

Make Your Child a Hero

The Historical Approach

Every life has a unique and individual story to tell, a story with many chapters.

Your child's historical story can come from anything he or she has experienced: a trip to the zoo, a walk in the park when winter has loosened its grip on the landscape, the time the training wheels came off (or went on) the bike. Most young children love to hear about their younger selves. What about a story that culminates in the sense of accomplishment the first time your child managed to roll over after so many attempts? Or the time your child successfully navigated the space between the bowl and his or her mouth with a spoon? Or the wonderful experience of that first trip to an aquarium or the first ride on any kind of public transportation from city bus to train or airplane. What about a playgroup experience? A visit to a friend or relative's house, be it across town or across the country or beyond? What about when your child learned how to float?

Photos that you, friends, and family have taken of early milestones in your child's development or special occasions can trigger ideas for your story.

The assumption is that you are not a graphic artist. If you are, and plan to draw your own illustrations, that's great! In that case you can create a storyboard through sketches. If you are like most of us mortals, you will need to **find photo images**—physical or electronic—to prepare your storyboard. Think of it as fancy scrapbooking. Your images are the skeleton of your book, but at this point don't worry about the order of the images. Concentrate on finding (or creating) pictures that relate to the story you plan to tell. You can supplement your personal pictures with generic "fillers" from websites like **pexels.com** or **stockfreeimages.com**.

If you are using paper pictures, **attach a post-it note to each picture**. On the post-it, describe in a couple of words where you think the picture fits in the story: somewhere near the beginning, or somewhere near the middle, or towards the end. If using digital images, tag each image to note its approximate placement in the story.

Next, start refining the sequence of your images and attaching some narrative notes. After this, **find the picture that will be the opening of your book**. The opening may be when the action of the story began, but it can also be after the action ended. If your story is about an exciting day at the county fair, the opening photo might be of your child on the way back home, happy, but exhausted, and possibly asleep in the back seat of the car. You may end with a public domain picture of the neon lights of a ferris wheel after dark. It's your story, so you're the boss!

Get into the action of your story. For this example, let's name our child "Amelia." What did Amelia enjoy at the fair? Itemize these things. Did she fill up on hot dogs and cotton candy? Did she visit the farm animal area and fall in love with a bunny or a baby pig? If she had a favorite activity, focus on that activity more. Did Amelia ride in the bumper cars five times? If you have pictures for everything, that is

fantastic. If you don't have (or can't find) good pictures for everything, but the experience was a highlight, don't leave it out.

Sum it up. How did your day end for Amelia? Was she tired but happy? Ready to go back to the fair again tomorrow? For the young child, go light on the words and heavy on the pictures.

What to do now: Cut and paste a rough draft of your story complete with narrative. Then share your draft with someone you trust—maybe your child—to provide feedback before finalizing your book's story.