



Instruction manual

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Preface

Reading is fun!

Through stories you can experience the most beautiful events and all things are possible. That is why people, young and old, often like stories. In addition to stories being fun, they also help the development in various domains: for example, language, social-emotional development and memory are stimulated by reading aloud.

If a person has limitations in terms of communication, reading aloud is often more difficult, and often it seems that the person has no need for it. Regular reading books might have no appeal, perhaps the person cannot hear or understand spoken language, or has a too short attention span.

With a *sensory story* you not only hear or see the story, but you also smell, taste and feel it. Because the story is short and always follows the same order, many people with multiple disabilities can pay attention to this and enjoy the story.

We heard from parents and supervisors that they had not thought that reading out loud could be so much fun. In addition, we find that a *sensory story* can help in the development of communication possibilities.

Have fun reading the *sensory stories*!



Necessities

Print from www.kentalisshop.nl: the text of the story and dress up paper dolls

And optionally from other sources:

- Icons
- PCS symbols
- Photos of the gestures
- The materials per story in a box or case (search or buy)

Further available on YouTube (Dutch)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3sUyymNSI3Kdd4LGtTqOI-k01LMGzE9S>

- General introduction video
- Good practice per story
- Video of the story in Dutch Sign Language
- Video of the story in Dutch supported with Gestures.

The preparation

Choose story

There are four example stories. We have tried to make the stories as recognizable as possible. But the story can always be adjusted if it has more appeal that way. Feel free to take a page out, or change the text, or choose another item.

As many senses as possible are addressed per story. But you can also adjust the story in this respect; for example more sounds, or just replace the sounds with something that vibrates or moves.

A story is most appealing when someone can recognize some of it. So we recommend that you first actually bake cookies, or go to the forest.

The story box

The materials for the *sensory story* are everyday items that you have at home or that you can buy in a toy store or department store. They do not have to be exactly the same as in the sample stories. It's about the experience. The materials are stored in a box, so that it can be easily packed and cleaned up.

Taking and cleaning up the materials is generally done by the reader, so that it is clear when an object has its turn.



The communication form

Sensory stories can be read with the help of all kinds of communication forms. Here you choose the forms of communication that the person normally uses. So Sign Language or spoken language supported with gestures. And the story itself can be shown with icons, photos, PCS symbols or text. For some people the images are too many. Always look for what type of reading works best for this person..



The place of reading

Reading a *sensory story* can be done best at the table: the story folder can be placed in a visible place and at the same time the story box is easily accessible. But sitting comfortably on the couch can of course also be nice. If you use gestures, make sure they are clearly visible.

Reading out is easiest if the area is quiet. If there are other people in the room, perhaps the story can be read to several people at the same time.

Practice the story

Because a *sensory story* can take some getting used to, it is often nice to practice the story beforehand. That way, you are familiar with the story and what experiences are offered. You can also practice the gestures. For the gestures from the example stories, photos and videos are available for extra support.



How often to read

Reading out the same story several times can give a familiar feeling. Therefore we recommend to read out a story at least once a week. But reading more often is great as well. The reading out is not mandatory. If the person does not feel like it, we respect that. Then we will just try again next time. Sometimes it helps to show what is in the story box. This can make someone curious ...

The name of the main character

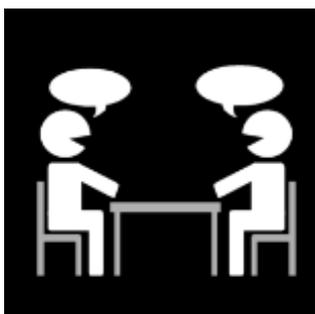
For the *sensory stories*, we chose a boy and a girl name. You can also substitute these with the name of the person being read to. Some people really like this. Please make sure first whether this is confusing or not. For example, the person might think he is going to sleep himself or is going to the forest.

Read out

In the beginning

It is nice if someone can focus his/her attention on the reading of the story. Sometimes someone is a little sleepy. Then moving around a bit before the story starts can help him/her become more alert. Someone can also be too busy. Breathing in and out deeply can then provide rest. Or just put a plaid on their shoulders.

For some people, the story only starts with an actual physical experience.



During the reading

During the reading, you keep the order of the book. You can see per page how you can stimulate communication. For example, by asking what can be seen in the icon. The sentence that is read out is basically the same every time. This may help the person to recognize the gestures or the words. The combination of gesture-object-image can help someone to understand it better.

Stimulate senses

Every page requires an action and an experience. For example, stirring in a bowl, spraying with the plant sprayer or the smelling of wood. Some people do not like scents or are scared of the water. Never force anyone, but see if the person can perhaps be motivated to give it a try. Gently offer the experience and do not scare the person.

Exciting and fun

Sensory stories are about daily events. Often, one of the incentives is more fun or interesting than the others. You can then work towards that, for example by asking: 'And what happened then?' It can be extra creepy-fun when something tickles under the blanket. Just like in normal reading books, exciting or sad moments also belong to the *sensory stories*. But they will always end well ...



Interactive reading

Sensory stories mean that the story is interactive.

If the person wants to say something, he/she is more than welcome. If he/she wants to talk too much about other things, not related to the story, you can park it if necessary. But *sensory stories* are a means to stimulate communication, so that should be kept in mind at all times!

To learn a language

We have chosen everyday words for the sample stories, which we think may be of benefit to many people.

If the goal is for the person to learn certain concepts, it is best to first say the sentence and/or make the gestures, then offer the experience, and then say the most important words and/or gestures again. If you first offer the experience, all the attention will go to that.

If you have questions about what is best for this person, consult a speech therapist or communication expert.



Close the reading

At the end of the story you always say 'Now the story is ready'. After that, everything goes into the story box and the reading is finished. Of course you can still talk: 'How did you like it? Have you ever been to ...? Have you ever ...?'

Your own story ...

If you now have the taste of reading out, a personal custom-made story is of course the best. That way, it can be about the subjects that the person is most involved with, or wants to learn gestures about. There are a number of instructions on the internet to create a customized story (see the sources).

If you would like more information, Kentalis also offers the course 'Making a *Sensory story*'. In this course, you create a customized story for someone and you get all the information about it. For more information, visit: www.kentalisshop.nl

Sources

Multisensory storytelling (MSST)

Sensory stories are inspired by *Multisensory storytelling (MSST)*. This is a form of reading aloud for people with complex multiple disabilities. We were inspired by Saskia from the Omega foundation.

More information about MSST can be found at:

www.annettenbrug.wix.com/msst (amongst other things, she has developed a manual)

www.multiplus.be (a manual is also available here)

www.voorlezen-plus.nl (they also offer a course)

Our English inspiration came from bag-books. More information and English do-it-yourself- books can be found at www.bagbooks.nl

Sensory information processing

In the *sensory stories*, there are many different sensory stimuli. Many people with multiple disabilities have impaired incentive processing. For the sample stories, we have been advised by Monique Thoosen, physiotherapist and Sensoric Integration expert at www.7zintuigen.nl.

Thanks to

Thanks to

We are grateful to the parents, caregivers, children and young people who so willingly cooperated in sharing videos of their reading-time moments. Thank you for sharing all those wonderful moments for us to watch!

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The sample stories and instructions were created with the help of a feedback group:

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- Andrea Hubbers, speech therapist and sign language expert
- Fokje Jagersma, communication expert
- Merel Prins, treatment coordinator and GZ psychologist

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- Carla Wikkerman , Voorlezen Plus