

Story-telling is virtually the oldest form of communication and in many ways is the most successful. It is personal, it is immediate, and it can be very exciting. It is also very rewarding. Few occasions are more enjoyable than those during which youngsters listen avidly to a yarn spun by an adult or by one of themselves.

In the Cub Scout Pack the yarn or story is part of the overall programme. It may be used as an introduction, as a summary to offer a moral or cautionary tale, as the basis of a theme for a particular programme, or just for fun! Stories can be told at the Pack meeting, at campfires and at Scouts' Owns. They may be quiet or may equally involve action, but must be appropriate to the situation.

There is never any lack of sources for stories and full use should be made of all suitable material. Adventure stories, whether functional or factual, are always popular. Religious and historical tales can be both exciting and informative, and jokes, happenings, and large-scale events can all form the basis of a good yarn.

Many people are apprehensive about telling a story but with practice and with various prompts and aide memoirs, many of which are suggested later in this factsheet, all will gain in confidence.

Cub Scouts, as well as Leaders, can make good storytellers, but ensure that a Cub Scout is well prepared and that the audience is receptive.

There are many ways of actually telling a story. All are suitable for inclusion in Cub Scout training, but do remember to 'Be prepared'!

## **1 Read a story directly from a book**

There is no shame in this. In fact for stories with much factual detail, it may well be more successful than any other method. Always read the story through a few times to yourself. Watch for areas where special emphasis is required and

pay particular attention to punctuation. Read slowly and distinctly. Remember that eye contact with the audience is essential if you are to remain in control of the situation.

## **2 Tell the story from memory**

You must read the story frequently to yourself and be totally familiar with all the important details. Do not be over-confident. Use a small prompt card with important paragraph headings and with particularly vital details such as dates and times, complicated names or technical information. Have the beginning of the story off by heart. This means you can establish that all-important eye contact, and build up an immediate rapport with your audience. Speak slowly and distinctly. If you forget part of the story, don't panic. If it is relevant, try to put it in without being too obvious. If not, don't spoil the flow of your words. The listeners will never notice.

## **3 Use a tape-recorded story**

If you can bear the sound of your own voice, so can your Cub Scouts! This method allows you to overcome your nerves far from your audience and is an excellent way of giving yourself practice. Speak clearly and make full use of sound effects, such as music, door slamming, and bells ringing. This adds a whole new dimension to the programme as it can be used for memory games, messages from Special Agents, etc.

## **4 Tell a story as part of a game**

For example, an action has to be performed each time a word is mentioned. Chairs can be set out in a coach formation and a story told about a journey - the youngsters get off to sightsee, eat, pick fruit, swim, etc., at intervals. The story could also begin with the Highway Code or road signs. Even a much played game such as Fruit Story Relay can have a simple, even silly story line added.

## 5 Yarns used with drama and creative activities

After hearing a story the Pack or Sixes might portray it in dramatic form as a frieze, collage, or tableau. Or again, as a Pack or in Sixes, they might construct a story. A simple way of introducing this is the memory game which involves the packing of a suitcase. One Cub Scout starts: 'I went on my holiday and in my suitcase I packed...' The next adds another item, having said what has gone before. Each of the Cub Scouts adds their own item to the end of a lengthening list. The items can then be used to build a story, with each person contributing an idea. On the same principle, each Cub Scout and Leader might add a line to continue a story begun with an introductory paragraph such as 'Once upon a time...' Each person need only add a short piece and the next person just has to cope with the situation. There are many variations on these two themes.

## 6 Use the headlines

Articles can be extracted from local or national newspapers and used for interest, local knowledge, or to illustrate a point about community or safety.

## 7 Serials

The serial story is useful to add continuity at times of difficulty or to quieten the group down, particularly before bedtime on a Pack holiday. A short story however, might be serialised in very short snatches throughout the meeting by way of introduction to each new activity. In many ways you are doing this already in any Pack programme and so are on the way to full story-telling. Serials may also run for two or three weeks and, if a good adventure tale is used, excitement will mount!

### Helpful hints on preparing a story

- Read through it for enjoyment and to get the atmosphere of the story.
- Practise reading or speaking aloud.

Re-read the story for the main structure, the plot and the main events. Note particularly the beginning and the ending, but also the characters and the framework.

- You must decide on the essential points of the story - your sense of direction.

- Tell it to yourself to see how much you remember. Certain points you will forget.
- Go back and look up the gaps in the continuity of your story. This will fix them in your memory.
- Look for colourful turns of phrase, vivid description and telling repetition.
- If it is helpful, make a few notes and headings. This is useful if the story depends on a certain order of events. But do not lean on your notes!
- Some people find it useful to transfer their notes, putting the key points on postcards.
- Make sure of a good beginning and a good ending.
- Is any action, illustration, or prop appropriate?

### A few rules for good story-telling

- Remember that Cub Scouts are used to watching TV, not listening! Telling stories helps them to appreciate the need to listen and the importance of good manners. It takes two to yarn - one to talk and one to listen:
- You must believe in your story, not always literally, of course, but in the essential truth of the theme.
- Tell your own story. You don't need to be too dramatic and act it. Story-telling is a descriptive art, not a dramatic one. You paint your picture with words.
- Don't hurry. Allow for the telling pause which heightens excitement or creates suspense.
- Intonation and correct use of the voice is important.
- You must see the action in your mind's eye.
- Props may be useful to inspire a story or to hide behind. You have seen the tricks some storytellers get up to.
- Expensive puppets are not necessary. A puppet bag, a dish mop, a cuddly toy, or a monster mask are even better, as they are more easily used by the Cub Scouts themselves.

- Selected props may be used to suggest the type of story. A plastic zoo and farm animals for *The Jungle Book*, tools for bicycle safety; first aid kit to talk about accidents, etc
- Make sure that the Cub Scouts are sitting comfortably. Allow them to lie on their fronts - that way they can see your face, and you can see theirs - and if someone is inattentive, tell the story directly to that person for a while.
- Taking the time to prepare yourself for storytelling is time well spent. If possible, seek help from a local librarian and ask if you can attend one of the library's Story Corner sessions. Also encourage the Cub Scouts to visit the library on every available occasion.

Most of all, enjoy yourself! Story-telling is a real pleasure