

storytime™

50-WORD STORY PACK!

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15 TOP TIPS



1

It's a good idea to give your story a beginning, middle and an end, but **don't make your beginning too long**. You don't have time for long setting and character descriptions in a 50-word limit.

2

Try to **put the main character in the action straight away** – think **who, where** and **what**. Can you say who your main character is, where they are and what they're doing in the first sentence?

3

If you can, **give your first sentence a bit of suspense** – to make the reader want to carry on and care about the main character. You can do this by telling the reader how your character feels about where they are or what they are doing. Is your character nervous, angry, scared, happy, sad, excited, guilty, tired or calm, for example? Make your readers wonder why your character feels that way.

4

You could also **make your first sentence so vivid** in your readers' minds that they can't resist carrying on. Paint a strong visual picture. You can do this by putting your main character in an unusual place and doing something unexpected. For instance, how about a school librarian jet-skiing after an evil villain?

5

Don't have too many characters – it will make your story too complicated and harder to fit everybody in. 50-word stories are very short! Keep it simple.

6

Think small with your idea. Don't be too ambitious. In 50 words, you can only capture one moment in a character's life or one little idea – not a huge event taking place over many years with lots of people.

7

Make sure something happens to your character by giving them a challenge or some conflict to face. Even better, make the challenge or conflict change your character in some way.

8

Don't use two or three words when you can use one. For instance, you can say 'sprinted' instead of 'ran quickly' or 'yawned' instead of 'looked bored'. Use a thesaurus to help you keep your story short. See our **Wordy Warm-Up Exercise** to help you master this technique.

9

Make your story more detailed and interesting **by being specific with the words you use**. Instead of saying your character got in a car, you could say it was a Ferrari or a Mini. If there's a dog in your story, is it a Chihuahua or a Rottweiler? That gives your reader more clues about the characters and the settings in your story too.

10

Avoid long, funny names like Vice Admiral Plumly-Hickinbottom – that's four of your 50 words gone already!

11

You could **start at the end**, and use the rest of your story to explain how the ending came about. For example, you could start with something like, "I didn't mean to cover the head teacher in jam..." Get some more **Story Starter ideas** later in this pack.

12

Make your last line strong and give your readers something to think about after they've finished your story. Your ending could be intriguing, surprising (with an interesting twist) or funny. Here are two examples: "If only I'd realised she was from another planet." Or "I guess that's why you can't trust a dog to drive a car."

13

Don't try to stick to 50 words straight away. **Start off long** and then cut your story shorter. The more you look at your story, the more you'll see details and words that aren't necessary. Is every word working hard?

14

When you get started, **be as silly or as serious as you like**. Don't worry about what anyone thinks or how a teacher would mark it. Be creative and **write freely and for fun!**

15

Don't forget – **your story title isn't part of the 50-word count**, so don't worry about how long or short it is, but a good title can intrigue and excite your readers and draw them into your story, so do think about it carefully.







WHY NOT WRITE
A STORY ABOUT A
COOL CAT LIKE ME?

TRY THIS!

When you think you've finished your story, read it out loud. Read it to your friends, your family or your class. It will help you to work out what is and isn't working in your story far more easily than if you read it in your head. We always read our **Storytime** stories out loud!

WORDY WARM-UP EXERCISE

In a short story, it's better to use one word when you can, rather than two or more. The examples below can be cut to single words. Use a thesaurus to help you work out what they are. We've put possible answers at the bottom of the page.

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Talk quietly |  | _____ |
| 2. | Talk loudly |  | _____ |
| 3. | Talk angrily |  | _____ |
| 4. | Talk quickly |  | _____ |
| 5. | Look closely |  | _____ |
| 6. | Walk slowly |  | _____ |
| 7. | Walk quickly |  | _____ |
| 8. | Walk quietly |  | _____ |
| 9. | Walk unsteadily |  | _____ |
| 10. | Run fast |  | _____ |
| 11. | Hit hard |  | _____ |
| 12. | Drive fast |  | _____ |

Answers: 1. Whisper, murmur; 2. Shout, yell; 3. Scream, rage; 4. Babble, gabble; 5. Examine, stare; 6. Plod, trudge; 7. Stride, scurry; 8. Tiptoe, creep; 9. Wobble, stumble, totter; 10. Bolt, sprint, dash, dart; 11. Whack, punch, thump; 12. Speed, accelerate.

INSTANT IDEA GENERATOR

Not sure how to get started on your 50-word story? Use this page to get your creative juices flowing and prompt a story idea. Pick one of the ideas below and get started. Write about...

An imaginary friend

A secret

The first time an adult told you off

An animal you wish you owned

A night away from home without adults

Your least favourite food

A surprise birthday party

Something that happened in the playground

Being naughty

Sports day

A magic pen

Starting at a new school

A scary adult

Winning a prize

Losing a favourite toy

A trip to the beach

A mysterious teacher

A zoo animal with a problem

A character from a nursery rhyme

Facing a big fear

A wish coming true

An awesome invention

Discovering a room you never knew existed

Telling a fib

A strange hobby



STORY STARTERS

Warm up your brain and see where these story starters lead you! Pick one or more and use them at the beginning of a 50-word story (but not your final story for the competition!).

1. It was after midnight when...

2. My school tie has superpowers...

3. I'll tell you a secret...

4. I think my neighbour is up to something...

5. Jake's bedroom is like no other...

6. "Dear Miss Parker, you are invited to..."

7. Sprouts! Why did it have to be sprouts?

8. I know I shouldn't have eaten the cake but...

9. It's not easy being related to the Queen...

10. Sid the Squirrel was a sleuth...

11. Alice didn't look like a goddess...

12. 'Just add hair', said the label...

13. When Santa cancelled Christmas...

14. Ted sneakily glanced at Libby's answers...

15. Elizabeth tiptoed through the crowd...

16. I hate looking like a robot...

17. Albie came up with the plan and I followed it...

18. I have the world's worst sister...

19. "Happy birthday, dear Foo-Foo,"...

20. Getting locked in the zoo wasn't...

TIP!

Pick a starter that leaps out at you and just start writing. Don't think about it too much – let the words flow. You can always cut it down and make changes later.

50-WORD
STORY EXAMPLES

Here are a few examples
of 50-word stories to
inspire you!



IN A JAM

I didn't mean to cover the head teacher in jam. We were baking jam tarts and Josh poured flour over me. I should have ignored him. I shouldn't have splatted him – just as the head walked in too! Now I'm in trouble. Apparently, teachers shouldn't throw jam at their pupils.

INCOGNITO

Elizabeth tiptoed through the crowd trying not to catch anyone's eye. She had never been to a rock concert – she longed to be normal for once. A man jolted her and her cape slipped down, revealing her crown. Everyone gasped. "Forgive me, Your Majesty," he said, and the Queen sighed sadly.

THE TREETOP DETECTIVE
AND THE MISSING TAIL

Sid the squirrel was a sleuth, but he couldn't solve the mystery of his missing tail. One day, he looked in a puddle and found it. Sid dived in, but the tail disappeared. He tried again, but it vanished. Suddenly, Sid felt embarrassed. Can you guess where his tail was?

PLANNING SHEET 1

Practise your 50-word story here. Plan your beginning, middle and end, and your who, where and what, then use Planning Sheet 2 to write your story out fully.

BEGINNING

MIDDLE

END

WHO is my character?

WHERE are they?

WHAT are they doing?

What CHALLENGE are they facing?

PLANNING SHEET 2

Now write your story! This can be your first draft. Make any changes on this sheet before using our entry form at the end of the pack for your final story.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, framed by a red border. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area below the title and instructions.



STORY CHECKLIST

Before you commit your story to our official competition entry form, have a look through our checklist. Can you tick some or all of these boxes?



- ☐ Is it clear **who** the main character is?
- ☐ Did you stick to just a few characters?
- ☐ Did you describe **where** the story is set quickly and clearly?
- ☐ Did you get into the action and tell the reader **what** is happening as close to the beginning as possible?
- ☐ Did you make your beginning interesting to hook your readers in?
- ☐ Did you put a strong image in your readers' heads?
- ☐ Did you give your main character a problem to solve or a challenge to face?
- ☐ Did your character learn something or change in any way?
- ☐ Did you keep your story simple?
- ☐ Did you end your story strong? Will it leave your readers thinking or smiling?
- ☐ Did you read it loud?
- ☐ Did you check for spelling errors and mistakes?
- ☐ Is your story 50 words or under?
- ☐ Finally, did you enjoy writing it? We hope so!

GOOD LUCK!



DRAW IT!

Just for fun, draw a picture from your story here. Drawing can put you in a creative mood!



MY 50-WORD STORY!



STORY TITLE: _____

NAME: _____

AGE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PARENT/SCHOOL'S EMAIL*: _____

**Optional, but it means we can contact you more easily if your child wins.*