

# Story boxes: 1001 stories to tell

Age  
3 to 6



## Context:

- Plurilingual and intercultural education in Luxembourg is part of preschool education. From a very early age, children are in contact with the school languages Luxembourgish and French. A collection of activities edited by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth supports professionals in designing cross-curricular learning scenarios that foster language learning with regard to all the languages present in their group/class.

## Reasons for choosing this activity:

- The story box is filled with different small objects. Children can create **a multitude of stories out of one box** - depending on which objects they start with, the number of objects a box contains, and the order in which they appear in the story (→ active language learning). For example, starting a narrative with the little pink monster and its quest for identity (“Am I a crocodile?”; “No, you cannot swim!”; “You are pink.”; “You have 2 ears.” etc.) takes a different turn than the one starting with the the crocodile looking for its mummy (“Have you seen my mummy?”; “Yes, over there...”).
- **There are numerous ways of composing story boxes:** They may contain objects belonging to specific thematic areas (e.g. kitten, dog, cow, wolf, etc.) or a variety of items (e.g. animals, vehicles, Lego bricks). They may also contain the main characters or important objects of a well-known story (e.g. Red Riding Hood, the Wolf, a basket) .

## Description:

- All you need to start creating stories are a box or bag filled with different objects (toys, everyday objects, cards, etc.) which are meaningful to the children (→ meaningful language learning).
- Children choose one or more objects from the box and create a story with these items (e.g. the snowman, the airplane). First, they decide which item to start with (e.g. the snowman). One child starts the story (“The snowman has blue eyes.”; “And a red nose.”; “The snowman smells good.”; “He is soft.” etc.) (→ holistic language learning); it may be a description of an action (“The snowman is sad. He is melting in the sun.” etc.)
- A second child continues the story, connecting to what has been said before (e.g. “The Snowman sees an airplane. He gets in and flies to a cold place.”); then a third child (“To the refrigerator.”; “No, he visits the Eskimos.”) (→ active and meaningful language learning).
- If necessary, children are supported by the teacher in structuring the story, in interlinking different ideas, etc. (T: “Sarah wants him to live in the refrigerator and Tommy, you want him to go and visit the Eskimos. Can’t he do both?”)
- If children are new to this activity, it may help them to be given a ‘start-up’ sentence (e.g. “Once upon a time ...”; “Today, the snowman is sad...”)
- The story may be recorded and/or written down by the adult.

## Variation:

Story boxes offer a huge range of variations to create stories that respect children's interests, talents and needs (→ holistic, continuous and coherent language learning)

- The **structure of the stories** may vary from very simple (several small independent stories with one or two objects) to elaborated (e.g. one story with several characters/objects or parallel storylines).
- **Number of objects:** With an increasing number of objects, the stories become more sophisticated.
- **Monolingual versus multilingual stories:** Children use their home language(s) to create a story (e.g. *"Do you speak 'Snowmannish'?"*; *"Let's see who speaks a language which Jimmy understands ..."*); bilingual stories are created with one or several main characters speaking different languages (e.g. English and German).
- Children create **parallel stories** with the same basic story line but different main characters (e.g. the little pink monster is replaced by the crocodile in the quest for his identity).
- **Personal story boxes:** Children create their own story boxes with personal objects.

## Observation:

- Which children participate actively by describing, answering questions, continuing the story, etc.? Are there children who hesitate to participate? What are the reasons for their hesitation?

- Which children are primarily listening?
- Which children use non-verbal means of communication?
- Who succeeds in linking his/her part to the existing story? Who creates an isolated story/part of the story?
- Who succeeds in resuming the important parts of the story?

