



National  
Deaf Children's  
Society



# The Big Story Challenge

Parent's guide



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Signed Stories

# A world without barriers for every deaf child

We are the National Deaf Children's Society, the leading charity for deaf children. We give expert support on childhood deafness, raise awareness and campaign for deaf children's rights, so they have the same opportunities as everyone else.



## Acknowledgements

This resource has been developed by the National Deaf Children's Society with support from the National Literacy Trust.

We would like to thank the National Literacy Trust for their support. For fun activities and support to help your children develop strong literacy skills visit [www.wordsforlife.org.uk](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk).

This guide has been created to help you support your child to come up with their own story for The Big Story Challenge. Use this guide together to support them to be creative, it will only take a couple of hours. Once you get to the end of the guide, your child will have everything they need to write or sign their story and send it in to us.

## Before you start...

You might want to visit the library, book shop or an online e-book store with your child and find some books they love and are keen to read. What type of stories are they drawn to? Does the book rhyme? Does it repeat? Does the book have a central hero or a conflict? Maybe it uses magic, mystery or a special skill to bring the book to life.

Reading lots always improves writing and imagination. It's important for you to read with your child or show an interest in what they're reading. If they see you taking an interest in what they're reading, they will feel supported.

As a warm-up exercise you may want to pick a short book your child wants to read. Read it with them, stop halfway and ask them to describe what they think happens next or to come up with the ending. This will help to get them thinking about creative ideas for stories – they may even use their alternative ending as the basis for their new story!

**!** We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of hearing loss from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing loss such as glue ear.

We use the term 'parent' to refer to all parents and carers of children.



# Activity 1

## Create a character

Your child’s main character might be closely or loosely based on themselves or even entirely imagined. For this competition, all we need is for one of their characters to be deaf. Remind your child that we can always draw on our own experiences to help us come up with an idea for a character – perhaps it could be based on someone they’ve met before – and imagine how characters will act and feel.

Start by asking your child to answer the following questions about their new character. You can get them to fill it in below or you can ask them the questions using speech or sign.



### Tell us about your character

Who I am:

.....

Where I live:

.....

My friends:

.....

My best friends:

.....

My favourite pet/pet I’d like to have:

.....

.....



When I grow up:

.....

.....

.....

Hobbies:

.....

Clubs:

.....

The best thing that ever happened to me:

.....

.....

The worst thing that ever happened to me:

.....

.....

The funniest thing that ever happened to me:

.....

.....

.....

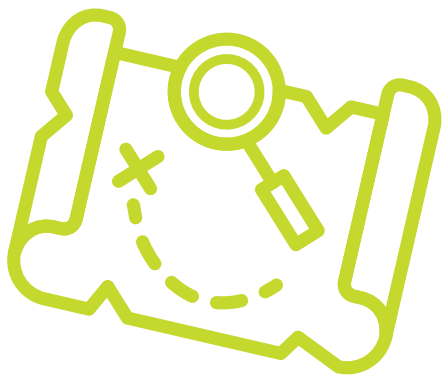
# Activity 2

## Draw a map of your imaginary place

Now your child has a character in mind, you might want to think about the world that they live in. It could be very similar to the real world or it could be something completely different – another planet, a castle in the Middle Ages or perhaps the North Pole!

In the space on the right or on a sheet of plain paper, ask your child to draw a map of where they want to set their story. It could be as simple as them drawing a map of their main character’s house – how many rooms does it have? Where is their bed in the house? Or it could be more like a treasure map.

Once they’ve drawn their map, ask them to think about their character in that place. Who lives with them there? Are they happy there or do they want to leave? Together you can jot down their ideas in the box below.



### Ideas

Write down any ideas for your map here:

### Draw your map here





# Activity 3

## Decisions, decisions, decisions

Now your child has their main character and their setting, it's time to think about their story. By now, they might have already come up with a great idea for a story. If they have, you can skip this activity!

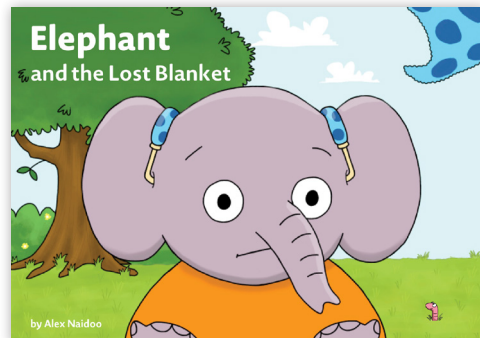
If they're feeling stuck, tell them not to worry! Everyone, including top authors, gets stuck for ideas. Encourage your child to think about some of the following things and the ideas will soon be flowing. They can use one answer or all of their answers. You'll notice ideas often come out of asking questions. Lots of great stories start with a question!



In our first book *Daisy & Ted's Awesome Adventures*, Daisy and Ted are able to time travel and go to lots of different places. If your character could time travel, where would they go? Who do you think they would meet there? Would your character feel at home in this new place or like they're not supposed to be there? What unexpected event could happen there?



In our second book *Jake and Jasmine to the Rescue*, it's Jasmine's first day at superhero school. If your character had a super power, what would it be? What would be so great about having that super power? What would they do if they had it? How might that super power get them into trouble?

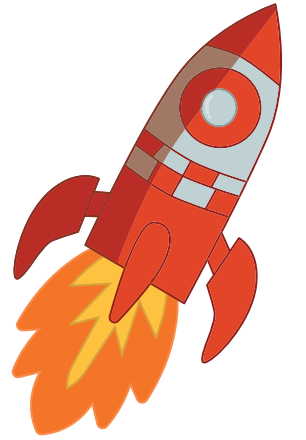


In our third book *Elephant and the Lost Blanket*, Elephant and his friends spend a fun day at the park until something special goes missing. Send your character on a special day out. Where have they gone? Once they're there, they could find something. What did they find? Do they need to get it back to its owner or are they going to take it with them?



Hopefully one of these questions has helped your child to come up with an idea for a short story. You can also come up with some questions of your own.

Now your child has their main character, a setting and an idea for a story, they're ready to get writing.



## Top tips for writing a short story

Short stories can be tricky, and with only 500–600 words to play with (or five minutes if they're signing their story), the following tips could be helpful to your child:

- › **Don't have too many characters.** More than three may be too many – one main character and one or two additional characters at the most.
- › **Limit the timeframe.** Set your short story in a particular time frame which isn't too long – a lesson at school/an hour/one day/one bus ride/one trip etc.
- › **Think in scenes.** You won't have enough space and time for long explanations, so try and imagine your story in scenes, like a film, to move the action along. Drawing out a mini storyboard might help. Use the core five elements; who, what, when, where, how, to get you started with writing your story.
- › **Show not tell.** You won't have time to tell your reader about your character with lots of description, you'll need to show them what your character is like by how they communicate, how others react to them, the way they move etc.



# Activity 4

## Practise your story

Now it's time to bring it all together. Before putting pen to paper, it might be useful for your child to talk their story through with you.

A great way to do this is if you pretend to be TV reporters on the news! Your child is explaining the headline news of the day to you, the studio anchor. Practise with your chosen storyline. This will help your child to communicate the story clearly in a short space of time and then they will be ready to write it down or sign it without any interruptions. Grab some fake microphones (you can always use a banana or a hairbrush) or a pretend camera if you're signing and get ready to go live!

Ask your child the key questions:

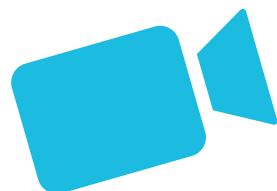
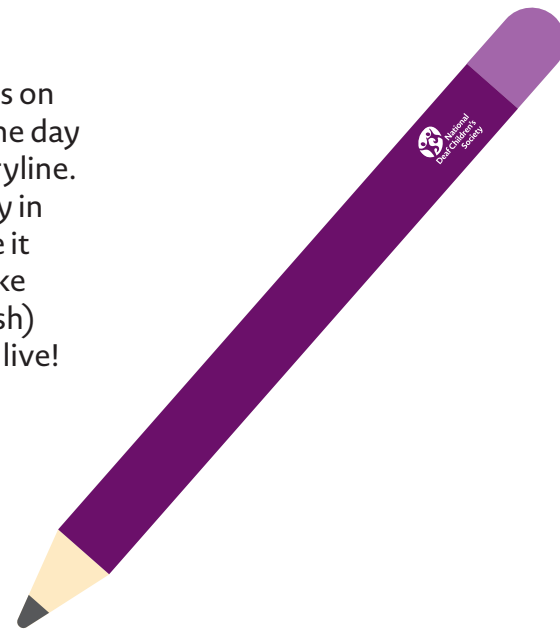
- › What happened?
- › When did it happen?
- › Where did it happen?
- › Describe how it happened...
- › Who did it happen to?
- › How did they feel?

Add any other questions you think might help!



**Now your child has their story, all they have to do is write it down or sign it to the camera. For instructions about how to enter our competition, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/bigstorychallenge](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bigstorychallenge). Make sure you get your entries in before our closing date on 14 December 2020.**

**We can't wait to see your child's story!**



# About us

**We're here for every deaf child who needs us – no matter what their level or type of deafness or how they communicate.**

Visit our website [www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk) or contact our Freephone Helpline to find out how we can support your child at every stage of their life. Join us for free and you'll be able to:

- › download or order our free information
- › come to our events
- › be a part of our online community
- › borrow equipment through our technology loan service
- › read about other families' experiences in our quarterly magazine and monthly email updates
- › access support.

**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,  
the leading charity for deaf children.**

**Freephone Helpline:**

0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

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