

HOW TO TELL A TALE

Storytelling Basics by Brian "Fox" Ellis

* A good introduction needs to get their attention, get them ready to listen, and ease (or jolt!) them into the tale. Begin with:

Some history or background.
Something about the author or source.
A song or poem or chant.
A question or purpose for the listener.
Some intriguing sound effect.

* RELAX, take a deep breath, have fun, and let the story unfold.
A little nervousness is natural and helps you to focus.

* Use all of your tools:

VOICE...loud and clear, with feeling, changing tone, pace, accents,
and make sound effects.
BODY...use gestures, sign language, facial expressions, mime and dance!
IMAGINATION...make it up as you go along...live the story as you tell
it...take the audience with you.
SIX SENSES...describe flavors, smells, and textures...make noises, clap,
stomp, hoot, squeak...draw elaborate word pictures...tune into the audience,
watch and listen carefully to bring them under your magic spell!

* Involve the audience.

MAKE EYE CONTACT!!!

Ask questions: Have you ever felt,(seen, done), this before? Do you know
someone like this?
Local Metaphors: Compare elements of the story with tangible places, events
and people.(..as big as this room..)
Ask them to repeat key lines with you like a chorus.
Invite them to sing!
Give them a job or make them a character.

* Have a neat and tidy ending.

For example, "...and to this day..."

PAUSE for a moment of silence. BOW! Graciously accept their applause!

Each of you are different and will tell stories differently. Some will make great sound effects while others will excel in movement and mime. Find a style that feels comfortable to you. Try new things, experiment. Discard what does not fit and practice what feels right for you. Remember, you are already a teller of tales!

HOW TO LEARN THE STORY

* Chose a story you really enjoy and could imagine yourself telling. (If you don't love it, do you think they will?)

* Read it over several times

Once out loud for feeling, rhythm, and tone.
Once to get to know the characters.
(Imagine you are each of the characters.)
Once to get to know the place or setting.
(Imagine you are in that place.)
Once to learn the order of events.
(Write a brief outline of the 5 main events.)

* DO NOT MEMORIZE (unless you want to...)

Simply remember the important scenes, feelings, images, and phrases.
Remember the bare bones and flesh it out differently each time you tell it. Be
in your story and let YOUR words describe what is happening in your mind.

* PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE (These are the 3 keys to success.)

Tell the story to each family member, every friend who will listen, the dog, the
cat, the gold fish. In the beginning ask only for positive feed back: What are you doing
right? What is working? Later, when you are able to screen the good from bad, ask for
constructive criticism. Tell the story to a tape recorder or large mirror so you can critic
yourself.

* Research the story for accuracy and authenticity.

Read similar tales; look for different versions of the same tale. Discover more
about the characters. If possible, visit scenes from the story. For example, before you tell
a Mark Twain story, build a raft, float down a river, visit Hannibal Missouri, read some
of his other stories to add background knowledge, and rent videos to view different
adaptations of his material. This will add depth and breadth to your telling.

