

Storytelling Sticks

For All Ages

A **storytelling stick** is a collection of materials which act as a visual reminder of lived experiences. Storytelling sticks may be used to commemorate events, whether real or imagined. They are decorated with a collection of items that can represent a person, a place, an experience, or even an emotion.

There is a long, rich tradition of indigenous people using sticks to document and share stories. The Aborigines in Australia made journey sticks to help them recount their travels; Native American tribes also used sticks to record and share events in their lives.

Today, many educators have used the idea of journey sticks to help young children document nature walks, tying found objects across the length of a stick. This practice helps children visualize the physical journey they've made, explore the concept of mapping, and use items they've collected and arranged to share a story. It's also possible to take a more impressionistic approach and assemble a storytelling stick chronicling the feelings and memories associated with an important event.

Because a storytelling stick allow us to record and reflect upon our experiences, it can serve as a nonverbal journal, capturing memories through objects instead of words, and then inviting us to share the significance of those objects with others through acts of storytelling. Since journaling has been proven to calm the mind and relieve stress, we recommend storytelling sticks as a way for families to create a meaningful record of a challenging period. During these extraordinary times, when each day has a unique story, consider helping your child craft a storytelling stick to remind your family of where you have been, and what you have thought, felt, or seen.



A journey stick from *The Stick Book* by Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield

Here's how you can make a storytelling stick:

First, select a stick!

Next, gather a selection of yarns and strings with which to tie objects to the stick. *For younger children, consider wrapping rubber bands around the stick so that small hands can independently tuck items underneath. For even younger children, consider using double-stick tape wrapped around the stick, so little ones can easily attach their own items.*

Now, have family members begin to collect items that remind them of things that have happened during your day. When you're ready, start attaching those items to the stick.

If you go for a walk . . . encourage your child to look for items that capture their interest. Have them be mindful of what they are experiencing. A bird's feather can remind them of the birds singing during their walk, a scrap of newspaper of their online reading assignment. There is no judgement about the item chosen. A piece of trash can evoke a memory as well as a beautiful leaf.

And if you spend the day indoors . . . gather objects that will help you represent activities and events that happened inside your house that day. What did you eat? What did you learn? What did you do? What kinds of objects can you find that will represent those different activities?

Once you've finished crafting the storytelling stick, gather your family members together, and have everyone share their stories and explain the significance of the items they selected.

What does each of the items on the storytelling stick tell us about the story of your day?

Additional resources:

[Taking the Curriculum Outside: Journey Sticks](#)

Play the Forest School Way: Woodland Games and Crafts for Adventurous Kids (2016), by Jane Worroll and Peter Houghton

More information can be found by placing your phone's camera over the QR code or by going to <https://qrgo.page.link/G4H9G>

