

Lone Star Storytellers

Tips and Tricks for Submitting a Winning Audition

Finding a Story

- A good place to start is looking through fairy tales, folktales, fables, scary stories, myths, tall tales, and fractured fairy tales. Stories like this are often structured in a way to be compellingly told aloud.
- Go to the Frisco Public Library or school library and ask for help selecting a five-minute story. Look for stories in the sections listed below.

PICTURE STORY TALES- Contains picture books renditions of fairy tales and folktales. Make sure there are enough words to make the story long enough!

J LITERAT- This section contains anthologies of fairy tales, folk tales, mythology, scary stories, etc. It also contains some anthologies of stories meant to be told aloud.

- Search online:

<http://storyarts.org>

<https://www.americanfolklore.net/>

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~spok/grimtmp/>

- Audition stories **may not** be self-written stories. They must be published in some format, whether it be in print or online.

Learning the Story

- Read the story aloud **over and over and over, about 7 times** in front of a mirror. Try to make eye contact with yourself as much as possible. Don't worry that, when you look away from the story, you don't repeat it word for word.
- Copy the story from a book to paper.
- Draw a picture outline of the story. This helps you see the story as a series of pictures/scenes. It is not meant to be an art project; stick figures are fine. Use balloons to hold important words/phrases. After the pictures are done, try telling the story just using the pictures. (It is much easier for some to tell a story as a series of images than as a set of memorized words.)
- Make a story map (a listing of key words, phrases, or scenes in sequence). For example:

Hen lives with the lazy Dog, Cat, and Mouse
Hen finds grain of wheat
Friends won't help, so she plants it alone ("not I")
She cuts it alone ("not I")
She takes it to the miller alone and carries flour home ("not I")
She bakes bread alone ("not I")
She eats alone since she did all work alone

- Tell the story in your own words. However, it is often helpful to memorize the first and last lines of the story. This way the story will start and end smoothly.
- Tell the story to anyone (or anything) that will listen, such as dogs, cats, stuffed animals, baby brothers, friends, families. The more the story is told, the more firmly it will be planted in your mind.
- Record the story then listen for expression, pauses, and so on. Re-record the story to see if you have improved.
- Tell the story to yourself whenever you have a chance - when walking the dog, washing the dishes, waiting for a ride. You will learn the story well enough that you will be able to tell it even if you are distracted while performing (for example, if a baby starts crying).

Polishing and Telling Your Story

- Look carefully at the text of the story you are working on. Reading aloud will help you identify places where you are having difficulty speaking the lines. You may find deleting or slightly altering the text will help you achieve a smooth flow of words.
- Speak in clear sentences. Emphasize the consonants at the beginning and the end of the word. Avoid nervous habits like "and um."
- Be careful in being overly dramatic and trying to change your voice too much for each character. It can be hard to maintain changes in your voice throughout the story.
- Be expressive when telling your story. Some ways to be expressive are to sound angry, happy, sad, frustrated, evil, or scared. When you are expressive in your voice, facial expressions will follow.
- Practice points in your story to lower your voice or turn up your volume. Sometimes lowering the voice is more effective in establishing suspense than raising it. Whispering can also be very effective.
- Practice where to pause in your story. A pause or silence before a word gets the attention of the listener and a pause after a word gives them time to let the idea sink in. Pausing sets the listener up, makes them wait, and draws them in.
- Practice the speed at which you speak during the telling of your story. Speaking more slowly can express sadness, suspense or doubt. Speaking quickly may impart excitement, nervousness, or extreme joy.

- Practice where to change the pitch in your story. A high pitch can relay excitement, being scared, or being small. A low pitch can portray strength, self-confidence, disgust, or unhappiness.
- Practice various gestures and decide whether they enhance or detract from your story. The gesture should feel "right" at the spot where you are using it.
- Watch yourself in a full-length mirror or videotape a performance. Analyze your performance. Practice your final performance just as you plan to do it. Your performance should be smooth and fluid.

Excerpted from the Tampa-Hillsborough County Storytelling Festival Web Site