

Overview of Preschool Story Time

Story time is more than picking a stack of books to read. Early literacy and learning is also encouraged through songs, rhymes, dancing, musical instruments, and other activities. Here is a sample story time lineup, developmentally appropriate to a preschool audience, ages 3 to 5.

<i>Welcome</i>	Welcome the group, introduce yourself, give any announcements or expectations as briefly as possible.
<i>Opening Song or Rhyme</i>	This is a great way to get everyone focused and looking at you. I would never skip this and I like to do the same thing each week so pick something you like.
<i>Book 1</i>	While you have their attention, launch into a book right away. Pick the longest of your books.
<i>Flannel Board</i>	Flannel boards are an excellent way to present songs or rhymes in a unique visual way, distinct from books. Perfect for counting and math concepts.
<i>Song/Rhyme</i>	Now is a good time for some movement. If the group is focused you can pick a finger play (fine motor skill) but chanced are they might need to move around by now.
<i>Book 2</i>	Preschoolers love to hear stories, be sure to ask them questions about the book, how it relates to the last story (if applicable), call attention to unique vocabulary, ask them to complete rhymes.
<i>Song</i>	This is a good time to do some dancing, or use some rhythm sticks, bean bags, scarves, egg shakers. Note: This segment can also work equally well at the end of story time, especially if you have an energetic group.
<i>Free Spot</i>	Here you can do a finger play, rhyme, another flannel board, another action song, etc. I often choose an activity that can be done seated. This can also be skipped if you're running short on time.
<i>Book 3</i>	Time for the last and shortest book.
<i>Closing</i>	A closing song is a great way to bring things to a close. Sing the same song for a few weeks at a time.

This is just a sample!! Rearrange to suit you and your group.

Key Developmental Aspects of a Preschooler, ages 3-5.

- Fine motor skills are developing rapidly. Child can easily turn book pages, is getting better at finger plays, and has better sense of her body.
- Can distinguish between “real” and “make believe” and is engaging in roll playing and imaginative play .
- Begin to have a clearer sense of time: yesterday, before, tomorrow, later, etc.
- Can count and can recognize alphabet letters.
- Vocabulary is large and varied. Can be easily taught new words.
- Vision is refined, and more detailed illustrations are appealing.
- Begin to realize people can have inaccurate perceptions of the world, or may have different points of view. Arguing commences!
- Can ask questions.
- Understands “same” and “different” .
- Speaks in complete sentences.
- Has longer attention span and can sit in a group setting for books that last 5-6 minutes, usually longer one-on-one.

Tips for Preschool Story Time

- Be flexible, change up your order if need be. It doesn't hurt to have a variety of length books for days when the kids are super focused and those when they are wild.
- Have some simple, active songs memorized to bring out when the group is distracted (If You're Happy and You Know It, or Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes)
- With a room of mostly preschoolers you can ask them to quiet down. Kids will still talk out of turn, but in general, it is now appropriate to ask them to be quiet. Most of them will understand that there is a time to talk and a time to be quiet. You can remind them of this by saying, “When I'm talking and reading, I need you to be quiet. I will let you know when it's time to talk.”
- Don't feel you have to finish a book. Laugh and say “That's enough of that book for now, let's try something else.”
- If you ask a question, they will answer. Don't let that stop you, but be prepared with a way to quiet them back down. Asking kids questions about the story is an excellent way to promote narrative skill—a child's ability to connect events, understand cause and effect, and follow a plot.
- Don't insist that kids follow along with your dance motions. If they want to stay seated, let them.
- It's ok to stop story time and ask for caregiver attention either for a specific child, or if parents are chatting amongst themselves.
- Stick with a familiar structure week to week – this is still helpful for preschoolers.