

## Story Mapping

### What is story mapping?



Story Mapping is a visual aid, which depicts the settings or the sequence of major events and actions of story characters. This strategy can be used as a framework for story telling, retelling events as well as for developing an outline when tackling story writing. This is sometimes called 'mind mapping' as it can map out how you think as much as a sequential story.

### Why is story mapping important?

Story mapping allows a child to visualise story characters, events and settings. It is a way to increase a child's ability to comprehend and to organise their thoughts and sequencing of main events. Furthermore, it develops a child's knowledge of what a story is and the key elements that make up a story, which assist in storytelling, retelling and writing. It is also a medium from which children become aware that story characters and events are interrelated.

## What are the building blocks necessary to develop story mapping?

- **Vocabulary:** The variety of words used in the English language.
- **Understanding questions**, such as 'Who?', 'What?', 'Where?', 'When?', 'How?' and 'Why?'
- **Expressive language (using language):** The use of language through speech, sign or alternative forms of communication to communicate wants, needs, thoughts and ideas.
- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of language.
- **Attention and concentration:** Sustained effort, doing activities without distraction and being able to hold that effort long enough to get the task done.
- **Working memory:** The ability to temporarily retain and manipulate information involved in language comprehension, reasoning, and learning new information; and to update this information as change occurs.
- **Planning and sequencing:** The sequential multi-step task/activity performance to achieve a well-defined result.

## How can you tell if my child has problems with story mapping?

If a child has difficulties with story mapping they might:

- Have trouble retelling events and recounting information.
- Recount a situation and/or event but their ideas are disjointed or fail to follow a sequence.
- Omit details when providing information (e.g. where the event took place, who was there).
- Struggle with contributing to class discussions.
- Have trouble engaging in conversations with peers and adults as the child fails to effectively relay their message and/or answer questions sufficiently.
- Lack detail in written assessment tasks.
- Require assistance to start classroom tasks/projects.

## What other problems can occur when a child has story mapping difficulties?

When a child has story mapping difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of language.
- **Expressive language (using language):** The use of language through speech, sign or alternative forms of communication to communicate wants, needs, thoughts and ideas.
- **Problem solving:** The identification of a challenge, including what the challenge is, what strategies could be used to overcome it, and the subsequent performance to overcome it.
- **Social interaction** with peers and adults (e.g. there are breakdowns during conversations as the child has trouble putting forward their ideas or understanding the information their communication partner has presented).
- **Working memory:** The ability to temporarily retain and manipulate information involved in language comprehension, reasoning, and learning new information; and to update this information as change occurs.
- **Planning and sequencing:** The sequential multi-step task/activity performance to achieve a well-defined result.
- **Attention and concentration:** Sustained effort, doing activities without distraction and being able to hold that effort long enough to get the task done.
- **Organisation:** The ability to know what a task involves, the materials required, how to collate them.

## What can be done to improve story mapping?

- **Visuals:** When a child is asked to recount an event or write a story, implement visual aids (e.g. table, poster, chart) as a reminder about the key areas that need to be included in the story (e.g. Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?).
- **Use non-fiction events:** As a start, children may find it easier to write and plan a story about actual events, rather than fictitious events.

## What activities can help improve story mapping?

- **Stories:** Encourage the child to make up stories. Use visual aids (e.g. table, poster, chart) which outline the key areas that need to be included in the story (e.g. Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?). Also provide verbal and visual examples for each of the story components to assist the child in generating their ideas (e.g. Who: fireman, bear, man, baby; Where: park, pool, school, zoo; When: morning, afternoon, night time).
- **Model language:** If the child provides short responses when giving information (e.g. The boy. Park), model appropriate language to extend the child's ideas (e.g. "Oh, the boy went to the park. He went to the park in the afternoon").
- **Read books** with the child and encourage the child to think of what may happen next in the story or to generate ideas for an alternative beginning/middle/ending.
- **Describe events** in books or TV shows: Describe what you can see happening in the pictures, then read the text and compare how the story you have generated is similar/different to the 'real' story.

## Why should I seek therapy if I notice story mapping difficulties in my child?

Therapeutic intervention to help a child with story mapping difficulties is important to:

- Improve a child's ability to be succinct when retelling events and recounting situations.
- Improve a child's ability to relate their ideas in a sequential manner when answering verbal and written questions.
- Help a child who is struggling to complete academic work (e.g. written tasks including recounting what they did on the weekend, generating a story, summarising factual information, completing a project or putting forward an argumentative case).

## If left untreated what can difficulties with story mapping

## lead to?

- Difficulties being concise and providing specific and relevant information during:
  - Conversations with friends and peers.
  - Interactions with unfamiliar peers and adults.
  - Situations which involve putting your best foot forward, such as show and tell times (or later, a job interview).
- Higher level planning becomes difficult for policy writing or any other type of structured writing piece.
- Difficulties completing assignments because the person is unclear about how to start and structure work.
- Inability to multi-task and prioritise task demands.

## What type of therapy is recommended for story mapping difficulties?

If your child has difficulties with story mapping, it is recommended they consult an Occupational Therapist.

If there are multiple areas of concern (i.e. beyond just story mapping) both Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy may well be recommended to address the functional areas of concern. This is the benefit of choosing Kid Sense which provides both Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy services.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

