



How to Learn a New Story

This is not as difficult as you might think. Once you have used this technique with simple and short stories you will find it easy to learn longer and more involved stories.

Choose a story you heard when you were a child – or a story you have read to children. It is easiest to choose one of the ‘nursery’ tales such as Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs etc. because they have a simple structure and were rooted in oral traditions.

At all stages you must **speak aloud**. You need to **hear the words**.

Try to **see** the pictures in the story – **be there in the story** and this will help you to remember it. As Stanley Robertson says, you need to “go to the land where stories grow”.

Scan the story quickly

Tell yourself (or a partner) **about** the story – just the main points in a couple of sentences. E.g. *This is a story about three pigs who had to build themselves houses so that the wolf would not get them...*

Read the story

Only check the main points. Do not worry about the way the author describes characters or places. You only need the **characters** and the **sequence of events**. You want the **skeleton** of the story.

Tell the bare bones

Once upon a time there were three pigs and their mother said they had to leave home and look after themselves. She warned them about the big bad wolf. They set off and along the way they met...

Re-read ONLY if you have lost the plot!

Make the story your own

Relax and tell the story again and this time just let it happen. You will find your own **natural** way of telling this story. You might be telling in Scots, or choosing ‘voices’ for characters, adding some description, etc.

Shaping the story

Once you are at ease with the story, you might think about the main character, or the villain, and develop them to give a special angle to the story – to make this story *your* story. Tell the story again and again until you find it *feels* like your story.

Tell the story

You are now ready to tell the story. Remember, this is *your* story and it will be different from any story in a book. Every time you tell the story you will shape it further and it will change. It will also change according to the audience listening to you.

Judy Paterson 2007

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