

Making Sensory Stories

Instruction manual



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Introduction

How nice that you want to make a story! With this tutorial, you will create a senses story based on an activity and then tell or read it aloud. We assume in this tutorial that you know what a sense story is. If you don't, first watch the sample videos on YouTube and/or watch the e-learning 'Reading and making sensory stories' via the QR code below.

Key terms:

- *Sensory story* = a way of reading aloud where you read or tell a story using supported communication (gestures (language), pictograms, pictures) and where each page has one associated sensory object through which you experience what that page is about.
- *Reading aloud* = we use 'telling' and 'reading aloud' interchangeably because we would like you to be in touch together about the story. What we mean is that you look at the pages together, tell/sign the story line and then experience the corresponding object together and connect over it.
- *Activity* = an event or experience about which you create the story.
- *Story box* = a bin, box or case that holds all the objects you use in the story.
- *Story folder* = the folder that holds the story pages. Because you 'write' the story yourself, this is not a book but you laminate the printed pages or put them in show bags and so you put the story in a folder. A story folder is sometimes omitted if it does not add value to the person being read to in addition to the objects.

We wish you lots of fun creating and reading your sensory story!



*QR code to the e-learning
'Making sense of stories and reading them aloud' (in Dutch) and the downloads.*

In short ...

What will you do?	
Preparations	
1	Think of an activity you want to create a sensory story about
2	Make a list of sensory objects that can be used in that activity and fit in a box.
3	Make the story box* and think about what else you might need in terms of preparation, for example communication tools or certain gestures you might need.
Perform activity	
4	Do the activity together with your child, client or pupil. Use the instructions in this guide.
5	Now, based on the course of the activity, create the story box with the objects used.
Storytelling sessions	
6	Create the story folder* and also use supported communication in this if possible; icons, pictures or other (visible or tactile) symbols.
7	Start storytelling in the same week as the activity. This may also be on the same day. Use all senses in the storytelling!
<i>If necessary, watch a video of the storytelling, together with the speech therapist/communication expert using the observation guide.</i>	

*This method is explained in more detail in the e-learning 'Making sensory stories and reading them aloud'. If necessary, use the fill-in sheet from the toolkit to work out the different steps.

Story topics

The activity the story is about can be anything. We give some suggestions, but something else is of course possible too!

- **Autumn/To the woods** (spider, leaves, feather, branch, earth, cobweb, bird, boots, rain, chestnuts, acorns, umbrella, mackintosh, candle, cinnamon, autumn tea)
- **To the shop** (bag, pack of rice, pack of juice, onions, leeks, orange, money/card, cash register(sound), turn bar, shopping basket)
- **Party/carnival** (confetti, balloon, whipped cream, horn/music, garland, gift(paper), dress-up clothes, wig/party hat, party nose)
- **Cleaning/washing windows** (bucket, water, child-friendly detergent/foam, window squeegee, sponge, Hoover, dustpan and brush, cracking soap)
- **Petting** (hay, netting, fleece, sheep's wool, horseshoe, poop scent, fake egg, stuffed animal, fake grass)
- **To the hairdresser** (hairdresser's coat, scissors, comb, water spray, hairdryer, hair mousse, gel, tuft of hair)
- **Crafts** (scissors, finger paint, glue, paper, brush, glitter, clay, chenille wire, soap, cleaning cloth, towel)
- **Biscuit baking** (apron, sugar, milk, whisk, rolling pin, baking paper, timer, oven mitt, fake egg)
- **Working in the (vegetable) garden** (gardening gloves, shovel, seeds, watering can/spray, soil, plants (e.g. cress), carrot/potato/flower, clogs/boots, manure (smell), fake insect)
- **Watching the fire brigade** (fire helmet, water spray, fake fire, siren, flashing light)
- **Winter** (gloves, scarf, ice cubes, fake snow, chocolate milk powder, soup powder, pitcher, sled/skates, stuffed animal)
- **Make soup or spaghetti** (chop vegetables, pan, stock cube, dried (or fresh) herbs, vermicelli, ladle, litre measure, ladle, soup perfume, soup stalk/spheres, timer)
- **To the fair/amusement park** (coat, ticket/folder, tokens, candyfloss, ice cream cup, ice cream stick, music, belt, moving back and forth, screaming, mask (haunted house, fairy tale, clown), snack tray)
- **Playing on the beach/sandbox** (sand, water, bucket, shovel, shell, bug)
- **Making music** (flute, drum, triangle, mini piano, disco lamp, glitter clothes)
- **Catching fish** (fishing rod, fake fish, boots, reeds, water plants, bread/corn, bucket, water, duck)
- **In the bath** (bath foam, water, rubber ducky, towel, body lotion)
- **Walking the dog** (dog leash, fake turd, poop bag, branch, dog treat, bone, bark)
- **Summer/swimming pool** (sunburn, swimwear, swimsuit, flip-flops, lemonade/straws, sunglasses, water, (fake) water animal/plant)
- **Hospital/doctor** (mouth mask, bandage, thermometer, stethoscope, plaster, cotton wool, surgical apron/care clothes, cuddly toy)
- **To the restaurant/snack bar** (coat, menu card, napkins, plastic drinking glass with straw, mayonnaise/ketchup, tablecloth, fake candle, chocolate, snack trays, milkshake cup)
- **Making a birdhouse** (wood, hammer, nail, plaster, paint pot, paintbrush, bird food, fake bird, bird sound, feather)

- **Walking or cycling in the street** (traffic light, bike bell, car horn, leaf, water spray/fan, fake insect, sand, stone)
- Etc.

The activity as the basis of sensory storytelling

To ensure that your child, client or student can relate the story to their own experience, we base the story on an activity. A number of elements are important in this activity, in preparation for the story we create next:

General

You may tailor the activity entirely to what your child, client or student indicates. That is leading.

Order

You structure the activity as much as possible; you do this by offering the experiences in a clear order. Actually, you already offer the experiences in story form, but it only becomes a story together with the other person when you start telling or reading it aloud.

Beginning and end

You look for a beginning and ending stimulus that is distinctive and makes it as clear as possible - especially for someone with congenital deafblindness - that the story begins and ends. You can think of: turning something off/on, going in/out 'under' something, opening/closing something etc. In principle, the story box itself (and possibly the story folder) could also make this clear, but if you are in doubt, look for another stimulus in the story that supports this.

Empathise

Try to empathise with the other person's experience as much as possible, so experience it together; see what the other person is paying attention to, even if it is something completely different from what you actually had in mind with the stimulus.

Giving time

- Give your child, client or student time to experience.
- If your child, client or student 'hesitates' for a moment, give time for that.
- If the other person spends a long time experiencing/exploring one object, that's fine. Then fewer stimuli may come into play in the story.

Review

You can repeat a sensory sensation, if necessary, so that your child, client or student can experience and process it properly.

Communication during the activity

- Pay attention to the expressions of your child, client or pupil. Confirm the expressions by imitating/repeating them - if this is not disturbing to the other person. If possible, try to communicate about it.
- For each stimulus, add a gesture, either by naming the concept or by making a matching movement.
- Show that you notice what is happening in the other person.

Emotional and physical reactions

- Try to incorporate something emotional into the story: funny, crazy, scare, weird, dirty, surprising, obstacle, dropping something, hiding and so on.
- Pay attention to any emotional reactions; an emotion helps remember a physical experience. So it may be that a person initially finds a stimulus difficult, or is a bit startled. See if you can offer closeness and support that will then make the other person dare to explore the stimulus anyway.
- Pay attention to any physical reactions, for example movements the other person makes. It is important to offer movements big.
- Pay attention to the location of the stimulus - where on the body does it happen?

All senses

- Try to include all the senses. So also pay attention to residual vision or residual hearing, temperature, muscle tension.

Compiling the sensory story

Before the activity, you already had an idea for the story. Depending on how the activity went, you can change this idea; take a stimulus out or add one. Think carefully about the appropriate action, the appropriate gesture and any pictures that could be used in the story. Put this outline for the story on paper in a story folder. Put the stimuli needed for telling the story in a box.

Story folder or not?

With sensory stories, you try to tell the story from a story folder as much as possible; this is a stepping stone to other (read-aloud) books and a reminder for both you and the other person. By describing precisely per page in the story folder what the story line is and what the corresponding stimulus is, a new person can also read the story aloud. The supported communication in the story folder helps someone link the pictures to the experience and to the word or gesture.

But sometimes the story folder is not helpful. For example, because someone can see so little that he or she cannot see the page. Or because someone needs all their attention to communicate and experience. Then you leave out the story folder. In this manual we describe both variants, so with or without story folder.

Story lines

Try to tell or read out a set line on each page or with each object (if you are working without a story folder). These are short, simple sentences, possibly of 1 word/gesture, preferably using concepts the other person already knows to a large extent. With someone who is already interested in letters and reading, you can also place the story lines extra large, possibly in Braille. This way, someone can gradually learn to recognise the word picture or start reading along.

Supported communication

Add the supported communication that suits the person; pictures of the person himself or 'neutral' pictures, icons, PC symbols, other symbols, gesture drawings etc. Also, see how many images per page are appropriate. Choose those images that reflect the essence of that page.

Making the sense story further together

The idea is for the story to take further shape in interaction with your child, client or pupil itself. Preferably, you tell this story once the same day. Actually, that 'story' is the repetition of the activity in miniature - a 'picture book' using different sensory experiences.

Reading out of sensory stories

What matters when you read a sensory story?

Fun!

The main premise is that reading aloud is an enjoyable activity, so enjoy it (both of you)!

Clear start

Let the box and the referrer be felt on the box and/or show the folder.

Offering incentives/objects

- **With folder:** You first show the page in the folder and tell the corresponding sentence(s) of the story. Then you offer the corresponding object. Then you clear the object, turn the page and move on to the next page.
- **Without folder:** Offer the objects from the lid of the box. When you do, it is clear that the object belongs in the context of the story box. Then clear away the object and offer another one. This keeps the 'story' framed to what comes out of the box.

Doing it together

As much as possible, try to create and tell the story together; so include initiatives from your child, client or student in how the story will look - even if it is different from how the activity went!

Communications

- Each page has a reading line. This is where you start. Even if you tell the story without a map, each object has a gesture or movement associated with it. In this way, you tell the story in a recognisable way.
- Then you can vary in contact with the other person, depending on the reaction of your child, client or pupil. For example, you can start exploring the sensory stimulus together, or the other person tells something about a similar experience. All reactions are OK! Just make sure that you pick up the thread of the story afterwards and that there is momentum.
- Pay attention to the other person's expressions and signals. Confirm expressions by repeating them provided this is not disruptive to your child, client or pupil. If possible, try to communicate further about it and negotiate the possible meaning; what does the other person mean by that utterance?

Fixed order

You keep the order of the objects as they passed by in the activity.

Time

Within the story, give time to experience the stimuli.

Attention

Pay attention to what your child, client or student is paying attention to. If attention wanders to the story, give the other person time to refocus. If you notice that the other person is no longer interested, do the last stimuli with the corresponding movement briefly and close it. Unless this also creates too much tension, then break off the story.

Closing

In conclusion, the folder closes, you put all the objects in the box and, if necessary, show or feel that everything is now in the box. Then the lid goes on and the story is finished.

The methodology in this guide is based on practical experience combined with scientific studies and articles. If you would like to know more about this or receive the reference list, please send an email to: zintuigenverhalen@kentalis.nl.

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