

Martha Speaks: Sharing Family Stories

What's The Point

When we want to share a story with our children, we often look in a book. What about stories that are NOT written down—stories from our own history, shared out loud around the dinner table? Just like good books, these stories build vocabulary and support writing and sequencing skills. Open up the pages in your own history by connecting your child to a family story.

This Activity Will Help Your Child

- Build vocabulary
- Develop story sequencing skills
- Improve writing

Book Suggestions

- **FAMILY PICTURES**
by Carmen Lomas Garza
- **TELL ME A STORY, MAMA**
by Angela Johnson

Supplies

- A family member, such as a parent or grandparent
- Pencil and paper for notes
- 3 pieces of white paper
- Crayons or markers
- Recording device (optional)

How Do I Do It?

Interview a Family Member

1. Help your child choose a family member to interview.
2. Together, come up with three questions that will encourage a story from the past. You might consider questions like:
What was your most embarrassing moment?
How did you and Grandma meet?
What was the funniest memory you have of school?
3. Interview the family member.
4. Encourage your child to write down key words during the interview. You might also make a recording.

Build and Share a Story

1. Have your child choose her favorite story from the interview.
2. Together, break up the story into three main events: beginning, middle, and end.
3. Invite your child to draw a picture to represent each part.
4. Talk about the words she will use to tell each part of the story, referring to her notes or the recording.
5. Write the key words on the back of the appropriate papers as cues.
6. Create a title for the story.
7. Invite a friend or other family member to hear the story retold by your child. The pictures and key words will provide a guide.

Note: Many families live far apart from their relatives. This activity is a great way to connect over the phone. Oral stories can be shared easily no matter where you are.

Take It Further

Make a collection of family stories. Encourage your child to interview a variety of family members, gathering their stories in drawings or recordings. Organize the stories by character, date, or place. Share these stories orally with others.

Invite your child to think of a story from her own life. Identify the beginning, middle and end. Draw pictures and share this story with someone.

