

Sequencing

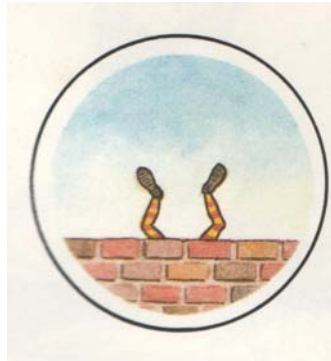
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by Leonard Grech (Principal Education Officer)

Simon and Paula were playing with pictures, trying to put them in sequence to form a story. They started with something simple, two pictures of Humpty Dumpty and then they went on to the pictures of the boy jumping over the candle (pictures 1-5).



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5

Sequencing is an essential skill, it is the ability to put actions, events or ideas in order. Children experience many examples of sequencing in their daily lives, for example the different steps carried out in brushing one's teeth:

- 1 getting out the toothpaste and toothbrush
- 2 squeezing the toothpaste onto the toothbrush
- 3 wetting the toothbrush and toothpaste with water
- 4 moving the brush around in the mouth
- 5 spitting out the toothpaste
- 6 rinsing off the toothbrush and the mouth
- 7 putting toothbrush and toothpaste away.

(Refer to www.quia.com/pages/sequencingfun.html).

They also watch other persons performing actions in a sequential manner, for example their father preparing a meal or washing the car, or their mother ironing

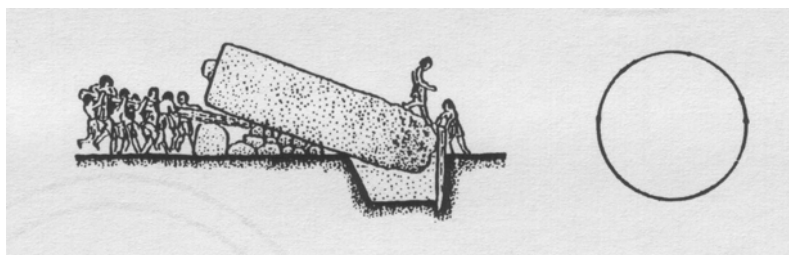
clothes or sending an email. These experiences have very positive effects on children who begin to perceive the order of events or actions. In turn this helps them to become more logical in their methods of thinking, to break large tasks into smaller ones, and to better understand the concept of cause and effect. At school sequencing aids children in mathematics and in reading comprehension among others. But acquiring this skill takes time and effort because putting ideas in sequence can be difficult particularly for children with certain learning disabilities such as autism. Teachers and parents will realise, for example, how much time and effort is spent working on the beginning, middle, and end of a story in early grades because the logical order of events or ideas is not always equally evident to every child. Hence, sequencing must be practised often and in many contexts before it becomes automatic for children. (Refer to <http://www.eduref.org/Virtual/Lessons/Interdisciplinary/INT0202.html>).

The following are a number of ways in which educators can help children acquire this skill from an early age.

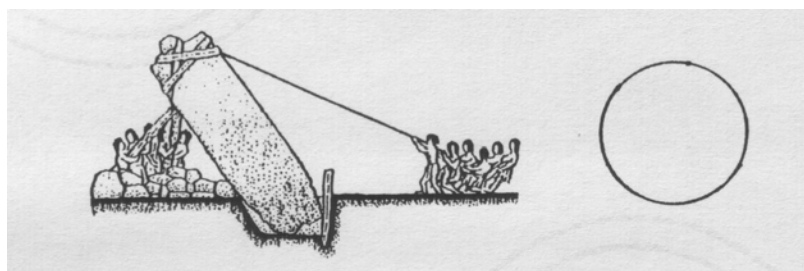
1. Start with everyday experiences; for example the child wants a drink. How do you go about preparing it? You tell the child what you are doing: taking out a plastic cup from the cupboard, opening the bottle of water, pouring water in the cup, closing the bottle and putting it back in its place, and passing over the cup to the child.
2. Use pictures such as those of Humpty Dumpty and of the child who jumps over the candle. Pictures 6 -14 show a series of actions that the child has to put in order. Be careful and choose the pictures according to the child's development. We should present attainable targets to children because this will increase their self-esteem and self-worth. Moreover, tasting success will get them motivated and increase their effort.



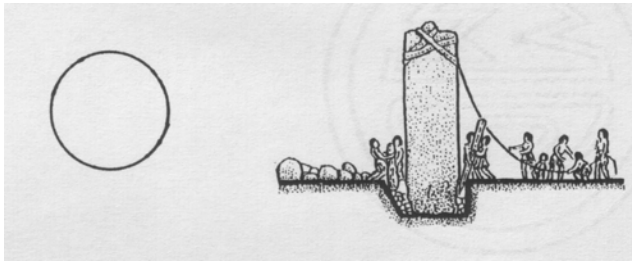
Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9



Picture 10



Picture 11



Picture 12



Picture 13



Picture 14

3. Challenge children to put in sequence events that are involved in particular activities, for example making microwave popcorn, putting on socks and shoes (figure 1), or going fishing. Children can even participate in these exercises on line where they can play either individually, in pairs or in groups and are able to check for themselves whether their answers are right or wrong.

(Refer to www.quia.com/pages/sequencing_fun.html/).

**Putting on your shoes and socks
(6 steps)**
Put these in the correct order

- Tie your shoelaces.
- Pick out the shoes and socks that you want to wear.
- Sit down.
- Walk away.
- Put on your socks.
- Put on your shoes.

Figure 1

- 4 Train children to put in sequence according to size, weight, or age using English or Maltese as the medium of instruction. With very young children or with those who have difficulties in reading it is advisable to use real objects. Exercises such as those in figures 2-4 help pupils to internalise the meaning of essential concepts such as smaller and smallest, bigger and biggest.

Put in order from the smallest to the biggest.

- book
- desk
- peanut
- mobile phone set
- pencil
- computer

Figure 2

Put in order from the lightest to the heaviest.

- ljun
- naħla
- kelb
- qattus
- għasfur
- nemla

Figure 3

Put in order from youngest to oldest.

- child
- grandparent
- baby
- teenager
- toddler
- parent

Figure 4

5. Challenge children to put in the correct order sentences or paragraphs to form a coherent story. In the beginning make use of well-known stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' (refer to the one created by Mark Warner, Teaching Ideas for Primary Teachers, available on line <http://www.teachingideas.co.uk>). One can also make use of traditional stories in Maltese, for example 'Ġaħan u l-Bieb' (refer to figure 5). Exercises like these help children become familiar with words and phrases such as: 'once upon a time', 'then', 'later', 'afterwards', and 'in the end'.

Poġġi dawn is-sentenzi wara xulxin biex tiffirma l-istorja ta' Ġaħan u l-Bieb

Wara ftit Ġaħan qam, libes u ġie biex joħroġ mid-dar. Ftakar li ommu qaltlu biex jiġbed il-bieb warajh.

Min jaf kif hassitha omm Ġaħan meta ratu diehel fil-knisja jiġbed il-bieb warajh!

Qabel ħarġet mid-dar omm Ġaħan qalet lil binha: “Ġaħan, qum, ilbes u ejja l-knisja. Tinsiex tiġbed il-bieb warajk.”

Meta wasal, Ġaħan daħal fil-knisja, ikaxkar il-bieb warajk.

Għalhekk Ġaħan qala' l-bieb u kaxkru mat-triq lejn il-knisja.

Figure 5

Chronology is an important aspect of sequencing that helps children become aware, for example, of the beginning, the middle and the end of a story. It also allows them to start asking fundamental questions such as ‘What happened?’, and ‘What happened next?’ as well as realise why something happened and what the consequences were.

Sequencing is a skill we make use of all the time in our daily lives and while studying. Unless we are trained in sequencing we will not be able to cope with Mathematics, Science, History, Comprehension Tests and with other areas of knowledge.

Sequencing enables children to follow instructions and to give instructions themselves. They learn that certain steps have to follow each other; this is the basis for most of our activities.

Ask pupils to write instructions how to make microwave popcorn, or, maybe, how to send an email.