

BEDTIME STORY PROMPTS FOR PARENTS WHO CAN'T THINK OF ANY STORIES TO TELL

We've assembled a short collection of bedtime story prompts to help spark ideas on difficult evenings when you simply can't think of any stories to tell. (We've all been there.) If you're plagued with bedtime story stage fright, these should help everyone get to sleep a lot faster.

BEDTIME STORY PROMPT #1: THE QUEST

Think about an Indiana Jones movie. Indy learns of an artifact, he goes through trials to locate it, and he eventually finds it — but isn't always allowed to keep it. That's a quest. All you need for a quest is an objective, an obstacle, and a resolution.

One day, (PERSON) was digging in their backyard when they found an old map. The map revealed the location of the (REALLY COOL OBJECT). But finding the treasure would mean getting past (OBSTACLE).

_____ or _____

(PERSON) always dreamed of traveling to (AMAZING LOCATION). But on the first day of their trip, they encountered the last thing they ever expected — (RIDICULOUS, IMPOSSIBLE-TO-OVERCOME OBSTACLE).

TIPS: Working your child's name or other names they'd recognize into the story is a fun way to keep them engaged.

Try alternating between object quests (biggest diamond ever, the perfect pizza recipe, crashed alien spaceship) and location quests (Australia, Atlantis, Mars) to keep things interesting.

BEDTIME STORY PROMPT #2: EVERYDAY CHAOS

Sometimes kids just want to hear heightened and exaggerated versions of their everyday lives. These stories follow this pattern: It's a normal day, some kind of insane plot device disrupts the status quo, crazy things happen, and then status quo is resumed (or changed forever).

(PERSON) ran outside to catch the school bus, but there was a (VERY UNLIKELY THING) standing right in front of their house.

_____ or _____

(PERSON) was playing at the park one day, when suddenly (VERY UNLIKELY THING) fell from the sky.

TIP: Once you come up with your catalyst for chaos, it's pretty easy to imagine how it would disrupt a normal day in your neighborhood. Just think of how your child would really react to a runaway robot, a meteor shower, or a scientist with a ray gun that turns people into puppies, and go from there.

BEDTIME STORY PROMPT #3: ADAPTATION

Try retelling an existing story but put your own spin on it. You still get the benefit of getting to copy the story structure of the original tale, but your kid gets to enjoy your weird little additions and alterations as you go along.

Once upon a time, (PERSON) journeyed into the dark forest, bound for Grandmother's house with a basket of goodies.

TIPS: You can either follow the classic story (in this case, *Red Riding Hood*) exactly or split off in a new direction whenever you want.

If you want to make it really interesting, mash together a bunch of stories as you go. So, a Cinderella could go to the ball, where she gets some magic beans, which create a giant beanstalk that takes her to Oz, where she has to fight a Wicked Witch.

BEDTIME STORY PROMPT #4: CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Rather than coming up with a whole narrative on your own, you just present your child with a series of questions and allow them to determine the path of the story. This format can allow your child to take ownership of the story and create a really entertaining back-and-forth between the two of you.

One morning, you open your bedroom door and see (CRAZY CREATURE) . It wants you to follow it.

Do you follow it or do you run away?

If they choose "follow it":

You nod and it leads you towards a dark cave that has appeared in your backyard.

Do you go inside the cave?

If they choose "run away":

You run down the hall, away from the creature. When you run outside, a (VEHICLE) appears.

Do you get inside it?

TIP: The only catch with a "Chose Your Own Adventure" bedtime story is that, as the narrator, you eventually have to figure out a definite way to end the story. Otherwise, if your kid is getting into it, he or she will keep asking questions until bedtime is just a distant memory.