Writing Through Play

A Gentle Introduction

Book 1

Free Download



Every story begins long before a pencil touches the page. ♥

Hello, and welcome.

You might be surprised to discover that you're already helping your child become a writer.

Every story begins long before a pencil touches the page.
Perhaps you have watched a cardboard box become a castle.
Perhaps you have heard a teddy bear having a very important conversation.
Perhaps you have been invited to tea by a dinosaur, rescued by a pirate or asked to help a dragon find its missing treasure.

Those moments matter.

Children begin building stories when they listen, talk, pretend, sing, wonder, invent and play.

They are discovering characters.
They are imagining places.
They are wondering what might happen next.
And they are learning that their own ideas are worth sharing.

Writing does not have to come first
Throughout this series, children can take part in whatever way works for them.
They might:

- **talk about an idea**
- **draw it**
- **act it out**
- **build it**
- **choose between different possibilities**
- **record themselves telling a story**
- **ask an adult to write their words down**
- **or write for themselves when they are ready**

The important part is the story thinking.

How Writing Through Play works
We begin by giving children something interesting to do, explore or imagine.
Then we give them time to play with the idea.
Along the way, we gently invite them to notice what they have discovered — perhaps something about a character, a place, a conversation or what makes a story exciting.

Those discoveries become the starting point for the next adventure.
There is no need to rush.
There are no perfect answers to find.
Just stories waiting to grow.

Before children fall in love with writing...
they first fall in love with stories.

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What Children Build When They Play

Stories grow from all sorts of experiences.
Listening to a favourite story.
Singing a silly song.
Making two toys argue over the last biscuit.
Building a den and deciding who lives there.
Wondering what might be hiding behind a mysterious door.
It may simply look like play.

But while children are playing, they are discovering many of the things that storytellers use every day.

🟢 **Imagination**
Creating new ideas, possibilities, characters and worlds.

🟢 **Confidence**
Discovering that their own ideas are worth sharing.

🟢 **Vocabulary**
Finding new words through stories, conversations and everyday experiences.

🟢 **Understanding Characters**
Thinking about what someone might want, feel, fear or do next.

🟢 **Sequencing**
Beginning to understand that one thing happens, then another — and that events can be put into an order.

🟢 **Curiosity**
Asking questions, noticing details and wondering, **"What if...?"**

🟢 **Empathy**
Imagining how the world might look or feel from somebody else's point of view.

🟢 **Problem Solving**
Thinking about what could happen when something goes wrong — and finding different ways forward.

🟢 **Storytelling**
Bringing ideas together and sharing them through talking, drawing, acting, making or writing.

And none of this has to look like a lesson.
A child playing with a toy dragon may be exploring character.
A cardboard-box spaceship might become a setting.
A missing teddy could create a story problem.
A made-up conversation may become dialogue.

The learning is already there.
We simply help children notice what they have discovered.

Your Writing Journey

There is no single route into writing.
Some children begin with characters.
Some invent extraordinary places.
Some love acting out conversations.
Others collect ideas, draw pictures, build worlds or tell long stories aloud before they ever want to write them down.
Writing Through Play begins with what the child can already do — and builds from there.
You can move through the books in order, return to favourite activities or spend longer wherever curiosity takes you.
An activity might last ten minutes.
It might also spark an afternoon of drawing, building, talking, researching, role play or storytelling.
Both are valuable.
Children may return to an activity and discover something completely different the next time.
That isn't simply repeating it.
It is using an idea in a new way.

💚 How the journey grows

Throughout the series, children are invited to:

- Explore something through play, conversation, imagination or making.
- Notice what happened and what interested them.
- Discover something about stories and how they work.
- Use that discovery when they meet the next challenge.
- Little by little, separate ideas begin to connect.
- A character finds a place to belong.
- A place creates possibilities.
- A problem gives the character something to do.
- Conversations reveal personality.
- Events begin to form a story.

And eventually, writing becomes another way of capturing and sharing those ideas.

🌱 A Gentle Journey Through the Series

📖 Book 1 – A Gentle Introduction (This Book)

Discover where stories begin through listening, talking, observing, imagining, playing and sharing ideas.

↓

🎭 Book 2 – Meet Your Characters

Discover how memorable characters grow from simple ideas into characters readers will remember.

🏰 Book 3 – Explore Your Story World

Explore exciting settings and discover how places can become part of the story.

⚡ Book 4 – Story Problems and Adventures

Find out how exciting problems, mysteries and surprises keep stories moving.

✍️ And Beyond...

Bring characters, settings, conversations and events together as stories become more detailed and writing skills are introduced naturally, one step at a time.

💚 The story comes first
First we build the storyteller.
Then we give that storyteller more and more ways to share their stories.

Activity 1 – Favourite Stories

Stories are everywhere.



They might be in:

- books and comics
- films and television
- audiobooks and podcasts
- games and adventures
- songs and poems
- stories someone tells you
- stories you make up yourself

Think of a story you really enjoy.

It doesn't have to be your favourite ever.
Just choose one you know well.

Have a think...

What is the first thing you remember about it?

Was it...

- a character?
- a place?
- something funny?
- something surprising?
- a worrying moment?
- something exciting?

Talk about it, draw it, act out the bit you remember — or simply tell someone about it.

Now look a little closer

What keeps pulling you back to that story?

Perhaps you love the character.

Perhaps you would like to explore its world.

Perhaps you enjoy the humour, the mystery or the adventure.

Perhaps there is one particular moment you always wait for.



What did you notice about the kind of stories you enjoy?

You might discover something about yourself as a storyteller too.

Maybe you love strange characters.

Maybe you like mysterious places.

Maybe you want something exciting to happen.

Maybe you enjoy stories that make you laugh.

Keep that discovery in mind.

In the next activity, we are going to start with something much smaller...

one ordinary object — and see what stories might be hiding inside it.

Small things. Big stories.

Stories make a kinder, brighter world

Activity 2 – The Mystery Object

Sometimes the smallest objects can hide the biggest stories.

Collect one interesting object from your home or garden.

It could be:

- 🪶 **a feather**
- 🪨 **a smooth stone**
- 🐚 **a shell**
- 🔑 **an old key**
- 🍂 **a leaf**
- 🧵 **a button**
- 🌰 **a pine cone**

or anything else that catches your eye.

🟢 Have A Go

Take a really good look at your object.

Pick it up if you can. Turn it over. Look at it from different angles.

What can you notice?

Is it...

- smooth or rough?
- heavy or light?
- bright or faded?
- old-looking or new?
- scratched, bent, cracked or worn?
- completely ordinary — or a little unusual?

Look for one tiny detail you didn't notice at first.

Try This

Now stop looking at what you know about the object and start wondering.

Where might it have been?
Who might have owned it?
How did it get here?
Has it been lost?
Was it hidden?
Could it have travelled a long way?
What might have happened just before you found it?
You can make the answers as realistic, strange, funny or impossible as you like.



🟠 Ask Someone

Show your object to somebody else.
Don't tell them your ideas yet.
Ask:
"What do you think the story behind this could be?"
Did they notice something you missed?
Did they imagine the same story as you — or something completely different?

Did You Know?

Writers often use observation to find story ideas.
A mark on an old key, a torn photograph or a strange shell can make us start asking questions.
And questions such as...
Who? Where? Why? How? What happened?
...can turn an ordinary object into the beginning of a story.

🌱 What Did You Discover?

What was the first question that made your imagination start working?
Keep that object — or the idea it gave you — in mind.

Activity 3 – If This Could Talk...

What if an ordinary object suddenly had something to say?

Look around you and choose one object.
It might be:

- 🧸 **a toy**
- ☕ **a mug**
- ✏️ **a pencil**
- 🔑 **a key**
- 🐚 **a shell**
- 👟 **a shoe**
- 📚 **a book**

...or absolutely anything else you can find.

🟢 Have A Go

Imagine your object suddenly starts talking. What is the very first thing it says?

Does it sound...

- 😊 cheerful?
- 😠 grumpy?
- 🤩 excited?
- 😳 nervous?
- 🤫 mysterious?

Try saying the words out loud in the voice you imagine it would use.

Try This

Now have a conversation with it.

You could ask:

- Where have you been?
- What have you seen?
- Is there something you want?
- Do you have a secret?
- What do you think about the people who use you?

But your object doesn't have to answer sensibly.
Perhaps your pencil is furious because nobody ever asks where it wants to draw.
Perhaps your shoe dreams of travelling around the world.
Perhaps an old key refuses to tell you which door it opens.
See where the conversation takes you.

🟠 Ask Someone

Give somebody else the same object.

Ask them:

"If this could talk, what would it say?"

Did they give it the same kind of personality as you?

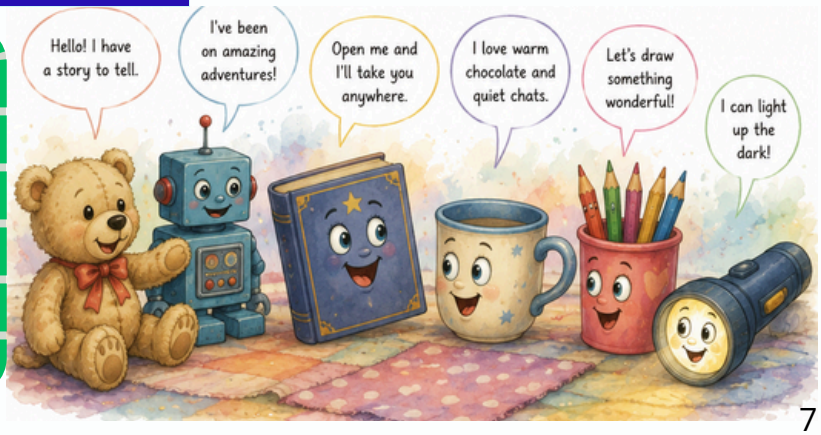
Or did your ordinary object become a completely different character?

Did You Know?

When characters talk to each other in a story, their conversation is called dialogue.
Dialogue can tell us much more than the words themselves.
The way somebody speaks can help us discover whether they are funny, impatient, brave, worried, bossy, shy — or something else entirely.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

Did the way your object spoke give it a personality?
What did you discover about it that you hadn't imagined before?
Keep that personality in mind...
Because next we are going to meet a character who may have been travelling with you all along.



Activity 4 – A Character in Your Pocket

Imagine you discover someone tiny living in your pocket...
Perhaps they have been travelling around with you all day.
And somehow...
you have only just noticed them.

They could be:
🐉 a tiny dragon
🤖 a miniature robot
🐭 a brave little mouse
🧚 a fairy
👽 a visitor from somewhere far away
🦜 a colourful bird
...or someone nobody has ever imagined before.

🟢 Have A Go

Close your eyes for a moment and picture your tiny companion.
What is the first thing you notice about them?

Perhaps it is:

- the way they look
- something they are wearing
- the sound they make
- the way they move
- something they are carrying
- the expression on their face

Now imagine them climbing out of your pocket.

What do they do first?

Try This

Take your character somewhere with you — for real or in your imagination.

What happens when they see the world from their tiny point of view?

- Would a staircase look enormous?
- Could a puddle become a lake?
- Would your pet seem like a giant creature?
- Would they hide from somebody — or rush straight over to investigate?
- See what your character chooses to do.
- Their actions might tell you more about them than their appearance does.

🟠 Ask Someone

Tell somebody about your tiny character.
But leave out one thing:
Don't tell them what your character is like.

Instead, tell them something your character did.

Then ask:

"What kind of character do you think they might be?"

Did they imagine them as brave, curious, mischievous, shy, bossy, kind — or something completely different?



Did You Know?

A character's personality is the collection of qualities that make them who they are.
Writers don't always have to tell us:
"She was brave."
Sometimes they let us discover it by showing what the character does.
If someone walks into a dark cave while everyone else stays outside...
we might begin to decide for ourselves.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

What did your character do that told you something about their personality?
Keep your new companion nearby.
Because every character needs somewhere for their story to happen...

Activity 5

Where Do They Live?

Every story character has a special place they call home.

Can you help each character find where they live?

Draw a line to match them together.

1 The Three Bears	•
2 Peter Rabbit	•
3 The Little Mermaid	•
4 A Pirate	•
5 Jack	•
6 A Princess	•
7 An Astronaut	•
8 Little Red Riding Hood	•

Which place would you most like to visit?

- Why?
- What do you think you would see there?
- Who would you meet?
- Would you stay for a day... or longer?



Turn the page to explore our Story Map!



Can you spot...


a butterfly


a dragon


a fairy


a colourful bird


a frog


something you would like to visit!


What else can you discover?

Activity 6 – What's in a Name?

A name can make us imagine a character before we have even met them.
Some names sound brave.
Some sound mysterious.
Some sound gentle.
And some are just wonderfully ridiculous.

🟢 Have A Go

Match each name to the character you think it belongs to.
There are no right or wrong answers.

Which match made you laugh the most?

Names	Characters
Captain Crumble	Giant
Princess Petal	Mouse
Sir Stumbles-a-Lot	Unicorn
Professor Puff	Pirate
Daisy Dandelion	Fairy
Percy Picklepants	Dragon
Wobblebottom	Robot
Twinkle Toes	Knight
Giggles McGee	Wizard
Naughty Nibbles	Wolf
Bouncing Bertie	King
Mischievous Molly	Alien

Try This

Now change things around.

Give one character a name that seems completely unexpected.
Could a fierce dragon be called Daisy Dandelion?
Could a tiny mouse be Captain Thunder?
Could a mysterious wizard have a very ordinary name?
Then invent a name of your own.
You could start with:

- something about the character
- something they like
- the way they move
- the sound of the words
- or simply a name that makes you smile

🟠 Tell Someone

Tell somebody only the name of your character.

Ask:

"What kind of character do you think they might be?"
Did they imagine them as brave, curious, mischievous, shy, bossy, kind — or something completely different?

Did You Know?

Sometimes writers use **alliteration** when they create names.
Alliteration happens when nearby words begin with the same sound.
For example:
Mischievous Molly
Bouncing Bertie
Princess Petal
It can make a name catchy, funny or easier to remember.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

Did a name change the way you imagined a character?
Perhaps the sound of a name made someone seem funny, mysterious, powerful or gentle.
Keep one character and one name you particularly like.
Next, we're going to give our characters something every storyteller needs... someone to tell the story with.

Sometimes writers discover the character first and find the right name later.

Activity 7

Let's Tell a Story Together!

Stories are even more fun when we tell them together.

One person begins the story with just one or two sentences.

The next person listens carefully... then adds the next part.

Keep taking turns until your story reaches the end.

You never know where your adventure might lead!

Here's a story starter...

One sunny morning there was a loud knock at the castle door...

What happened next?

- Take turns adding to the adventure.
- Listen carefully before it's your turn.
- Your next sentence should build on what the last person said.
- The funniest stories are often the ones nobody expected!

Anything can happen!



Where will your story go?



🌱 ***What Did You Discover?***

Did somebody add an idea you weren't expecting?

What happened to the story when everyone brought something different to it?

A story can travel somewhere completely new when we listen to each other's ideas.

Activity 8 – Story Surprise!

Stories can begin when a few simple ideas collide.

🟢 Have A Go

Choose one from each group.

Choose a Character

- 🧙 a wizard
- 🏴‍☠️ a pirate
- 👸 a princess
- 🐉 a dragon
- 🤖 a robot
- 🧚 a fairy

Choose a Place

- 🏰 a castle
- 🌊 under the sea
- 🌳 a forest
- 🚀 space
- 🏝️ a desert island
- 🏠 a little cottage

Choose a Problem

- 🔍 something has disappeared
- ⛈️ a huge storm is coming
- 🧭 someone is lost
- 🎁 a mysterious parcel has arrived
- 🐲 a dragon needs help
- 🚪 a secret door has appeared

Now put your three choices together.
What could happen?

Try This

Now change just one part of your story.

Keep the same character and place — but choose a different problem.

Or keep the same problem and character — but move the story somewhere else.

What changed?

Did your story become:

- funnier?
- more mysterious?
- more exciting?
- more surprising?

Sometimes the smallest change creates a completely new adventure.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

Which part changed your story the most — the character, the place or the problem?

Keep your favourite story idea in mind.

Because next, we are going to find another way to hold onto a story idea...

without needing to write the whole story down.



Now see where your imagination takes you as you tell the story together.
Every combination creates a completely new adventure!

Activity 9 – Draw Your Story

Stories don't always begin with words.
Sometimes they begin with pictures.

🟢 Have A Go

Choose a story idea.

You can use one from the last activity, or invent a completely new one.

Think about:

- who is in your story
- where it happens
- what happens
- how it ends

You do not need to write the whole story.

Just get ready to hold onto it in pictures.

🟠 Show Someone

When your pictures are finished, show them to somebody.

Ask:

"What do you think is happening in my story?"

Then tell them the story you imagined.

Did they understand it the same way?

Or did they notice something new?

Try This

Before you begin drawing, think of one small detail you might add.

It could be:

- a face showing how someone feels
- an important object
- something happening in the background
- a clue that something is about to change

Sometimes one tiny detail can make a story clearer or more interesting.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

Did drawing your story help you see what happened first, next and last?

Sometimes a story changes while we are drawing it.

Sometimes a new idea appears along the way.

That is all part of storytelling.

Turn the page and draw your story...



Writing Through Play

Book 1



My Story in Four Pictures

Big ideas start somewhere...

1 — Who and where?

2 — What happens next?

3 — Something changes...

4 — How does it end?

Stick people, symbols and quick sketches are all welcome — these pictures are for holding onto your ideas, not making perfect artwork.



Activity 10 – Collect Your Story Treasures

Great stories don't always arrive fully formed.
Sometimes they begin with one tiny thing worth remembering.

It might be...

🍂 **something you found**
📸 **a photograph**
🎫 **an old ticket**
🪶 **a feather**
🗺️ **a map**
😂 **a joke**
💭 **a dream**
✏️ **a funny word**
💬 **something somebody said**
⭐ **one interesting idea**

🟢 Have A Go

Find one story treasure today.

It doesn't have to look important.
Choose something that makes you:
notice... wonder... remember... or imagine.
Keep it somewhere safe.
You could use:

- 📦 a box
- 📒 a notebook
- 📁 a folder
- 📷 a photograph
- 🎙️ a voice recording
- ✏️ a quick sketch

You don't even have to know what the idea is for yet.

Try This

Choose one treasure from your collection.

Look at it again and ask:

What could this become?

A character?
A place?
A problem?
A mystery?
The beginning of a conversation?
You don't have to make a whole story.
Just see whether the treasure gives you one new idea.

🟠 Show Someone

Choose one of your story treasures and show it to somebody else.

Ask:

"What does this make you imagine?"

Did they see something completely different in it?
Sometimes one small thing can hold more than one story.

🌱 *What Did You Discover?*

Which kind of story treasure gives you the most ideas?
An object? A picture? A word? A memory?
Something you heard?
There is no single right place for stories to begin.
Keep collecting the things that make your imagination wake up.

Because this may be the last activity in Book 1...
but it is only the beginning of your story journey.

Did You Know?

Many writers keep collections of ideas.
They might save interesting words, overheard conversations, photographs, sketches, questions or little pieces of information.
Some people call these story seeds because one small idea can grow into something much bigger.

🌟 Your Story Adventure Has Only Just Begun...

Look how much you've discovered already!
You've...
📚 listened to stories.
👀 looked closely at interesting things.
💬 imagined what objects might say.
😊 met new characters.
🏡 explored wonderful places.
😂 laughed at funny names.
📖 told stories together.
✨ mixed story ideas.
🎨 drawn stories in pictures
💎 collected story treasures.

Every great story begins with just one little idea.
Sometimes it's a character.
Sometimes it's a place.
Sometimes it's a problem waiting to be solved.

Every wonderful story starts somewhere.
Sometimes...
it starts with
"What if...?"
Keep wondering.
Keep playing.
Keep telling stories.

🌈 What's next?
This is just the beginning of your Writing Through Play adventure.
In the next books we'll discover...
🎭 unforgettable characters
🏰 amazing story worlds
⚡ exciting problems and adventures
📖 and how all these wonderful ideas grow into stories of your own.

We can't wait to explore them with you!

We'll see you in
Book 2 — Meet Your Characters.
Every story begins long before a pencil touches the page.