

Creating a family storybook

Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority



A family storybook is a book or movie displaying information concerning how your family was created, presented in a child-friendly format.

Why create a family storybook?

Children ask questions, and not just at convenient times. They ask at the supermarket checkout and in front of school friends and relatives. The process of creating a storybook will help you choose which words you want to use to answer these questions. Reading the story to your child from a young age means you will be well-rehearsed by the time questions come - from your child and others.

Over time, a family storybook also equips your child with the ability to answer questions and retell their story to friends and family with confidence and pride.

This all contributes towards a healthy self-esteem for the child and sense of being loved and cherished.

How to create a family storybook

The most popular methods of book creation are:

- with a scrapbook where photos can be physically glued in and text hand-written
- as a movie with apps, such as iMovie on an iPad or iPhone
- as a photobook. There are online services which allow you to put together photos and text that are then printed as a book.

Before you begin, think about how you would answer the following questions:

- How do you want your child to feel about telling their family story?
- What are the key elements of your story that are important?
- How do you want to describe your donor or surrogate to your child?

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Tips on what you may wish to include

Every family storybook is unique, the beauty of creating it yourself is that you can decide what is included and how things are explained. Below are some ideas that might assist:

- It may help to write from the perspective of the third person, so refer to yourself as papa/mummy/muma etc. rather than 'I' or 'we'. This way anyone can read the book to the child or read it themselves and it will make sense.
- It is important to be honest with the information you include in the book as this builds trust between parent and child.
- You may like to set the scene with information about your relationship with your partner (if applicable) and why you chose donor conception or surrogacy. You might like to explain how much you wanted your child; who and what was involved in your journey to conceive; how long the process took to have a baby; and how you felt along the way.
- Consider whether you would like to include details about your donor and/or surrogate - some parents like to have as much identifying information as possible. You can include photographs and details about why you chose this particular donor/surrogate and how you feel about their decision to donate.
- Photos and details of the pregnancy and birth often appeal to children as can ultrasound photos.
- You may wish to point out the personality or physical traits the child possesses that come from the donor and those that come from the biological parent (if applicable). This helps to explain how the donor is relevant in the child's life.
- You could also point out the non-biological parent's role in the child's life (if applicable). For example, "Marcus/mum/daddy/Cherry loves you, spends time with you and takes care of you". This helps to explain how a donor differs from a parent.
- A popular ending involves emphasising how loved the child is by everyone in their family for being just who they are. You could include photos and information on grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, and anyone else special in your child's life. You may want to talk about each person's role in your family and how much you child is loved by these people.

Find out more

The Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (VARTA) has more information on its website that may be useful, including a number of videos, which can be found at:

- <https://www.varta.org.au/information-support/donor-conception/parentsrecipients/talking-children/how-tell/family-storybook>
- <https://www.varta.org.au/resources/personal-story/family-storybook-dear-rosie>
- <https://www.varta.org.au/resources/personal-story/family-storybook-my-special-donor-buddy>
- <https://www.varta.org.au/resources/personal-stories/family-storybook-how-did-i-get-there>

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