

First, Next, Last: Retell a Story in the Right Order

Become story detectives together! This Education Makes Sense guide introduces a short video and downloadable worksheet for Year 1 children. Children put events from an original story in order, then retell it using ‘first’, ‘next’ and ‘last’. Enjoy it as a playful shared activity, with time to listen, talk and try again.

What it is

‘First, Next, Last: Retell a Story in the Right Order’ is a story activity for children in Year 1 in England. Retelling means telling a story again after hearing or reading it. Children become story detectives: they spot events that have been mixed up, put them back in order and explain their choices.

The short video and downloadable worksheet offer a way to explore an original story together. The words ‘first’, ‘next’ and ‘last’ give children simple prompts for their retelling. This connects with the Department for Education’s Year 1 English programme of study, which sets out what pupils should be taught. Its reading comprehension requirements — learning to understand what is read — include becoming familiar with stories and retelling them.

What happens

The activity centres on listening to the original story, sorting its events and telling it again. You can watch the short video together, then use the downloadable worksheet to explore which event belongs first, what happens next and what comes last.

Invite your child to explain a choice: ‘What happened in the story that helped you decide?’ If an event seems out of place, return to the story together and look for a clue. You can then take turns retelling, using the three words as prompts.

These are suggestions for sharing the resource, rather than a required lesson routine. It offers a playful option for autumn-term story sessions, but schools choose when and how to organise activities. Ask your child’s teacher how it fits with the stories being shared in class.

What it means for your child

This activity gives your child an opportunity to show what they understand about a story they have heard. They can talk about its events, listen to another person’s ideas and explain their own choices. The Department for Education’s Year 1 English guidance includes listening to and discussing stories, retelling familiar stories and explaining understanding.

Your child can join in even when the story is beyond what they can read independently: the guidance includes listening to books read aloud. You can do the reading while they explore what happened.

For children with special educational needs and disabilities, often shortened to SEND, ask the teacher which support would make the activity accessible. The national curriculum framework says teaching should take account of pupils’ needs, including those learning English as an additional language.

How you can help at home

Choose a story your child enjoys and share it together. Afterwards, invite them to tell you one thing that happened first, one thing that happened next and how the story ended. You could use the worksheet, draw a few simple pictures or act out the events with toys. These are optional ways to play with the same idea.

Keep it short and follow your child's interest. If they mix up events, say, 'Let's look at that part together,' and reread it. Take turns so you are both storytellers.

If your family uses another language, you could talk about the story in that language too, then model the English prompts. Children can also point or use their usual way of communicating. Ask their teacher about suitable adaptations.

Questions parents often ask

Does my child need to read the story alone? No. The Department for Education's Year 1 guidance includes understanding stories children listen to, as well as books they can read themselves.

Must they remember every word? For this activity, invite them to explain the events in their own words. You can return to the story whenever they want a reminder.

Are 'first', 'next' and 'last' compulsory curriculum words? The Year 1 reading comprehension requirements include retelling familiar stories, but do not prescribe these three prompts. They are the approach used in this resource.

What if my child finds it difficult? Share one event at a time and keep the experience relaxed. Ask their teacher which stories and support suit their current learning; classroom approaches vary.

Sources

- Department for Education — National curriculum in England: English programmes of study, particularly Year 1 reading comprehension and its accompanying guidance. [Official document on GOV.UK](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>).
- Department for Education — National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4, particularly section 4, Inclusion, and the guidance on schools organising teaching. [Official document on GOV.UK](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>).