

How to Pick a Story

How do you determine if a story will work for you? As a beginning storyteller, you must go through the exciting but time-consuming task of finding a story you want to tell. There are thousands to choose from, so how do you narrow your search?

Begin by seeking out a story with a simple, straightforward narrative and few characters and plot devices. Make your approach to these first stories straightforward and simple so that you and the listener have fun. Make sure that the story is not so long that it will be difficult to tell it well, and remember that children enjoy stories with lots of action.

In your search for stories to tell, seek out stories that surprise you. You will find that what surprises you can vary. Sometimes it might be a unique retelling of a familiar tale or perhaps a wild twist in the plot. Surprise endings are always fun. Whatever it is that surprises you about the story is what is going to help making telling the story enjoyable for you.

Conversely, if you know a story's ending from the very beginning, it will be difficult to create excitement in your telling. If you were not dazzled by some aspect of the story, your listeners won't be either and your performance may be listless.

Never tell a story you don't like. There are enough stories out there that you will eventually discover one you are drawn to and wish to share.

Think of stories like jokes -- if you heard a joke that you didn't think was funny, you wouldn't pass it on, would you? But if it made you laugh, you can't wait to tell another person. A story is a gift you can't wait to share.