



Online sensory story time event

Deafblind Awareness Week 2026

I am an Artist

Hosted by Vision Australia's
Felix Library and Children
and Young People Services

Contents

Deafblind Awareness Week 2026	1
Storytelling for children with different sensory abilities	3
How to use this guide.....	4
Part one: Different types of stories	5
Part two: 'I am an Artist' online sensory story time	8
Ideas for different environments	24
About Deafblind Awareness Week	26

Storytelling for children with different sensory abilities

Welcome to Vision Australia's Online sensory story telling guide for deafblind awareness week 2026. This information is aimed at supporting story telling for children with deafblindness, who are blind or have low vision, or are deaf or hard of hearing or other complex communication needs.

Storytelling is about more than words on a page, at its heart sharing stories is about understanding, communication and connection.

It's important because sharing stories is about:

- making sense of the world,
- understanding routines and experiences,
- sharing thoughts, choices and feelings,
- remembering things that happened before and anticipating what comes next.

Sharing stories can be about reading and writing, but that is not the starting point. Sharing stories begins with shared experiences and communication.

This resource explores:

- Different types of stories and how children experience them.
- Thinking about accessibility from the child's point of view
- Creating individualised story resources, that fit your child, home and family.

How to use this guide

This booklet guides you through how to make your very own accessible story kit to join in our online sensory story event on June 25, 2026.

Part one

In part one, different types of stories, we describe different ways to make stories accessible for children with different sensory needs. We explore four different ways to make stories accessible.

Use this section to work out the best way to make the story accessible for your child.

You can choose one way or a mixture of different ways.

Part two

In part two, 'I am an Artist' online sensory story time, we share different ideas to make at home for each of the types of stories. We've tried to use items that are easily found around the home or in your local area.

There are ideas to adapt the story in different ways, you don't have to use exactly what we suggest. Make use of what you have on hand, recycling materials or kitchen equipment.

Part one: Different types of stories

Children with sensory needs experience stories in many different ways, a story is not just read, it is experienced and shared. Most children join in more than one story type and their preferences and needs may change.

Sensory-experiential stories

What they are: Stories built from sensory experiences rather than pictures, objects or text. Meaning comes from touch, movement, sound, light and shared emotional moments. The experience itself is the story.

Why they matter:

- Support engagement and enjoyment,
- Help children feel safe and regulated,
- Allow participation in responsive environments.

Features:

- Loose structure,
- Repetition of sensory themes,
- The plot offers a frame; it doesn't matter if you don't stick to it.

Real world stories

What they are: Stories that revisit real-life experiences using real objects, places and events from the child's world. These stories help children make sense of, remember, organise and share experiences.

Why they matter:

- Build concrete understanding of objects and events,
- Support memory and sequence,
- Connect meaning and language with lived experience.

Features:

- Real objects,
- Clear link to child's experience,
- Predictable structure.

Tactile stories

What they are: Stories that have tactile supports (objects, miniatures, tactile images, signs) to represent real events in the story. In these stories, consistency matters more than realism.

Why they matter:

- Support abstract thinking,
- Builds formal literacy skills,
- Allow stories to be repeated consistently.

Features:

- Consistent materials, representing images in the story,
- Repeated tactile supports or key words,
- Exposure to alternative print,
- Clear beginning and end.

Alternate print stories

What they are: Stories that have accessible print support (large print, braille, Auslan) to support access to the text. In these stories access to language and print matters.

Why they matter:

- Support abstract thinking,
- Provides formal literacy development,
- Foster independence,
- Development of book concepts such as title and page numbers.

Features:

- Access needs are matched to the child's needs,
- Consistent layout of alternative print,

Children may enjoy different types of stories as they are growing up. Your child may enjoy sensory-experience stories for a long time, they may use a mixture of objects and some ideas for tactile stories, in a blended format. They may experience alternative print alongside other sorts of storytelling.

How children access ideas and words

All of the different types of stories can be supported with different ways to access the ideas or words of the story.

Ways children may access stories include:

- Spoken language or audio,
- Auslan or tactile sign,
- Braille or large print,
- Objects or tactile symbols,
- Actions or on-body signs.ide other sorts of storytelling.

Final thoughts to consider

Stories are not only found in books, but they are also co-created through shared lived-experiences, repetition, exploration and connection. Storytelling makes us human and offers ways to engage and share access to the world. Story telling is about creating shared experiences that are meaningful for your child, there are lots of ways to 'read' a story.

Part two: 'I am an Artist' online sensory story time

Who is this activity for?

- Children aged 3 – 7 years.
- Parents, support people, educators, pre-schools and service providers who can help set up the activity and support learning.



Before you start:

- The story 'I am an Artist' is based on five different sensory environments (forest, beach, rain, muddy, cloudy) which makes it a great story to adapt for different types of storytelling.
- Decide which sort of story you want to create with your child: Sensory-Experiential, Real-World, Tactile or Alternative print, (read part one of this guide to help you choose).
- Discuss with your Vision Australia service provider if you are unsure or need any help.
- You may want to visit real world environments to collect items for your story and create real world memories of these environments (forest/reserve (forest), beach/lake shore front (beach), fountains (rainy), muddy, cloudy!).
- You may have requested a braille book, or sensory pack when you registered for the event.

A sensory-experiential story

Activity goals:

- Independent exploration in responsive environments (reaching, touching, grasping, listening, looking).
- Concept development (environmental concepts).
- Joining in shared story routines.
- Social connection.

Preparation and materials:

- Purchase or borrow 'I am an Artist' by Nikki Slade Robinson. You may be able to borrow from your local library or the Felix library (if available).
- Register for the online story session.
- You will need to create a story pack based on the type of story you have chosen.
- You will need items that relate to the 5 different scenes of the story.
- Organise your space: this may depend on how much space you have.
- Consider how messy you want things to get and if you need protective covers.

Activity instructions

For the online story telling session:

Join the online storytelling event link (this will be emailed to you on registration).

The storyteller will introduce the session, sing a couple of warm up songs and read the story for the group.

As the storyteller reads the story they will guide you through exploring the different environments for you and your child, in different ways for different children.

To create your own story pack:

Sensory-experiential stories give the opportunity to create sensory environments using an active learning approach. This means you can incorporate:

- Position boards provide stable access to story materials.
- Resonance boards add vibration and sound feedback.
- Little Room uses defined space to allow reaching for objects easily.
- Treasure basket containing story-related objects together.

Choose the sensory concepts for each environment (forest, beach, rain, muddy, cloudy). Some examples are listed at the end of this pack.

Collect your sensory items to create the different environments, you can use real and sensory objects, depending on how your child likes to explore.

Tips:

- Do not leave your child unattended when using story items.
- Know your child and what is safe and what might be a hazard.
- These items are provided as ideas, you can use other items depending what is on hand.

Some photos of ideas are described below:



A treasure basket of round forest themed items (a metal bowl, with wooden discs, pebbles, cones, sticks).

A position board of beach related items, (with ribbons as seaweed, some shells and twine).



A resonance board of cloud concept, (with white balloons, foil space blanket and twinkle lights reflecting light and shapes like clouds).

An exploration tray with cellophane and shiny pom-pom (water concept).



Real-world story

Activity goals:

- Joining in shared reading routines.
- Concept development (environmental concepts).
- Experiencing alternative print or alternative storytelling.

Preparation and materials:

- Purchase or borrow 'I am an Artist' by Nikki Slade Robinson. You may be able to borrow from your local library or the Feelix library (if available).
- Register for the online story session.
- You will need to create a story pack based on the type of story you have chosen.
- You will need items that relate to the 5 different scenes of the story.
- Organise your story, think about how you are going to present the objects for your story.

Activity instructions

For the online story telling session:

Join the online storytelling event link (this will be emailed to you on registration).

The storyteller will introduce the session, sing a couple of warm up songs and read the story for the group.

As the storyteller reads the story they will guide you through exploring the different environments for you and your child, in different ways for different children.

To create your own story pack:

Choose real-world objects for each environment (forest, beach, rain, muddy, cloudy). Some examples are listed at the end of this pack.

Collect real world objects to create a collection of items found in different environments.

A baking tray or high contrast table mat provides an exploration surface with a clear boundary.

Keep collections of objects in separate containers (or sandwich bags) and open them for each part of the story.

Collect your sensory items to create the different environments, you can use real and sensory objects, depending on how your child likes to explore.

Tips:

- Do not leave your child unattended when using story items.
- Know your child and what is safe and what might be a hazard.
- Using bags or containers helps you manage the objects for different parts of the story – it has a clear beginning (opening the container) middle (exploring the object/s) and end (putting the items back in the container).
- These items are provided as ideas, you can use other items depending what is on hand.

Some photos of ideas are described below:



A baking tray with pebbles, sticks, leaves and moss (forest concept).

A craft tray with sand and shells, sea glass and driftwood (beach concept).



A water tray with water and a water spray (rain concept).

An exploration tray with soil (mud concept).



Tactile story

Activity goals:

- Concept development (environmental concepts).
- Joining in shared reading routines.
- Experiencing alternative print or alternative storytelling.

Preparation and materials:

- Purchase or borrow 'I am an Artist' by Nikki Slade Robinson. You may be able to borrow from your local library or the Feelix library (if available).
- Register for the online story session.
- You will need to create a story pack based on the type of story you have chosen.
- You will need items that relate to the five different scenes of the story.
- You may want to prepare tactile images using real, representative or home-made objects.
- You may need to contact a print access service to provide an alternative format

Activity instructions

For the online story telling session:

Join the online storytelling event link (this will be emailed to you on registration).

The storyteller will introduce the session, sing a couple of warm up songs and read the story for the group.

As the storyteller reads the story they will guide you through exploring the different environments for you and your child, in different ways for different children.

To create your own story pack:

Use representative objects or make shapes related to real world objects to create a collection of items found in different environments (forest, beach, rain, muddy, cloudy). Some examples are listed at the end of this pack. These objects are tactile supports and can represent the images in the storybook.

Use thick cardboard or thick felt to create pages of your book. You can stick the items with hot glue or another strong adhesive. You could stick, stitch or secure items to the page.

You can create tactile images related to the lines in the story or just make collections of shapes of the images.

Make sure items are securely fixed to the page

You can add alternative print (large print, braille etc.) as well as these tactile images.

Tips:

- Do not leave your child unattended when using story items.
- Know your child and what is safe and what might be a hazard.

Some photos of ideas are described below:



Black cover page of 'I am an Artist' with a small person and paintbrush.

Real leaves, feathers and glass pebbles create a monster on a felt page (forest concept). The second image includes small person and paintbrush.



Shell shapes, seaweed ribbons and driftwood on a card page (beach concept). The second image includes the small person and paintbrush.

Raindrop gemstones represent rain on a card page (rain concept) with a small person and paintbrush)



Different mud spats cut from soft foam (mud concept) with a small person and paintbrush.



Cloud shapes cut from different white and silver materials (cloud concept). The second image includes the small person and paintbrush.



Alternative print story

Activity goals:

- Joining in shared reading routines.
- Experiencing alternative print or alternative storytelling.
- Understanding book concepts like cover, title, page numbers, reading left to right and top to bottom.
- Tracking print.

Preparation and materials:

- Purchase or borrow 'I am an Artist' by Nikki Slade Robinson. You may be able to borrow from your local library or the Felix library (if available).
- Register for the online story session.
- You will need to create a story pack based on the type of story you have chosen.
- You will need items that relate to the 5 different scenes of the story.
- You may want to prepare tactile images using representative or home-made objects.
- You may need to contact a print access service to provide an alternative format.

Activity instructions

For the online story telling session:

Join the online storytelling event link (this will be emailed to you on registration).

The storyteller will introduce the session, sing a couple of warm up songs and read the story for the group.

As the storyteller reads the story they will guide you through exploring the different environments for you and your child, in different ways for different children.

To create your own story pack:

You may want to supplement the traditional book with some tactile pictures.

You could use:

- Puff paint
- Glue gun
- Heat-swell paper
- Wiki-stix
- UV printing (print access service)
- Velcro
- Double sided tape

To create simple representations of pictures in the book.

To get a free audiobook from the Felix Library:

You can listen to the audiobook for free as a member of the Vision Australia Library.

Not yet a member? Joining is quick, easy, and completely free! Simply complete our membership application [here](#).

The Vision Australia Library opens the door to a rich collection of audiobooks, braille titles, newspapers, magazines, and podcasts, designed for people who are blind, have low vision, or live with a print disability.

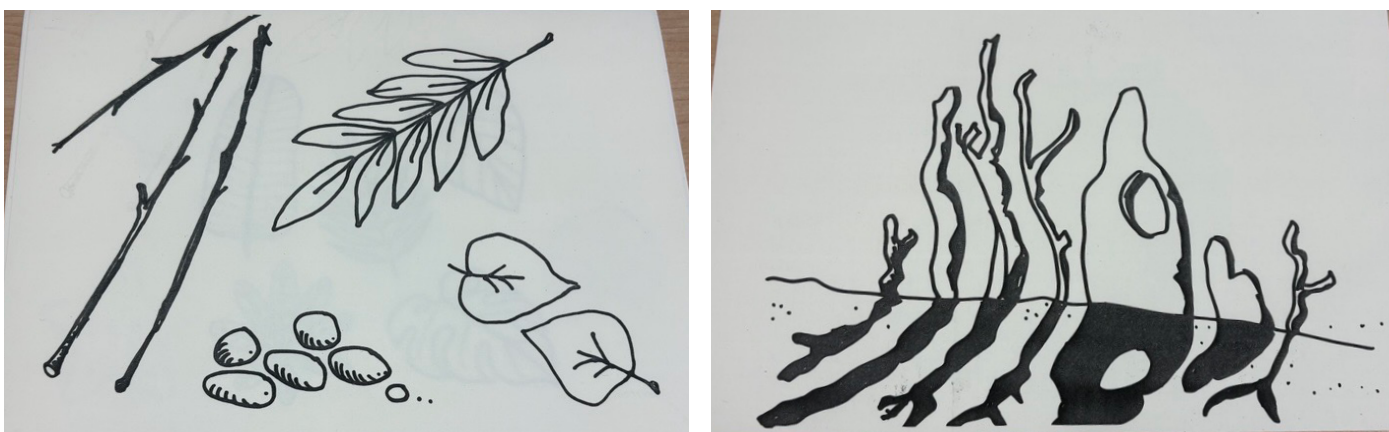
Tips:

If using a print access service, it may take time for them to prepare alternative formats.

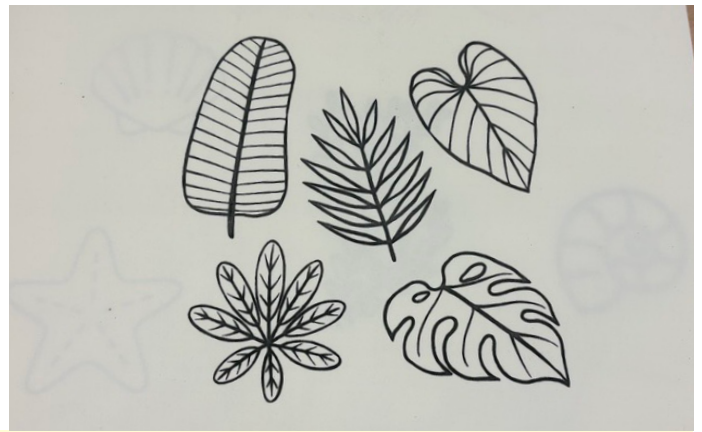
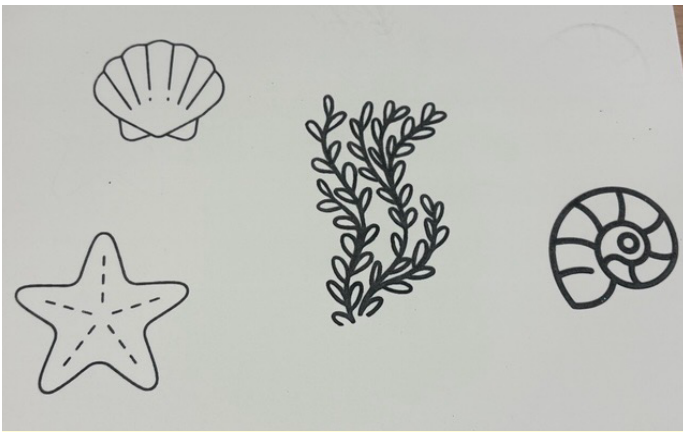
Some photos of ideas are described below:



Three pictures showing pages of the picture book I am an artist with braille overlay.



Left, hand drawn images of twigs, leaves, pebble shapes (forest concept) made tactile using Piaf heat swell paper. Right, Hand drawn images of driftwood and shadows (beach concept) made tactile using Piaf heat swell paper.



Left, printed images of seashells and seaweed (beach concept) made tactile using Piaf heat swell paper. Right printed images of different leaves (forest concept)) made tactile using Piaf heat swell paper.

Raindrops (rain concept) made tactile using glue gun drops.



Cloud shapes (cloud concept) made tactile using Wiki-Stix.

Auslan signs to support storytelling

Activity goals:

Some children will have enough vision to see the signs, other children may need to place their hands on top of yours to feel signs. Here are some useful signs for I am an artist.



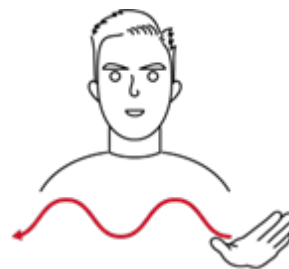
Forest



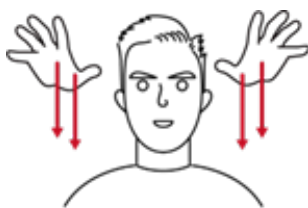
Tree



Beach



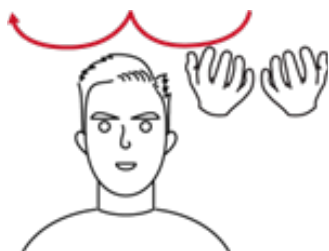
Ocean/Sea



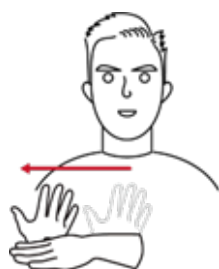
Rain



Mud (combines brown and dirty)



Cloud



Grass



Look



Dance



Walking



Make

Ideas for different environments

Forest

Concepts	Sensory-experiential story	Real-world story	Tactile story
Leafy tree canopies: cool damp, dappled shadows	Create a tree canopy with torchlight shining through fabric	Collect leaves, sticks twigs, pine-cones, gum nuts etc.	Artificial Leaves, feathers, glass pebbles, dowel sticks leaf skeletons
Footpaths: crunchy pebbles, uneven	Pebbles	Gravel, pebbles	Gravel, pebbles, shapes

Rain

Concepts	Sensory-experiential story	Real-world story	Tactile story
Wet, drips, cold	Water tray/water spray	Water tray/water spray	Raindrops, glitter gems, glitter

Mud

Concepts	Sensory-experiential story	Real-world story	Tactile story
Smelly, cold, sticky, gloppy	Chocolate pudding mix and water	Soil and water	Mud splats cut from foam

Beach

Concepts	Sensory-experiential story	Real-world story	Tactile story
Sandy shores: hot, soft, grainy	Sand, shells, twine	Sand, shells	Shell shapes, starfish shapes,
Driftwood: dancing shadows, smooth sea-worn wood		Driftwood, sticks, shadows cast by torch	Wooden shapes
Seaweed strands: long, pulling, tangles.	Ribbons of seaweed	Seaweed	Ribbons of seaweed
Mud pies/ sandcastles: cool, sticky, heavy.	Ribbons of seaweed	Add water to sand	Glitter paper sand shapes

Cloud

Concepts	Sensory-experiential story	Real-world story	Tactile story
Shapeshifting, light, airy, breezy,	Balloons, space blanket, twinkle lights		Cloud shapes cut from different white/silver materials

About Deafblind Awareness Week

Deafblind Awareness Week is to raise awareness of people with deafblindness and the support they might need.

Deafblindness is when people are both Blind (or Low Vision) and Deaf (or Hard of Hearing).

Deafblind Awareness week is celebrated every year in the week of Helen Keller's birthday. This year Deafblind awareness week is June 22 to 28, 2026.

Helen Keller was a famous person with deafblindness. She learnt to communicate with deafblind fingerspelling. She spoke up for the needs of people with deafblindness.

People with deafblindness communicate in lots of different ways. Some people use Auslan sign language, some people listen and speak, some people use touch. We have lots of different ways to communicate.