

Retellings

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to retell or act out the order of important events in a story, develop vocabulary by listening to and discussing familiar stories, and identify words that name persons, places, and things as well as words that name actions.

What to do

Your child benefits from retelling events in chronological order. Practicing this skill with common events helps your child do this later with stories he or she has read or listened to.

The first time you help your child with the activity, be sure to point out the events prior to asking your child to retell them. For example, point out the way he or she gets dressed in the morning as each task is accomplished. Then, later in the day, ask your child to tell three things he or she did in order to get dressed.

As your child becomes better at doing this, the preparation work will not be as important. Encourage your child to retell common events, such as setting the table, ordering ice cream, taking a bath, or putting on pajamas.

Extending the activity

- ✦ Encourage your child to use proper terms to describe the events that occur. Help him or her use new vocabulary words as well.
- ✦ Some children benefit from using objects in the retellings. You might draw three or four boxes (about 4-inch-square). Then ask your child to draw a different event in each box. For example, to describe coming home from school, your child might draw walking in the door, putting the backpack on the table, hanging up a coat, and getting a snack. Then cut the boxes apart and challenge your child to arrange them in order.

Reading Comprehension

Retellings (continued)

- ✦ Ask your child to organize photographs of a family outing in the order in which they happened. Or take photos of a common event and have your child arrange them in order while orally telling the story.

More questions to ask

- ✦ Asking, “What happened next?” or “What happened before?” helps your child learn that events occur in a sequence.
- ✦ Introduce some “what if” ideas to a story. Ask your child to describe how the story would change if a particular thing was different or did not occur.

What your child is practicing

Retelling events helps your child understand the idea of sequence and the elements (character, setting, problem, and solution) of a story. Often it is easier to identify these in something he or she has participated in rather than in a story read to him or her.