

# How To Tell A Story In English



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Telling stories is typical in any language as we normally share about our past activities or experiences and what we observe. Since it is almost always part of conversations, storytelling is a skill that any person should get better at to **communicate** effectively and connect with other people. Learning how to tell your story in an organized and easy to understand way will help you to make your listener visualize what happened through your words. To guide you on how to effectively tell your story, follow the tips provided below.

### 1. Use beginning phrases to start a story

Although you may hear in some movies and books that telling stories are **started with** **"once upon a time"** this is not commonly used in real life. Beginning your story in this manner, makes your story **sound fictional**. In typical conversations, storytelling begins after being asked with a question "what happened?" Start by having an introduction to your story so your conversation partner will have an idea of what you are going to talk about. Use beginning phrases to cue your listeners that a story is about to be opened.

#### **Beginning phrases that you can use are:**

*"It all started when..."*

*"To begin..."*

*"It all began when..."*

### 2. Provide a background to set the scene of your story

Introduce to your listeners the setting of your story. By providing them a clear background, they will be able to imagine the scene of the story and feel as if they're there. You can include details about who is involved, where it took place, and what you were doing at that time.

### 3. Talk about real events and challenges

One way of making your story relatable is by telling real events. Many are tempted to look good in their narrative and portray to be perfect, however, this can make your story less interesting. Some may find it boring, unrelatable, and even sound boasting. Don't strive to be perfect-looking in your stories but be honest and real. If you are going to talk about success or victories, refrain from omitting the challenges you faced along the way. People are interested in what's relatable, and mentioning about struggles and how you overcome them is something that many can relate with. A story with a perfect life will sound unreal, and fictional. Hence when sharing real stories of real people or your

personal story, do not try to invent a “perfect” character or plot nor create a story that you think your listener would prefer to hear.

#### **4. Choose relevant content**

Include details that are important to be mentioned in the story and omit the ones that aren't needed. Overly detailed stories are hard to follow thus can create a rambling feel. You can share relevant content by involving details in your experience that you think are relatable to your listeners.

#### **5. Use sequencing words**

Continue giving details in the story in an organized way by including proper sequencing of events. As they hear the events occurred step by step, they can easily follow, link the details and visualize events chronologically. Smoothly transition your story from event to event by using sequencing words.

**Sequencing words that you can use to continue or connect your story are:**

*“First of all...”*

*“Previously..”*

*“Next...”*

*“After that...”*

*“Finally...”*

*“In the end...”*

#### **6. Use interruption words to create suspense**

While you are telling your story, you may want to add some elements to avoid the same flow in the story or make it even more interesting. To hint your listeners that something

surprising or important is about to happen, use words that introduce interruptions. This will make your listener tune in and listen to you a bit more closely.

### **Interrupting phrases to add new elements in the story include:**

Suddenly

Unexpectedly

### **7. Use linking words**

Throughout your storytelling, you might need to give reasons for actions, mention contrasting information, or share about a result. Instead of presenting these details in a straightforward manner, weave them together by using linking words. Connecting the details well until you reach the end of the narrative will make it more story-like. Presenting events separately will make any narrative sound choppy thus break the listener's experience in the story. Keep your story flow logical, to keep your listener engaged and interested.

### **Good Transitional words you can use are:**

*"Because..."*

*"As a result.."*

*"Although..."*

### **8. Use time words**

Time words will enable your listener to know when the events took place. It will also allow them to better imagine the situation and determine how recent or old it was. Time words can be placed at the beginning or end of a sentence.

### **Examples of time words**

*yesterday*

*today*

*this morning*

*last night*

## **9. Describe emotions**

Make your stories compelling by communicating the emotions that you experienced. Interesting stories don't just present details of when, where and what happened, but also include what triggered action and how you felt. By describing your emotions, your listeners can understand what you felt at that time. It also creates a sense of immersion as they go through an emotional experience while listening to your story. If they felt the same way, then you have established a connection. To do this, use words that can create and describe strong emotions

### **Example:**

*"The news was so shocking."*

*"I was speechless."*

*"It was devastating."*

## **10. Use sensory words**

Make your story come alive by using words that talk about your senses. Including as many senses as possible will guide your listener to connect and picture what you are describing. Use words that tell about sound, taste, texture, smell, and look.

## **11. Use appropriate adjectives**

When writing your story don't just show but tell. Use different adjectives to draw a picture while telling your story. Adjectives help create better mental images and make your story more colorful and dramatic. Use interesting words to make your story more

interesting. Also, if you're going to tell about something related to change, tell both the observable and inner changes instead of just saying the word "change." Moreover, make your adjectives appropriate according to the kind of story you are telling. If you are sharing a sad story, use sad adjectives, if it's a happy story then use happy-sounding adjectives.

## **12. Tell your story in English to reach more people**

While it is good to share your story in your vernacular language, there are also a lot of advantages in sharing your story in English. If you are communicating with people who speak in a different language, they can understand your story if you shared it in English. Meanwhile, if you are writing your story in English, you will also be able to reach more people including the ones living in other countries.

## **13. Use colloquial and casual words**

People like to listen to stories to be amused, entertained, and be inspired. Storytelling often happens during a casual conversation when people want to slow down or destress. In their relaxed state, people would want to listen to a story that is easy to understand. If the story is too complex, they will eventually lose their interest in listening to it. Hence, when telling a story avoid using jargon and technical words. Use casual words or layman's terms instead. By using everyday words that you and your listener use, they will be able to be more connected to your story. Moreover, you sound more natural and genuine hence relatable.

## **14. Use the word "said"**

Part of telling stories is quoting what other people said that may have resulted in triggering some events or actions in the story. To talk about the speech of other people, use the past tense of "say" which is "said".

Example:

*"Peter said..."*

*"My friend said..."*

*"He said..."*

### **15. Use correct tenses**

When telling stories, you can use a variety of tenses to give a hint of when the action took place. Mostly, you will be using **past tense** to tell events that happened in the past. Meanwhile when talking about the things that do not change, use the present tense.

### **16. End your story well**

When you are about to wrap up your narrative, prepare your listener to disengage from your story. Abruptly ending a story will make them feel left hanging. End your narrative well by telling what finally happened in your story. Use a key phrase or word as well to hint that your story is about to end.

Some ending phrases and words you can use are:

*"Finally..."*

*"In the end..."*

*"Lastly..."*

### **Conclusion**

People often listen to stories as part of engaging in a relaxing conversation or out of curiosity. Make sure to connect with your listeners and include details that are relevant to them. The content, the words that you use in your story, and how you deliver it will determine how it will impact others.

Improve your skill in telling a story by learning more useful expressions.