

# ADVENTURE CRAFT

## Teaching Kids to Love Collaborative Creativity

Prototype Link - <http://bit.ly/10bDzf4>

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## Introduction & Mission Statement

Elementary and middle school children love to tell a story. These stories often capture the ingenuity and spontaneous creativity of children that we grown-ups sometimes wish we had. Sadly, children also often simply forget about their stories soon after expressing them verbally. Parents of these children also want their kids to capture this creativity and turn it into something concrete, usually in the form of writing that others can read. However, the current way of teaching writing in school and at home ultimately fails at teaching children to fully express and explore their creativity because they often fail at making writing “fun.” As a result, children wind up spending time on activities that fail to develop their keenly creative and explorative senses.

This is where we come in. We would like to present a tool which children can use to express their ideas, collaborate creatively, and most importantly, discover the joy of creative writing. We aim to remove the parts of writing that children enjoy least from the whole process, by giving them a chance to work with others or providing suggestions on how to move forward when they’re stuck. This will help children improve their writing skills, learn to collaborate with others and appreciate the ideas that others bring to them. Contributors on our platform can help the children organize their thoughts to take them from interesting ideas to coherent stories. This will encourage children to write, get feedback and also give them the chance to read well-formulated stories based on the ideas of other children their age.

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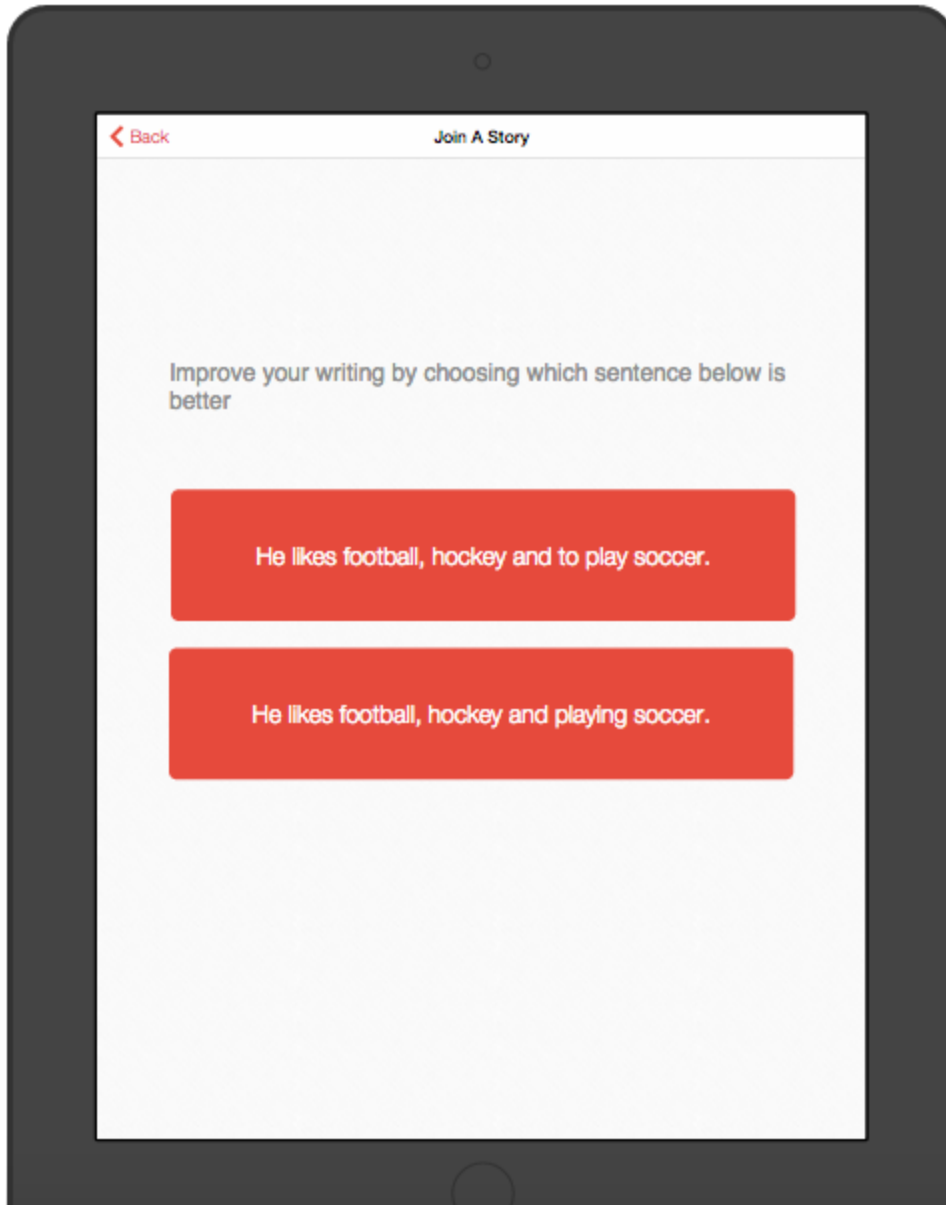
## Tasks

### *Start writing stories. (simple)*

We believe that the best way to improve writing ability is just practice. That’s why we tested how easy it was for children to start writing with a higher fidelity prototype and monitored their progress at each stage in the writing process (writing a title vs. starting the story). The children seemed to have a hard time getting the title down on paper, so we plan to give suggestions for the title when they start writing in our next prototype.

*Play games to improve writing (moderate)*

To help make all of the breaks in the writing process (waiting for a collaborator or turn to write) entertaining while still helping writing ability, our second task was a game where they pick the sentence that is grammatically correct given two choices (see Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** The users were asked to choose the sentence that uses correct grammar. After they answered they were given an explanation of the rule applied in these cases.

### *Collaborate with others (complex)*

To make the writing process more interactive and help foster shared ideas, our application focuses on collaborative writing. However, due to our inability to use crowd-sourced inputs (or even have multiple users) the task of collaboration was most complex for the medium-fidelity prototype. To overcome this problem we had them “jump in” to a story in progress that we had previously written, but to carry out multiple rounds of writing we had a placeholder telling the users that that would be where their collaborator’s text would be.

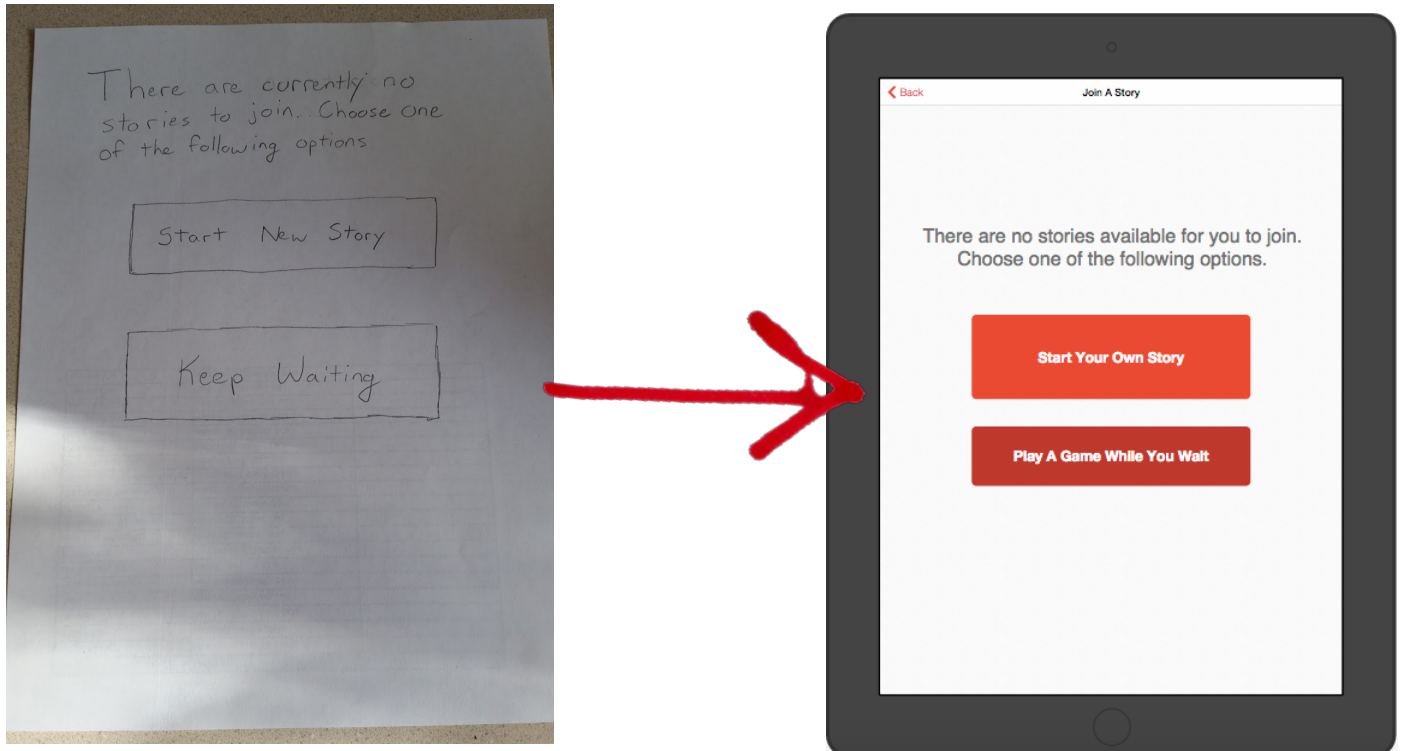
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## Revised Interface Design

As a result of our low-fi tests we felt that a lot of aspects of our UI were fairly intuitive to the children, but there were still some aspects that we needed to change for the medium-fi prototype. Watching children get stuck at certain points in the low-fi prototype encouraged us to change our prompts or the sizes of buttons. For example, we had a button labeled “Keep Waiting.” but almost everyone was confused about what it meant and suggested we rename it to something like, “Play some games while you wait” so they know what to expect when they click the button. We also increased the sizes of buttons we wanted the users to click on and reduced the sizes of others (See Fig. 2).

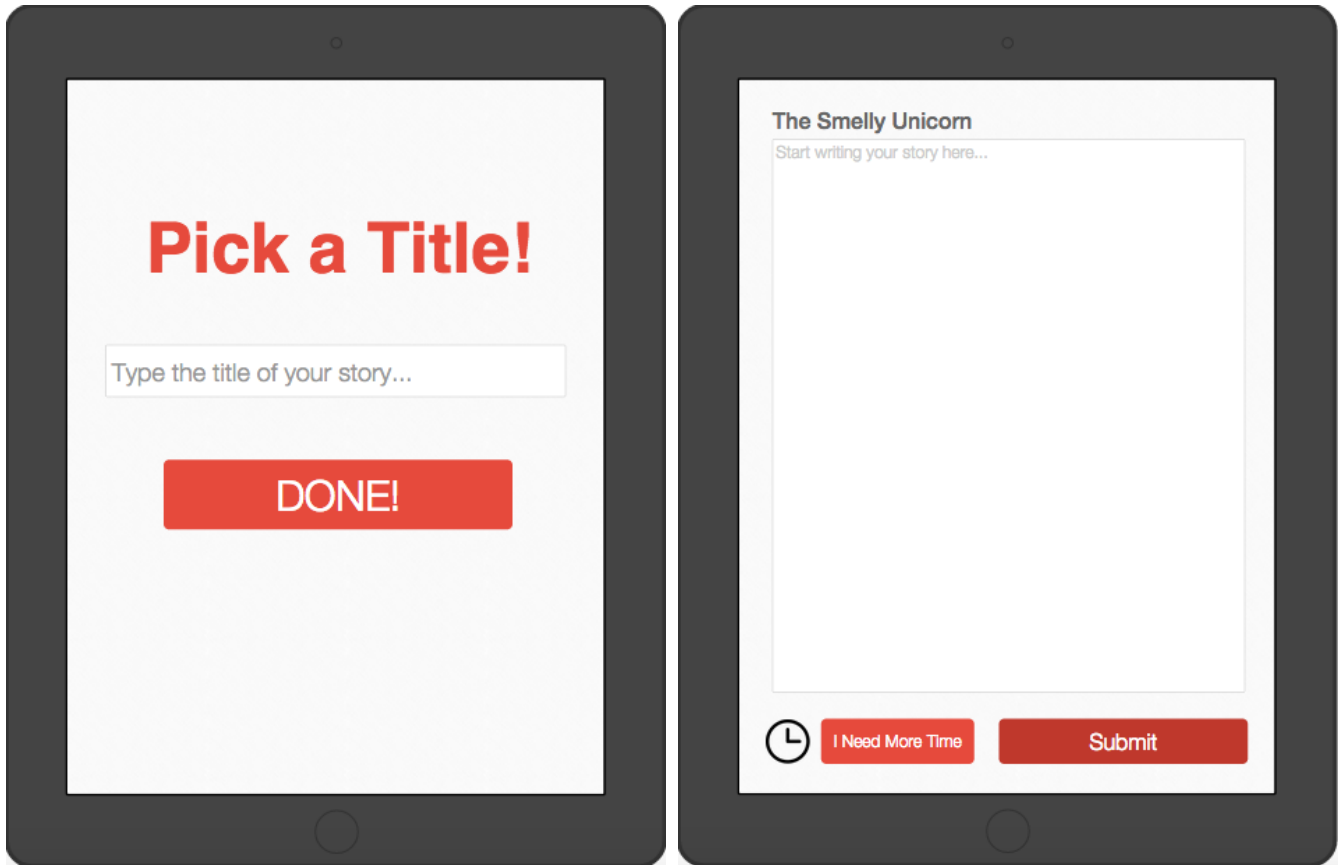


**Fig. 2:** We increased the size of the “Start Writing” button as opposed to the “Read My Past Work” button to encourage the users to write rather than review their work.



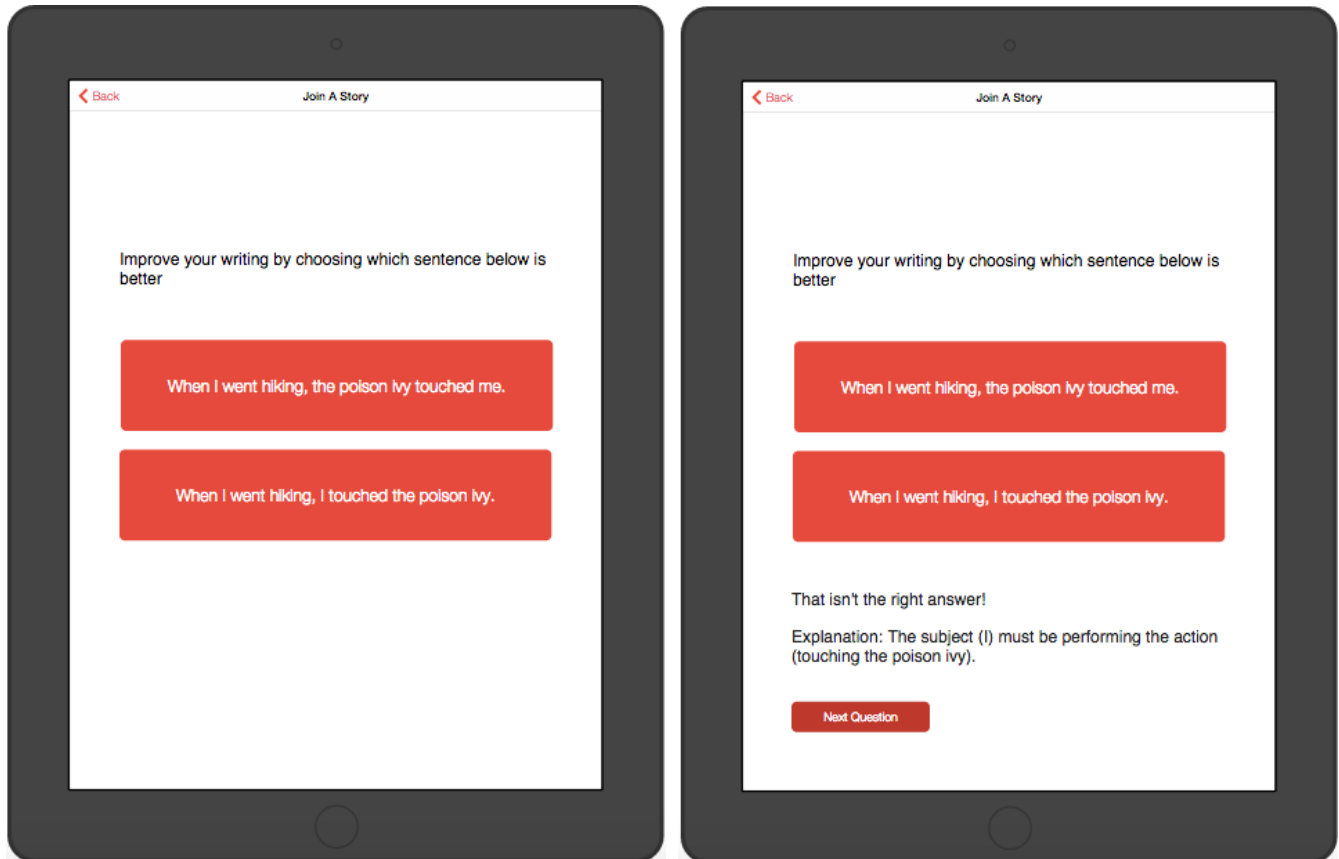
**Fig. 3:** We changed the prompt of the “Keep Waiting” button to make it read, “Play a Game While You Wait” because our users had complained about being unsure of what was going to come next.

## Task 1: Start writing stories.



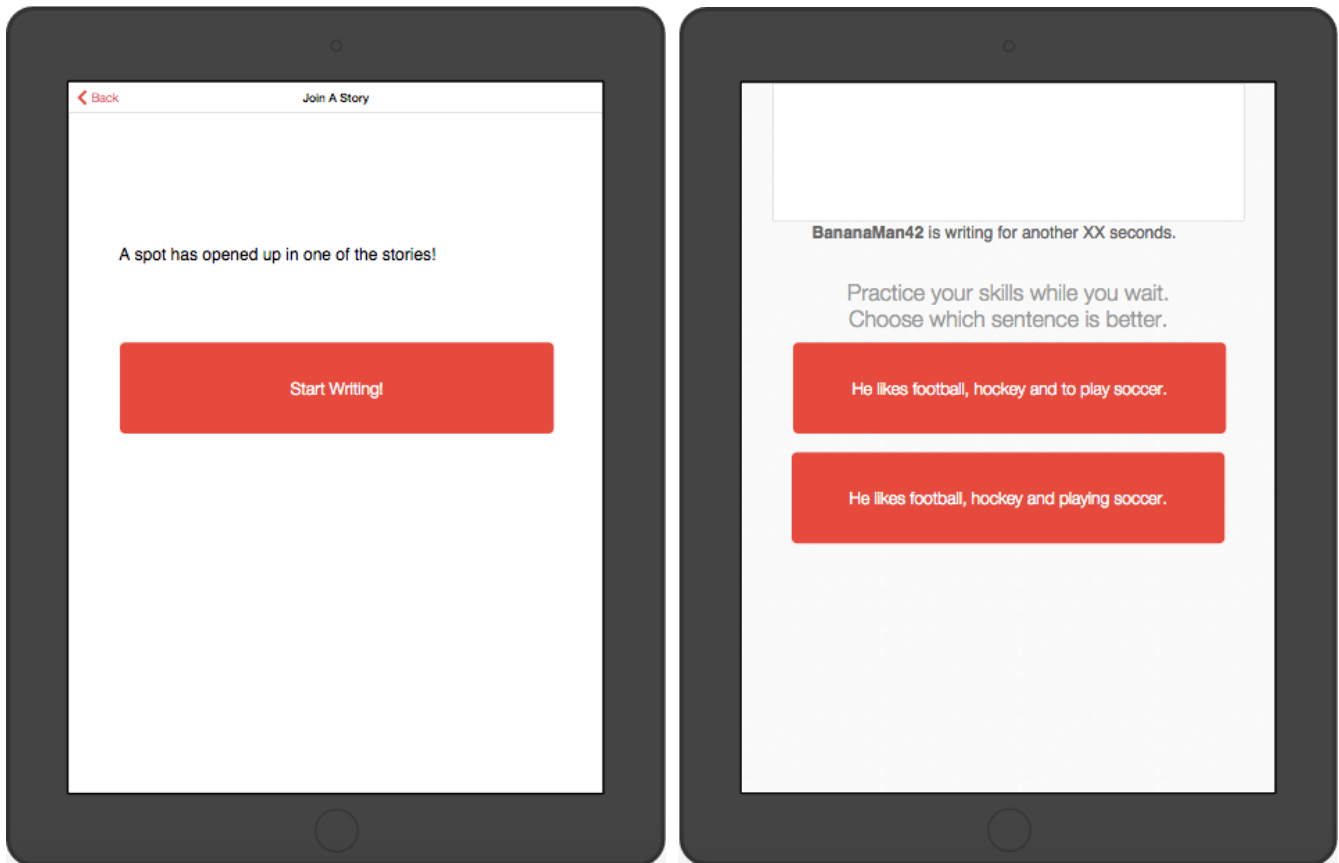
**Fig. 4 & Fig. 5:** The users can start their own stories and wait for others to join them. To get them started, we encourage them to pick a title so they know what they want to write before they actually get down to writing the story.

## Task 2: Play Games to Improve Writing.



**Fig. 6 & Fig. 7:** The users pick the sentence that they think uses correct grammar and get feedback and an explanation about the grammatical rule being used. The above scenario is shown when they are waiting for a story to jump in on. Similar questions are shown when they are waiting for their turn to write (see Fig. 8).

### Task 3: Collaborate on Stories



**Fig. 8 & Fig. 9:** The users can join in on stories that are already being written if they wait for someone else to start writing. This helps them embrace other people’s ideas and gives them the chance to learn and do something fun while waiting.

### Prototype Overview

After trying the different options offered to us by the class for prototyping software, we found that proto.io offered a good balance between functionality and ease of use. The tool helped us simulate a lot of the interactions that we found difficult to implement in the low-fi prototype. Proto.io also made it possible to take user input from a keyboard and store that input in a variable. This allowed us to move the data between screens. One limitation of proto.io was its inability to handle multiple users at the same time (hardly a limitation for a prototyping tool), so we had to hard-code the collaboration. Since we didn’t know what type of story a user would type, this took the form of “This sentence was added by a collaborator. You’ll just have to pretend for now :)”

We were also unable to figure out how to use timing features on proto.io. This was important because users were only given so much time to write. To handle this, we simply informed users that we would tell them when their writing time was up. Not ideal, but it worked.

There were a few other UI features that we did not implement in this prototype (like suggestions about where to start), even though they would have been feasible, because of the results of our low-fi tests. However after testing this prototype we feel that features such as suggestions and pop-up boxes to inform writers about other users would be useful in the next iteration of our product.

**Instructions for using the prototype can be found [here](#).**