

# STORYTELLING: PERFORMANCE SKILLS

The discussions surrounding storytellers should lead students to understand that **storytelling is a lot more than just reading aloud**. You can use the ‘ingredients’ you developed with students in ‘What Makes a Great Storyteller’ to help frame the following activities.

## BECOME A STORYTELLER

Discuss with students the sorts of **creative tools** a storyteller takes to the job (alternatively reflect on the ingredients / recipe created in ‘What Makes a Great Storyteller’)

### Creative Tools of a Storyteller

- Words (the story)
- Verbal Communication Skills (the way you speak / how you)
- Non-Verbal Communication Skills (the things you don’t say)
- Imagination
- Confidence
- Props
- Costumes
- Listening Skills

## **STEP ONE | Getting ready to tell a story - Verbal Communication**

Discuss with students how storytelling is more than just reading the words of a story out loud. It takes other skills as well.

It is important to be able to use a range of vocal tones when you are telling a story. If your voice stays at the same level, it will become boring and your audience will stop listening. To tell a story, you want your voice to go higher and lower, louder and softer. These games will help you learn how to use your voice to become a great storyteller.

### **FOCUS ON: Pitch, Pace, Pause and Projection**

Encourage students to play with their voices / vocal quality. Consider **the 4 Ps** and how ask students to say "Hello, my name is xxx" using:

- Higher / lower pitch than usual
- Faster / slower pace than usual
- Adding pauses for effect
- Louder / softer projection than usual

Listen for what those changes to voice do and consider how changes to voice make us think of different characters or personalities or emotions. Discuss with the students. Some may like to present their different use of voice to the class.

You may like to extend this activity by having students practice reading texts out loud to a partner or small group.

Find an age appropriate piece of text and ask students to change their voice as they read it.

Encourage them to let their voices go loud and soft, fast and slow, low and high.

### **FOCUS ON: Expression**

Explain to students that **it's not what you say, it's how you say it ...**

Give students a simple, boring sentence – something along the lines of "I like ice-cream."

Ask each student to say the sentence in a different way.

Alternatively, provide students with the prompts to assist them in experimenting with vocal expression and discovering how what they mean isn't always what they say. Prompt the students to speak the line as if:

- You don't really like ice-cream at all (sarcastic)
- You want your friend to share their ice-cream with you (pleading)
- You ate way too much ice-cream (sick)
- You are having an argument with someone (angry)
- You have just had your first taste of ice-cream, ever (excited)
- You eat ice-cream every, single day (bored)

Count 1 to 10: Explain to students that they have some lines to learn, like an actor. They already know these lines – they are simple, just counting from one through to ten.

Ask student to say ‘their lines’ (count) out loud with the following prompts:

- As if you are an angry mum or dad who is giving their child until the count of ten to clean up the big mess they made ...
- As a very little child just learning to count...
- As if you think everyone forgot your birthday but, wait a second, there are ten, wrapped presents sitting in the lounge-room ... count them ...
- As if you are a referee for a boxing match and you are counting someone out.
- As if you are counting dollar coins as you drop them into a piggy bank.

## **STEP TWO | Getting ready to tell a story – Non-Verbal Communication**

Discuss with students how storytelling isn’t just words and verbal communication. It is also non-verbal communication.

If verbal communication is how we speak and use words, ask students what they think non-verbal communication is.

Discuss with students the different elements of non-verbal communication and use these activities to explore facial expression, movement, gesture and posture.

### **FOCUS ON: Movement**

**Walk This Way** is a silent, non-verbal activity. Explain to students that there is no need to use voice at all – show, don’t tell!

Ask students to move around the room, on their own without touching or speaking with anyone else.

Prompt them to walk / move as if they are;

- on hot sand
- in slimy mud
- at the beach and the water is up to their ankles
- at the beach and the water is up to their knees
- heading up to the stage to collect a merit certificate / award from the Principal (could try this as proud and then shy and then embarrassed)
- on their way to the Principal’s office to get in trouble
- getting away from an angry dog
- making their way through the snow
- getting drenched by the rain
- in the spooky graveyard at midnight

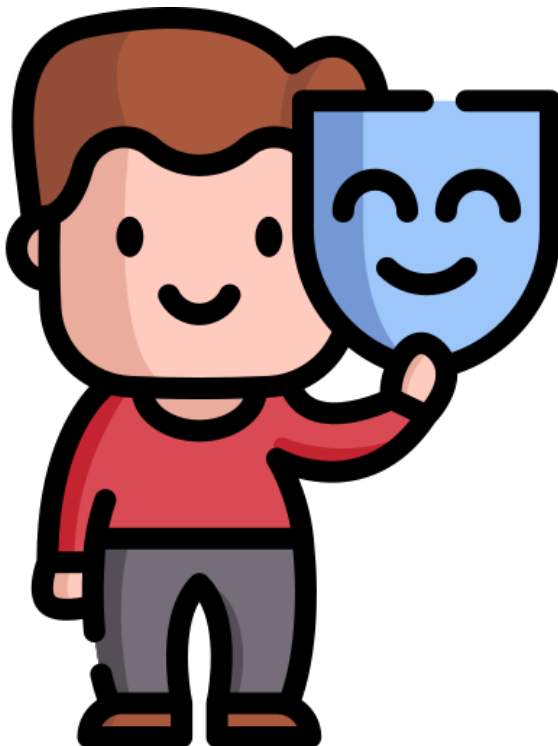
### **Activity - H.A.S.H (happy-angry-sad-happy)**

Ask students to only use their facial expression and move from a happy to an angry to a sad and back to a happy expression. It is always fun to film these, if possible, and let the students see the result.










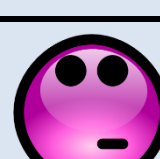
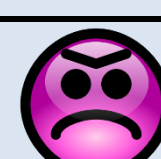

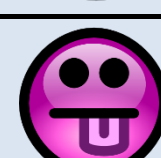
### **Activity - Guess the emotion**

Use the List of Emotions (see next page) and place them in a hat for students to choose at random. Or, if teaching remotely, send the student their emotion via a message. Ensure that no-one else sees the emotion they choose – the rest of the class will be guessing the emotion.

Give students a moment to prepare their emotion before presenting to the class. Ask them to use all their non-verbal tools: facial expression, body language, gesture, posture etc. to 'perform' the emotion non-verbally to the rest of the class.



## EMOTIONS

 CONFIDENT	 PROUD
 FRUSTRATED	 MISERABLE
 MISCHIEVOUS	 SLEEPY
 SHY	 EXCITED
 BORED	 SCARED
 LONELY	 GRUMPY
 JOY	 DISGUSTED

MORE OPTIONS ...

ANGRY	AMAZED	CAUTIOUS
CONFUSED	CURIOUS	DETERMINED
DISAPPOINTED	ENTHUSIASTIC	HAPPY
HOPEFUL	JEALOUS	LOVE-STRUCK
MISERABLE	NERVOUS	SAD
SHOCK	SURPRISED	THOUGHTFUL

## Tell Your Story – Storytelling and Personal Narrative

Develop the stories created in 'Create a Story' as the scripts for storytelling or you might like to use the 'Engaging Stories' worksheet (following page), which provide students with a prompt from which to write their own (fictional) story.

Have students practice telling the story to one person at a time. Listeners will need to be active and provide feedback to the storyteller as follows:

- Did the storyteller speak loudly enough?
- Did the storyteller seem to want to really tell me the story?
- Did the body language of the storyteller distract from or help the storytelling?
- Was the story clear?

You may like to form some specific questions for the storyteller to ask their listening partner. These may include:

- Did my story keep your attention?
- Could you picture what I said?
- Was I interesting to listen to?

With the class, create some self-reflection questions for the storyteller:

- Did I picture the story as I was telling it, without letting my mind wander?
- Did I use my voice in interesting ways?
- Did my words flow easily or was it difficult to find the words to express my thoughts?
- Did I use my body and facial expressions?

Students may like to consider the use of other elements to help enhance their story. Reflect on the elements seen in online storytelling performances. Consider how their own storytelling performance could be enhanced with Music, Props, Costumes and / or Set.

Encourage students to consider adding one element to their storytelling performance.

They will need time to rehearse their stories fully. Again, start with partners for feedback before moving into small groups. The primary goal is to help students feel confident speaking publicly and to encourage considerate group listening skills to support each storyteller.

If teaching remotely, you may like to arrange a Storytelling Festival Day and invite parents and friends into the 'virtual classroom' to hear and see these stories being shared.

The following worksheets have been designed to help with self and peer assessment of the stories, as well as a way to encourage students to rehearse and refine their performances.



## PEER Assessment

**My name:**

**Actor's Name:**

	Excellent	Good	Getting there
<b>Voice</b>	I could understand everything the actor said. The actor used their voice in interesting ways. The actor showed different characters and emotions through their voice. The actor used pauses to create suspense and atmosphere.	I could hear everything the actor said. The actor used their voice in interesting ways. The actor showed some different characters or emotions through their voice. There was some use of pause.	I could hear most of what the actor said. The actor sometimes used their voice in interesting ways.
<b>Body</b>	The actor used facial expression and body language to present different emotions and characters. The actor used eye-contact. The actor used their body to help tell the story.	The actor used some facial expression and body language to help tell their story. The actor looked at the audience. The actor started to use some movement to show character.	The actor used some facial expressions and body language. The actor started to look towards the audience.
<b>Story</b>	The story had a very interesting opening which grabbed my attention. The story kept my interest. The story had a conflict, climax and resolution.	The story had a good opening which got my attention. The story had a beginning, middle and end. The story held my attention.	The story had a beginning, middle and end. The story developed and made sense.

**COMMENTS:**



## SELF REFLECTION

**My name:**

	Excellent	Good	Getting there
<b>Voice</b>	I used my voice in interesting ways. I showed different characters and emotions through my voice. I used pauses to create suspense and atmosphere.	I used my voice in interesting ways. I showed some different characters or emotions through my voice. There was some use of pause.	I had a loud and clear voice. I sometimes used my voice in interesting ways.
<b>Body</b>	I used facial expression and body language to present different emotions and characters. I used eye-contact. I used my body to help tell the story.	I used some facial expression and body language to help tell my story. I looked at the audience. I started to use some movement to show character.	I used some facial expressions and body language. I started to look towards the audience.
<b>Story</b>	My story had a very interesting opening. The story kept the audience's interest. The story had a conflict, climax and resolution.	My story had a good opening. The story had a beginning, middle and end. The story held the audience's attention.	My story had a beginning, middle and end. The story developed and made sense.

Comments:

# Everyone has a story!

We decided the following ingredients are needed to make a good storyteller included:

- Expression
- Movement
- Emotion
- A strong voice

With these in mind, watch your partner's story and fill in the rubric.

Actor: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DEVELOPING
Expression	Puts a lot of expression in his voice to create character, mood and atmosphere.	Puts some expression in their voice to present character and mood.	Starting to put a little bit of expression in the voice but could use some more.
Movement	Uses gestures, body language and movement to engage the audience.	Occasionally uses gesture, body language and movement to get our interest.	Could use a lot more movement to help keep our interest.
Emotion	The actor chose a story that was funny or sad or scary or dramatic. It showed emotion (funny / sad / scary).	The actor chose an interesting story. There were some moments that showed emotion (funny / sad / scary).	The actor could have chosen a more interesting story. There was not quite enough emotion.
Strong Voice	The actor projected their voice really well. They spoke clearly and I could understand every word they said.	They spoke loudly and I could hear what they were saying.	They needed speak a little more loudly as it was difficult to always hear what they were saying.

One thing I liked about this performance was

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And don't forget to reflect on your own performance!

### SELF EVALUATION

MY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DEVELOPING
Expression	I put a lot of expression in my voice to create character, mood and atmosphere.	Put some expression in my voice to present character and mood.	Starting to put a little bit of expression in my voice but could use some more.
Movement	I use gestures, body language and movement to engage the audience.	I sometimes use gesture, body language and movement to get the audience's interest.	I could use a lot more movement to help keep the audiences' interest.
Emotion	I chose a story that was funny or sad or scary or dramatic. It showed emotion (funny / sad / scary).	I chose an interesting story. There were moments that showed emotion (funny / sad / scary).	I could have chosen a more interesting story. I only used one emotion.
Strong Voice	I projected my voice really well. I spoke clearly.	I spoke loudly and tried to slow down.	I needed to speak a little more loudly – I was a little quiet in places.

One thing I liked about my performance was

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One thing I would change is

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