

Oxford  
Children's  
Books

# Kitty

Creative  
Writing Guide



Written by Paula Harrison

Welcome to the Kitty Creative Writing Guide

Hello! I'm Paula Harrison, the author of the *Kitty* series which is illustrated by Jenny Løvlie. I'd like to tell you a little bit about how I became a writer, and what inspired me to create *Kitty*. I always loved stories when I was very young, and I even had a go at writing my own book when I was seven years old. I used an old notebook, and I started writing about a girl who had a whole houseful of pets! She had five cats, two dogs, three rabbits, four gerbils, and a squirrel monkey. I never finished that story, but I still look back and wonder what might have happened in it!



I think the tricky thing about writing stories is that there are so many choices about what to write. Do you want to write about robots or dragons or people with superpowers? It can often be a little nerve-wracking when you don't know where to start. If you sometimes feel like that, then hopefully this creative writing guide will help you. I'm going to give you my top tips and share with you some of my writing secrets.

After all, one of the best things about writing stories is that you have total control! **YOU** can decide what the story is about. **YOU** can decide where everything happens. **YOU** can choose whether your main character is a mouse who wants to travel in a hot air balloon or a pirate who's scared of beards. You can just let your imagination go wild and do whatever you like. Then if something in the story doesn't work out quite right, you can always go back and change it because that's what real authors do.

When I write the *Kitty* stories, I have lots of ideas and some of them work well and some don't. If I go wrong, I just cross things out and have another go. So don't worry if you sometimes find writing difficult. I have lots of tricks to help you, but the most important thing is to have fun. Do remember to show someone your story when it's finished. Stories are meant to be shared, and seeing your family and friends enjoy what you've made up will give you the motivation to write another one!

Happy writing!

Paula





# Contents

Paula's top 5 writing tips.....	4
How do I get an idea for a story?.....	5
How do I invent a character?.....	8
Character activity sheet.....	11
How do I decide what happens in the story?.....	12
Tricks to make writing easier.....	15
Expert tips.....	16
Making a different kind of story.....	18
Story starters.....	19
Illustrating your story.....	20
Sharing your story.....	20



## Paula's top 5 writing tips

1. Write about something that **interests you**. This could be anything from horses to pizza!
2. Make a **rough plan** before you start. This could be quite short or really long—it's up to you.
3. All good stories have **something that goes wrong** for the main character in the middle.
4. Don't be afraid to **stop and change things** if you're not pleased with your story. Authors do this all the time.
5. Add something **surprising or unexpected** to your story. This can be fun and will keep your reader guessing!





## How do I get an idea for a story?

When I begin a story, I like to daydream a bit. This is because stories don't come from outside of you. They are already hidden in your brain somewhere. All you have to do is find them!

So how do you find the stories that are inside you?

### What do you like doing?

Do you love dancing or football, or playing with your pets? Choosing something you love will make writing your story more fun. I've always loved cats, and I own a black cat called Inky. When I write the *Kitty* stories, I think about all the funny and mischievous things that Inky does, and then I put them into the story.

### Where have you been?

Have you ever been on a picnic? Have you ever been to the woods or to a funfair? Choosing a place you have visited will help you write your story.

In *Kitty and the Tiger Treasure* a statue is stolen from a museum, so when I wrote that book I thought about the museums I've visited and how everything looked inside.



## What important things have happened to you?

These don't have to be super-amazing things! You don't have to have climbed a mountain or met the Queen! You can write about starting school for the first time or getting a new pet. I still remember how excited I was the very first time I had a friend over for a sleepover, so when I wrote *Kitty and the Treetop Chase* I put a sleepover into the story.

## Is there something you'd love to try?

You don't just have to stick to things you've done and places you've been. If there's something you've always wanted to try, just add it to your story. Have you always wanted to fly in a space rocket? Great—just add it in! You could ask a grown-up to help you look up information about your interest. Then use what you discover to help you write your story.

## What stories do you like reading?

We often like to write the same kind of stories that we like to read. Do you love reading about aliens or witches or horses? Then you could try writing your own story about them. If you love the *Kitty* books, then you could invent your own cat crew and work out what adventures they might have together.





★ Try quickly jotting down some answers to the questions above. You don't have to write whole sentences. You can just draw a big thought bubble like the one below and write words inside it. Would you like to use any of these ideas in a story?

★ *Hint: you might end up with so many ideas that you can't fit them all into one story. So just pick your favourite ones, and save the others for another time.*



## How do I invent a character?

Sometimes I think of a character first and then I invent their story. But sometimes it happens the other way round—I think of a story first and then I make up a character to go in it. It doesn't matter which way you do it!

Do you want your character to be young or old? Are they an animal or a robot or a fantastical creature like a dragon? Not sure what to pick? Try answering the following questions and see what happens.

### What do they look like?

Are they tall or short? Green eyes or brown eyes? Think about what sort of clothes they might wear too. When I began writing about Kitty, I knew she ought to wear really practical clothes that would allow her to run and leap about easily. Her special outfit, with its cape, mask, and cat ears, make her look like a proper superhero.



### Who are their family and friends?

Should your character have lots of brothers and sisters or none at all? Do they have a friend who will be with them on their adventures?

### What are their likes and dislikes?

Does your character have a favourite food? Do they have a favourite toy or a place they like to go? You can use this information in the story.

### What do they do in their spare time?

Does your character have a hobby? You can make this funny if you want—like a pirate who loves to ballet dance or a sheep that does acrobatics!





## What is special about your character?

Is there something that makes your character different? Maybe they have a special talent or power? Perhaps they're an ordinary person, but they really love animals and they're very good at looking after them.

## A quick note on baddies!

If you have a baddie in your story, it's important to make them just as interesting as your other characters. Yes, they are behaving badly, but do they have a reason why? Are they jealous of someone, or do they just want to get rich? Do you think they should realise their mistakes by the end of the story, or do they stay bad right up to the last sentence?



Still not sure who your character should be? Try making a random character like this, using the grid on the next page:

1. Cut out the character features for the first row.
2. Muddle up the cards. (Perhaps you could put them in a hat or a bowl.)
3. Pick one card without looking at it.
4. Cut out the other rows one at a time and repeat steps 2 & 3.
5. Put the cards you've picked together to make your character.

You might end up with a cheerful witch who likes jam toast, loves playing football, and has a super-powered sneeze!



child	witch	cat	tiger	pirate	dragon	robot
tall	spiky	short	furry	jolly	green eyes	huge feet
shy	fierce	helpful	cross	cheerful	naughty	sleepy
popcorn	pizza	turnip stew	fish	mouldy onions	chocolate cake	jam toast
dancing	cooking	football	stealing treasure	writing stories	swimming	playing tricks on people
they have a huge beard	they can fly	they can talk to animals	they live in a castle	they have a magical ring	they have a super-powered sneeze	they are 100 years old

Who is your character?

What do they look like?

How do they behave?

What is their favourite food?

What do they do in their spare time?

What is special about them?



## Character Activity sheet

You can  
draw their  
picture  
here

Now try filling in the character sketch below  
for the main character in your story.

My character is a .....

(child/animal/witch/pirate/dragon . . .)

What they look like:

They are .....

.....

.....

(tall/short/colour of eyes/hair . . .)

The names of their family and

friends are .....

.....

Things they really like .....

Things they don't like .....

In their spare time they like to .....

.....

They are special because .....

.....

## How do I decide what happens in the story?

In every good story, there is something that goes wrong for the main character and then they must overcome that challenge before the end of the story.

In *Kitty and the Moonlight Rescue*, Kitty is asked by Figaro to find out what's causing the terrible noise in the middle of the night. She's never been on an adventure before, and she's a bit nervous about it. The awful noise is made by Pumpkin, who has got himself stuck, and Kitty has to rescue him.

First you need to work out what your character wants. In *Kitty and the Moonlight Rescue*, Kitty wants to stay nice and cosy in bed! But there is also part of her that would like to be a proper superhero, and this is her chance to go on her very first mission.





Once you know what your character wants, don't let them have it! Put a problem or an obstacle in their way.

Then work out how they will overcome the problem they're facing.

They may need to use a mixture of clever ideas and brave actions to win the day. Kitty has to think hard about the problems she faces, but she also has to leap and balance and use her superpowers to succeed.

So the simple way to work out the plot of your story goes like this:

1. What does your main character want?
2. What stops them from getting what they want?
3. How do they overcome it and win the day?

### What else could happen in your story?

Even when you've decided what your main problem is, you'll want some other things to happen as well. What should they be?

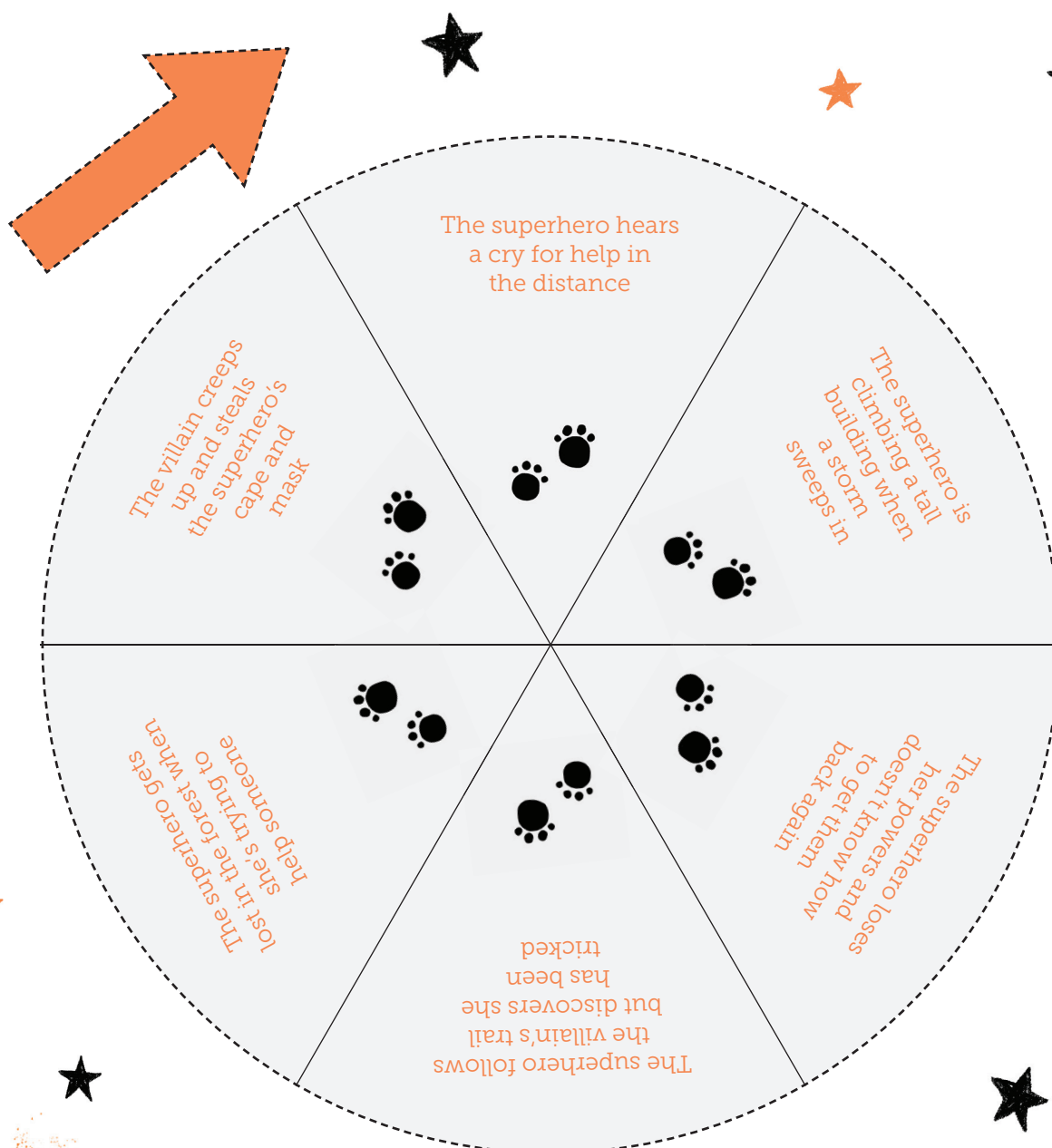
You can have some fun deciding by making a story spinner! The one I've drawn below works for a superhero story like the *Kitty* books. If you're writing a superhero story too, you can cut out my spinner and use it.

If not, you can trace around my spinner onto a piece of card or the back of a cereal box. Then write your own ideas onto each part of the spinner. Think of things that match your story—e.g. for a story set in outer space, you could write 1. *An alien jumps on board the rocket.* 2. *A meteor is heading straight for the planet.* And so on.



## How to make your spinner:

1. Trace around the circle below.
2. Cut the circle out and divide it into sections.
3. Write different problems into each section.
4. Trace around the arrow and cut it out.
5. Use a split pin to fix the arrow into the middle of the spinner.
6. Spin the arrow and follow the story choice that it lands on.



## Writing a plan

It's a good idea to write a plan of what will happen in your story so that you don't forget what you're doing halfway through. This can be quite short or very long—it's really up to you! But make sure you write down what your character wants and what kind of problem gets in their way.

## Tricks to make writing easier

### Words for 'said'

Rather than using **said** each time your characters talk to each other, why not use a different word instead? There are lots of possibilities. See how many more you can think of!

replied cried bellowed whispered  
yelled squeaked muttered sighed  
screeched giggled

### Adjectives

Adjectives are describing words. If you use plenty of them, they will bring your story to life! Here are some describing words to match things you might find in a *Kitty* book.

**Adjectives for the moon** – bright, shiny, round, pale.

**Adjectives for the street** – dark, long, shadowy, quiet.

**Adjectives for a cat** – furry, graceful, mischievous, shy.

**Adjectives for a duvet** – fluffy, cosy, stripy, rumped.

Try picking some things that you want to put in your story, and brainstorm adjectives for each one.





## Action verbs

When exciting things happen in your story, it's important to use action verbs. A verb is a word that tells you what a character is doing, like **run**, **play**, **eat** and **sit**.

Here are some action verbs from the *Kitty* books. See how many more you can think of!

gallop

spring

leap

tumble

race

somersault

scramble

hunt

climb

swoop

## Expert tips!

### Connectives

A connective is a word that connects two parts of a sentence together. You can use them to make longer and more interesting sentences.

So instead of writing:

*Kitty climbed out of the window. She was looking for Figaro.*

You can make one longer sentence, like this:

*Kitty climbed out of the window **because** she wanted to look for Figaro.*

Here are some more connectives you can use:

although

so

finally

however

unless

but

meanwhile

because

while

until

## Similes

A simile is a way of describing something by comparing it with something else. Every simile follows a pattern. They either use the word **like**:

*The stars looked like sparkling diamonds.*

Or they use the pattern, **as ? as**

*The stars were as bright as sparkling diamonds.*

Or they use the pattern, **? than**

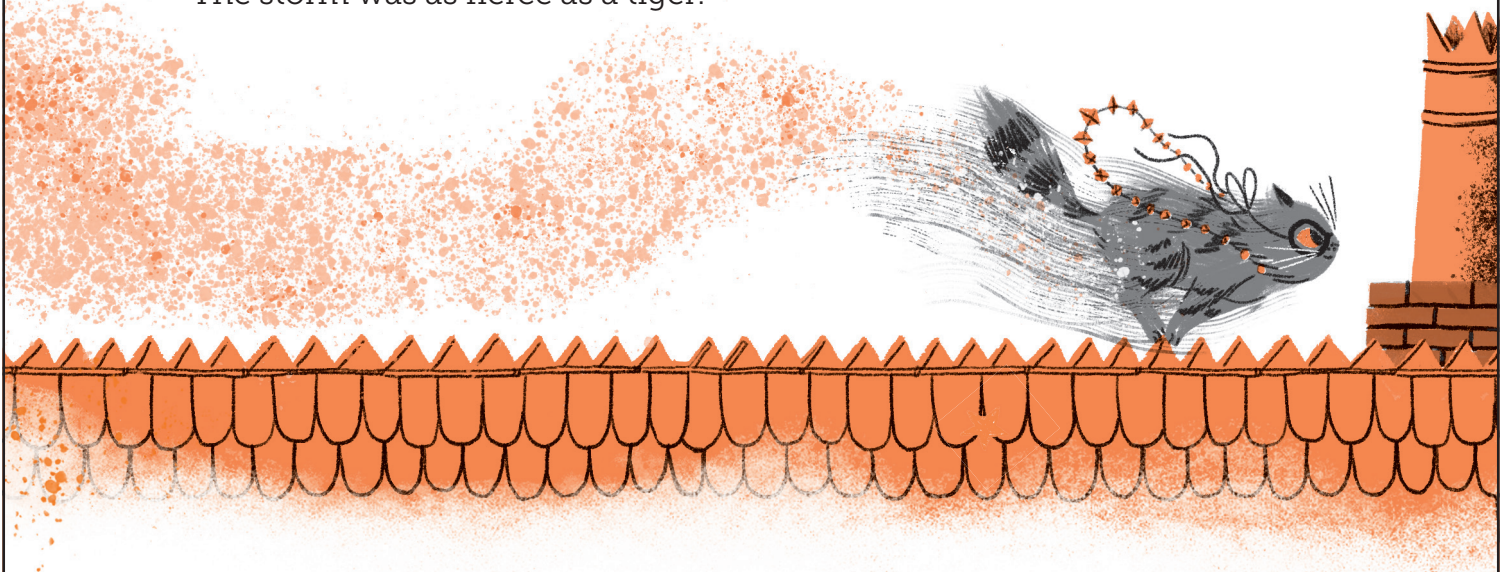
*The stars were brighter than diamonds.*

Using a simile is a really good way to make your writing special. Have a think about how you would describe one of the following things using a simile: a cat, the snow, a storm. As you can see, I had a go too!

The cat was sneakier than a burglar.

The snow sparkled like icing sugar.

The storm was as fierce as a tiger.





## Making a different kind of story

If you want to write your story in a normal way, then you can just find a piece of paper and a pencil and get started. Or you could type the story onto a computer or laptop.

But if you feel like doing things differently, have a look at the following ideas:

1. **Make a comic strip.** Take a piece of A4 paper. Fold it in half. Then fold it in half again. Then fold it in half one more time, and you'll have eight rectangles on your piece of paper. Make a comic strip story with one picture and one sentence in each box.
2. **Write a story with a friend or a grown-up.** You start the story and write four sentences. Then hand it to your story partner, and they have to write the next four sentences. Carry on like this until you get to the end. You may find your story partner adds some unexpected things to the story, which can be a lot of fun.
3. **Make the baddie into your main character.** Villains hardly ever get to be the most important character in a book. Why not try making the villain the main character in yours and see what happens! Maybe they will end up becoming good in the end.
4. **Make a story picture.** Choose something that's important in your story and draw a large outline on a very big piece of paper. Then write your story inside that shape. When you're finished you can colour in some details around your writing. If I was making a story picture for *Kitty*, I might draw an outline of a cat. Then I would fill in details of the eyes and whiskers after I'd finished writing.
5. **Narrate your story.** Sometimes writing everything down on paper can seem a bit daunting. If you feel like this, then try narrating your story instead. First plan out your story in the normal way, then record it using an iPad or a mobile phone (after getting the permission of a grown-up).

It's important to have a go at improving your story, so you could make a practice story first. Then play it back and decide what to change. Then have a go at recording the finished story. If you don't have a recording device, just narrate your story to an audience. You could even set up a storytelling show and use props to help you. The very first stories in the world were passed on through storytelling exactly like this.



## Story starters

Still trying to decide what to write? Have a look at these cat-themed and superhero-themed story starters to see if one of them sparks an idea!

Write a story about someone with animal superpowers. Which animal could their powers come from—fox, eagle, tiger? What adventures will they have?

What if you woke up one morning with the power to turn invisible? But what if it only happened when you sneezed?

What if your parents bought you a pet kitten and you discovered she was magic?

Write a story about a character that sails off in a boat to explore distant islands and takes her best friend, Whiskers the cat, along with her.



## Illustrating your story

Once you've written your story you might want to add some illustrations. The illustrator of the Kitty series is Jenny Løvlie and she has some great tips for drawing Kitty and your own characters in her draw-along which you can find here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSImdRo4wYc>.

## Sharing your story

I hope you've found lots of helpful ideas and tips in this Creative Writing Guide. Remember, the most important thing is to have fun making up your story. When you've finished it, share it with your friends, family or teachers so they can enjoy it too!



If you want to find out more about my books, have a look at my website at <https://paulaharrison.jimdofree.com/> and you can use the contact form to tell me all about your story.

Happy writing!

Paula





# Kitty

You can find out more about Kitty,  
and her writer and illustrator, at  
<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/kitty>

