

How to tell a story: Tall Tales

Let's face it - we all lie. But when you tell a tall tale you can lie with impunity. Your audience expects it, wants it and is looking forward to how boldly you lie. A [tall tale](#) is a story with wildly exaggerated elements - the tall man becomes a giant, the small fish becomes a huge one, the harvest is over-run with giant vegetables - and it's usually witty or clever. Some common examples of tall tales include Paul Bunyan stories and shaggy dog stories. You can find some other examples [here](#). But you can make up and tell your own tall tales out of your own life too. Here are a few tips and tricks to consider:

- Have a basic sense of **how to tell a story**. Please refer to Storytelling 101 if you need a few tips.
- **Start with something commonplace**. A walk through your town leads you to a local person with some unusual characteristics. Playing a game of football leads to a player who can throw a ball so high you have time to go inside, watch tv, eat dinner and do your homework before you have to catch it.
- **Use your imagination**. Tall tales require exaggeration. If something was big it becomes enormous. If someone was strong they become the strongest person in the world.
- **Don't hesitate to use outlandish examples and comparisons**. *The fish was bigger than a six-car train. It was so big that the hook we used to catch it was made from a piece of steel my strong uncle ripped out of a nearby building.*
- **Keep it relatable**. Whatever it is that happens, your audience should have had a similar though smaller experience. They should have at least heard of fishing if it's a story about a giant fish that got away. They should have at least seen football on tv if it's about someone with an amazing throwing arm who eventually is asked to throw a space shuttle into the sky.
- **Keep it fairly short**. If it goes on too long your audience may get tired of being asked to suspend their disbelief.
- **Try to end it with the possibility of another story**. *I don't know where he is now, but last I heard NASA had hired him for some other emergency mission. I keep watching the news to see if he'll turn up.*
- **And have fun!** You should enjoy the story just as much as your audience.

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