

Simple Tales

An Oral Language and Narrative Tool

Time saving, Easy to Implement, Powerful

Last week one of my clients came bouncing into the therapy room and asked “Do you have any stories for me today?” As I matter of fact, I did.

In the Beginning . . .

One crisp fall afternoon I was preparing therapy for a preschool child. We were working on stories, but I had no new story for her, having used up my meager store of existing stories. Time to invent, as we SLPs so often do. With this particular child we acted out a story before telling it, so I inventoried my props and came up with a witch’s hat and cauldron. Halloween was coming, after all. I took a stab at drawing a witch, and she was at least recognizable as a girl witch. Thus Wanda Witch was born, and she was a great success with my clients.

Wanda was quickly followed by the Tony character, who drives trucks, to satisfy the boy who only wanted to drive trucks on the city rug. Then came Peter Pig, for the child who loved the barn set, followed at last by Tess and Danny Dinosaur. I already knew many of my clients struggled to recall character names, and this struggle seemed to get them off to a rocky start when they did a retell. I found using multiple stories with the same character helped with name recall, and that is why each character has 10 stories, and some character names use alliteration.

The stories became such an integral part of my therapy I dreamed of having them illustrated by a real artist. Sometimes dreams do come true, and thanks to the lovely and talented Jocelyn, my stories have come to life in a way I never imagined. Now I always have a story on hand, and you can too.

What is Simple Tales?

Simple Tales includes 50 stories carefully designed for early narrative learning. Each story has five elements (character, problem, feeling, action, resolution) and comes with basic and expanded text for varied levels of narrative instruction. The stories are available in printable PDFs—perfect for online or in person instruction. Simple Tales features five repeating characters, with the option to buy single character packets of 10 stories.

Simple Tales

Fun

The stories are appealing, child centric, and delightfully illustrated. They have all been tested with actual children in a clinic setting and have passed the child approval test.

Research-Based

Research shows narrative instruction has a robust effect on language development.* Simple Tales can be used with any narrative instruction method. Through story telling children learn to:

- Identify main characters and ideas
- Recall names of characters, places, and times
- Learn names for emotions, including more advanced vocabulary for feelings
- Connect problems with character emotions and actions
- Retell stories with detail
- Use and understand questions, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and more, all within the context of a story
- Tell stories about their own experiences

Do you need more stories?

Do you love narrative instruction but need more stories? Do your youngest story-tellers need entry level narratives?

Simple Tales was created to solve the pressing need for several stories designed explicitly for narrative instruction. As we SLPs know too well, not many existing stories are easily adapted for children just beginning to dip their toes into narration. A basic five part story still requires a lot of language, so Simple Tales keeps the cognitive load manageable for beginners.

Simple Tales

What makes Simple Tales Unique?

- 50 stories! Our students need so much repetition and practice with basic narratives, it's a struggle to find enough material. 50 stories are enough for a full year's worth of weekly therapy, and they can potentially be used for a second year, with more advanced retellings.
- Suitable for earliest story learners - Elements early learners find difficult to include in a retell, such as dialogue, are kept to a minimum.
- Adaptable —The stories also have enough plot and detail for more advanced story telling.
- Auditory memory - Consistent characters across stories can help students with poor auditory memories recall specific character names. Some of the character names also make use of alliteration, e.g "Wanda Witch."

What's Included?

- The 50 story bundle has 10 stories with 5 consistent main characters.
- Storybooks with basic and expanded text for each story
- Individual story sets may also be purchased, with 10 stories featuring 1 main character.
- Personal narrative form
- Story tracker form to record which stories you have used with each student, and when
- Progress monitoring form
- Parent instructions

Simple Tales

Product Details

- These stories don't introduce complications, as the goal of Simple Tales is to provide therapists with a year's worth of basic stories. However, the basic stories vary in complexity in order to supply stories for every learner. Also, each story comes with two written examples, one very basic and one with more advanced language.
- The use of infinitive "to" (as in "Peter Pig wanted to go for a walk.") is obligatory in some stories. Infinitive "to" can be quite challenging for some learners, but it is a critical grammatical form for expressing intents and plans. To that end, Simple Tales has stories both with and without obligatory infinitive "to."
- The characters in Simple Tales inhabit multiple worlds— the child and grown up worlds, the animal world, and even the make-believe world. Thus Tony drives a truck, Wanda flies on her broom, and Tess talks to her Dad about spiders, while Peter Pig and Danny Dinosaur do their animal things.
- Every story is printable in three formats 1) with basic pre-written story text, 2) last frame blank for the child's retelling to be recorded, and 3) flashcard style for sequencing activities.
- If you use a narrative approach such as Story Champs or Story Grammar Marker, you can sketch in the accompanying icons.

FAQ

Who is Simple Tales for?

- Simple Tales works for children who have just become able to tell a basic story, in addition to children who have more advanced storytelling skills. There is ample opportunity to include settings, descriptions, a wide range of emotions, conjunctions, and prepositional phrases, not to mention infinitive "to."

When Should I Introduce Stories?

- Children need to have the ability to sequence events and form basic sentences in order to tell stories.

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What to do when a child is reluctant to tell stories

Often, a child who is reluctant hasn't had enough practice with the language of play to feel comfortable narrating. In these cases, it helps to act out stories with toys while the SLP narrates the story. You can also take pictures of the toys in the different parts of the story and practice co-narrating from those pictures. When children can talk freely in play, elements of story telling begin to emerge.

** Story Champs, SKILL (Supporting Knowledge in Language and Literacy), and Story Grammar Marker are three narrative instruction methods that have demonstrated the effectiveness of narrative instruction through research.*

Want to learn more? Check out the following podcasts:

[Where Everybody Knows Your Name - #59](#)

[To Infinity and Beyond - #58](#)

[Follow the Narrative Road - #46](#)

[Permission to Play - #12](#)

[Narrative Language Intervention with Douglas Peterson, part 1 - #23](#)

[Narrative Language Intervention with Douglas Peterson, part 2 - #24](#)

[The Power of Family Stories - #98](#)