book?" They might enjoy being the 'teacher' and asking you some where questions too.

Ideas and games to try at home with **when** questions:

Be aware that young children find **when** questions especially difficult as this is an abstract concept.

As you ask when questions, use the when sign to help your child to understand.

- 1 Collect together a bag of objects such as toothbrush, pyjamas, cereal box, pillow, school bag etc. Ask your child to pull out an object and then ask the question "**when** do you see this?" If they need more help, give them choices e.g. "do you see this at night time or in the morning?"
- 2 Read stories together about different times of day such as "Peace at Last", "I don't want to go to bed". Talk about when you go to bed, when you wake up, when you go to school.

If your child has been able to understand the above games try this game about different seasons/ time of year:

Collect together a range of objects from different times of year and ask them "**When** do we use/see this?"

For example,

- 🚩 Summer- shorts, sunhat, suntan cream
- 🚩 Spring- chicks, Easter eggs
- 🚩 Winter- hat, scarf, snowman
- 🚩 Birthdays- birthday candles, party hats, balloons
- 🚩 Christmas- Santa, Christmas cards

Sequencing

Why are sequencing skills important for narratives?

- Helps the child to organise their own thoughts and ideas
- Helps organise and order events – first, next, last – so listener can follow
- Cause and effect – linking events together
- Using picture sequences can greatly support the child who struggles with ordering their ideas and getting their message across clearly

Suggested events to use when working on sequencing:

- How to make a drink
- How to make a sandwich
- Sequence of getting out of bed in a morning and getting ready for school
- Getting changed for PE
- Instructions and sequence for a task already carried out in class e.g. how to make a simple model, art project or cookery task.
- Re-telling events from a story in a reading book or a traditional fairy tale such as The Three Little Pigs.
- Re-telling events from home or trips out at the weekend
- Re-telling a mishap from home or school e.g. an accident that happened to a child or an incident from the classroom where something went wrong.
- Photos of a sequence of an everyday activity such as cleaning teeth.

Using Picture Materials for Sequencing:

You can buy ready-made sequencing sets of varying complexity – however you could also use photocopied pictures from a story book, or even a series of digital photos taken while out on a school or family trip.

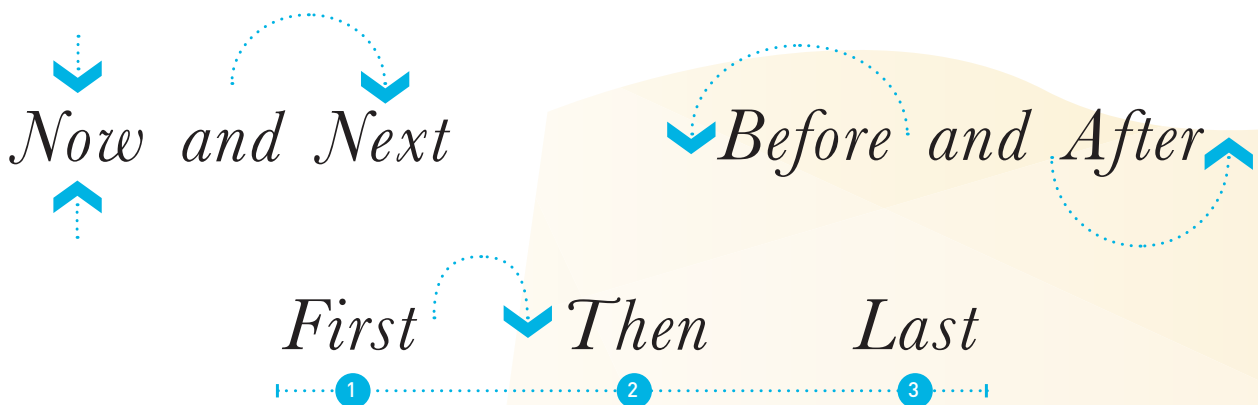
- First, consider how many cards – use less cards for simple sequencing
- Provide the first picture and the child can carry on with the sequence
- Provide all the pictures for the child to put into the correct order
- Put the pictures in sequence but miss out the final one – can the child predict what will happen?
- Put the pictures in sequence, missing out the one picture that shows the cause of the problem – can the child identify what the problem was?
- Think of an alternative ending – what might happen next, or what would you do?

Order for sequencing activities:

- 1 Talk briefly with the child about the basic event and think together about all the vocabulary you might need to talk about the event. You may draw or write a mind map.
- 2 Look at the pictures and help the child to decide which is first and then order the other pictures. If you don't have pictures you might want to draw out a comic strip of the events that unfold to help the child re-tell the story later.
- 3 Ask the child to re-tell the story sequence using the pictures or comic strip pictures as a prompt. If the child misses out part or key words help them to form longer sentences and include all the information needed.
- 4 Get the child to re-tell the event and act it out. Making the task multi-sensory means that the child is more likely to re-call the events of the story. If there is opportunity, ask the child to give instructions to an adult or another child to carry out a task i.e. make a drink. This will give them immediate visual feedback about the accuracy of their own sequence of instructions.
- 5 If there is the opportunity ask the child to re-tell the event to another adult with or without the pictures to prompt.
- 6 The next time you work with that child see what parts of the story sequence they can remember. They may need the pictures to prompt them.

Useful Vocabulary:

When working on sequencing, you may need to reinforce or specifically teach certain words and concepts. These include:



Ensure that the child understands these concepts, and continue to use them consistently throughout your sequencing activities.

Time







Time is an abstract concept which many children can struggle with. Sometimes it may be useful to specifically work on 'when' and the concept of time in relation to the child's own experiences.

Concrete Units of Time:

-  Times of day
-  Days of the week
-  Months of the year
-  Seasons
-  Years

Parts of the day can be taught through visual timetables, e.g. activities in the morning could be colour-coded as distinct from afternoon activities. Think about what events relate to times of the day i.e. when do you go to sleep/when do you go to school.

Abstract Concepts of Time:







-  Earlier
-  In a minute
-  Soon
-  Nearly
-  Later
-  In a while

Timelines:

Children may struggle with concepts of past events –timelines can be very useful for making this explicit.

Washing line timelines (for younger children):

Start by getting a length of string and making a 'washing line' by tying it to something at each end. Get some photos, pictures or symbols representing different events or time. An example of a simple timeline for younger children is:

-  Sun comes up
-  Wake up
-  Go to school
-  Come home
-  Eat dinner
-  Go to bed

Attach the pictures or symbols to pegs, and ask the child to peg them to the washing-line. The visual representation will help the child to develop an understanding of time.

Generating Narratives

- Children need practice in re-telling simple stories, and then more complex ones, before moving on to generating their own narratives.
- They need to explicitly understand all the story elements, e.g. who, where, what happened first/next/last.
- Visual resources such as writing frames may help children who have difficulty generating their own narratives.

Re-tell simple stories first



Move to generating own stories



Teach children a structured framework for story telling



Using appropriate question words



Incorporate reasoning and prediction

Links to the National Curriculum:






Schools may already be familiar with ideas from:

- The Story Maker's Chest: Creative Writing Set, by Pie Corbett.
- The Story Mountain and story plans

What can you do?

How can we use our language to support children in using theirs?

If a child makes mistakes in a sentence, help them to repair it:

-  Adjust order
-  Reinterpret
-  Add missing vocabulary
-  Add grammatical words
-  Leave pauses for them to add more words or repeat your ideas

Example of repair:

Adult: “what’s the festival?”

Child: “you take this one, all the way to along straightaway and lock the door and come to the river to come”

Adult: Option 1: “when is this festival?” ❌

By moving onto a different question, the adult hasn’t given the child any opportunity to address the errors in her sentence. The child may assume that there was nothing wrong with what she said, or that the adult understood it.

Option 2: “tell me that again” ❌







This tells the child that the adult hasn’t understood, but it doesn’t tell her exactly what was difficult to understand, or give her any support with repairing the sentence

Option 3: “in the festival, you go to a river...” ✅

This helps the child to order her sentence properly, by re-phrasing part of the sentence, adding the correct grammar, and also leaving a space for the child to add the next part.

Black Sheep Narrative Packs/resources

The Black Sheep Press has developed a series of narrative packs which are an excellent resource for working with children in schools.

-  They offer a highly structured programme
-  They are based on meaningful activities
-  They use colour, symbol support to visually reinforce understanding
-  Introduces story components and builds them up into a story structure
-  Moves from re-telling to story generation
-  Are session-planned with resources for school staff to run as a group

WIG3C - Nursery Narrative Pack

Introduces the narrative framework through attractive visual resources. Aimed at addressing poor listening and language skills of children entering nursery. The pack complements topic-based curriculum activities and includes full instructions and lesson plans, with carry over ideas for use in class. Ideal for small group sessions.

WIG4C - Reception Narrative Pack

Introduces the narrative framework using a format which complements Literacy Hour and Curriculum topics. Ideal for small group settings but can be used for whole class teaching.

WIG1 - Speaking and Listening Through Narrative

A complete set of lesson plans to introduce and develop narrative skills in young children (KS1). The framework can be applied to many classroom activities e.g. story planning, story comprehension, retelling events, explanations in verbal and written form

WIG9 – From Oral to Written Narrative, KS2

Aims to develop story-writing skills. This pack reinforces the narrative framework, and extends it into supporting 6 of the 12 strands of learning in the revised literacy framework: Speaking, listening & responding, Understanding & interpreting texts, Engaging & responding to texts, Creating and shaping texts, Text structure & organisation. Includes complete lesson plans, worksheets and illustrations to introduce concepts such as Descriptive Language, Problems & solutions, Feelings, Recording dialogue, Questions, Statements & Exclamations. Many activities are graded to suit differing ability levels. Suitable for whole class or small group teaching.

WIG 7 – Fun with Narrative

Sets of lesson plans and picture resources which link the narrative framework to familiar classroom texts, in a whole class context – texts include The Gruffalo, Peace at Last and The Tiger Who Came to Tea.

WIG5 – Story Starters

An extensive set of illustrations linked to a structured narrative framework which enables children to construct both oral and written story sequences

WIG6 – Secondary Talk Narrative, KS3/4

Information in grid form illustrating the types of narrative styles required across the secondary curriculum and how to support these using the narrative templates. A 'pick and mix' range of example templates that can be used as they stand and/or further adapted for use in other tasks/ settings. An expanded range of Narrative Symbols specifically designed for an older age group

CIP1 – Time

Teaches understanding and use of the basic vocabulary of time e.g. minutes, seconds. Clear instructions are provided on each page making them ideal for clinic, home and/or school for drill and practice.



CIP2 – Before/After

An attractive set of games and activities to teach this vital concept. Suitable for teaching sequencing skills.

CIP3 – Parts of the Day

A range of games and activities to teach vocabulary linked to parts of the day e.g. morning; night; bedtime etc. The pack includes lots of games, which can be played in one to one or group settings, and is ideal for school or home programmes.








Other resources and information:**Victoria Joffe:**

-  <http://www.speechmark.net/vocabulary-enrichment-programme-14746>
-  Narrative Intervention Pack (2011) Speechmark. ISBN 978-0863887970

Pie Corbett:

-  <http://www.piecorbett.org.uk/>

Speechmark Colour Cards:

-  <http://www.speechmark.net/category/speechlanguagecolorcards>
-  Simple Sequences (2003)
-  Basic Sequences (2001)
-  Sequences: 4-step (2004)
-  Cause and Effect (1997)
-  Storycards Narrative (2007)
-  Story Starters (2009)

Useful Resources for Parents:



Write Your Own Storybook by Louie Stowell and Jane Chisholm - ISBN-10: 1409523357

The first half of the book is full of writing tips, techniques and methods for children to make their own stories. It has lots of visual prompts and frames. Has helpful activities on coming up with ideas, writing from different points of view and creating characters, settings and story lines. The second half of the book is full of story themes to write about, from murder mysteries to tales from outer space.

The Creativity Hub Rory's Story Cubes by The Creativity Hub

How it works: Simply roll all 9 dice, examine each of the face-up images and let them guide your imagination through a story that begins with "Once upon a time...". The uses for Rory's Story Cubes are boundless. Play them while travelling, waiting in a restaurant, in the classroom, as an icebreaker, for idea generation, or to make learning a new language more fun.

Others in series:

-  The Creativity Hub Rory's Story Cubes - Actions
-  Rorys Story Cubes: Voyages