

# STORYTIME FUN WITH *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*

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This classic chant-aloud is an award-winning storytime favourite. There is plenty of space for action and props. If you are a newcomer to the book, try telling the story with just actions first. If you are already familiar with the story, try adding some multi-sensory props. Above all, relax, take your time and have fun with it – your guests will have a wonderful time!



## THE STORYTELLING SPACE

When planning the session make sure you are in a cosy, enclosed space where parents can sit with their children comfortably. This helps the children focus and makes them feel safe. Beware of distractions, such as a basket of toys or an interesting chair to crawl under. If there is a window in the room with a view onto the street, aim to have it behind the audience, not behind the storyteller!

A “dress rehearsal” really helps. You can ask someone to help you by pretending to be an audience member!



## BEFORE YOU START

It's nice to interact with the group before you start reading. Welcome people, seat them comfortably. You may find putting the book on a music stand is easier than holding it while doing the actions. Even better, an assistant can sit next to you, hold the book and show it around to the audience. This will leave your hands free for doing the actions and help you keep eye contact.

## WARMING UP

Toddlers experience the world through their adult so the key is getting the adults to join in and interact with the children! Start off with a strong “hello” and encourage everyone to wave and say “hello” back. If you have a “hello” song, even better!

## READING THE STORY

### Actions

The story really lends itself to actions and you might well find they happen of their own accord. Just go with whatever feels natural as this is likely to be easiest for everyone else too.

Hold your hands high for, “*We're going to catch a big one.*”

Hands palm-up to an imaginary sun for, “*What a beautiful day!*”

Shake a finger to show, “*We're not scared.*”

You can also use your hands to show “*over*”, “*under*”, “*through*” and “*Oh no!*”

And of course, have fun making up actions for each of the different “zones”: river, mud, forest, snow, etc.



### Props

If you are already using actions and are very confident with the story, consider adding props as well. They are brilliant fun, multi-sensory and will engage even the most stubborn child.

Choose a different multi-sensory experience for each “zone”. For example you might choose a water spray for the river, some balls of playdoh for the mud, a “rainstick” (or other rattle) for the forest leaves, crazy soap for the snow, and a big blanket to hide under for the dark.



Introduce the props before the story starts. Get out each item one at a time, introduce each sensation gently and calmly. Never force a child to touch anything they are not happy with – children can get just as much fun from watching other people experience things. They often LOVE to watch their parents trying things! Allow ten minutes for the prop-exploration before reading the book.

Props can be kept in a box throughout. Bring them out one at a time and put away as soon as they are done with. Take a pause, relax and allow time to explore each prop before putting it away. You might want to allow between three to five minutes of “play” before picking up the book for the next bit.

You could time it like this:

*“Uh-uh! A river! A deep cold river”* (Put down the book)

“What have we got for the river? You remember, the water spray! Shall I spray some in the sky and we can feel it falling gently down on us?” (Play until children are ready to move on.)

“That was fun wasn’t it?” (Put away spray. Pick up the book.) *“We can’t go over it. We can’t go under it.”* etc.

You could also have a teddy bear hidden away to bring out after the cave. You can explore the bear’s eyes and nose when you get to the cave.

At the end of the story, the illustration shows the bear going back to his cave looking lonely. You could suggest that we don’t want our bear to be lonely so you could finish the storytime by taking it in turns to give the bear a hug or a kiss, a wave or a high five!

Make sure everyone remains seated throughout for their own safety. If children get over-excited and start running or rolling around, accidents can happen. (Another important reason that adults need to sit with their kids!)

### Kids Who Don’t Like It

Of course, all the above is very good, but no matter how brilliant the book – or the storyteller – sometimes a child won’t respond. They might be over-tired, hungry or just plain grumpy! When this happens, it can be good to have an “out” for them. Is there a nearby room or hallway where a noisy child can be taken to calm down so they don’t disturb everyone else? Often they will quieten down in just a few minutes and they can come back in. Sometimes they don’t, but hey, that’s toddlers!

### SAYING GOODBYE

Another joining-in song can be good to finish the storytime. If you have a “goodbye” song, that’s great. Otherwise a few choruses of “sleeping bunnies” is always popular!

