



## Digital Storytelling – additional notes to accompany slides



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### SLIDE 9

#### Good Stories are Engaging

Scenarios and animations are two favourite ways of using storytelling in adult learning.

#### Good Stories are Relatable

Tailor your story to your audience members by creating characters that are relatable. When a learner can relate to a character, they will feel better connected and develop an understanding of the experience of your character.

#### Good Stories are Conversational

Write dialogues that are conversational in tone, using language that your learners would actually use with each other and their children. Consider using 'slang' to help make the conversation more authentic. Avoid acronyms. Read your dialogues out loud to confirm they sound like natural conversation.

#### Good Stories are Personal

Do not be afraid to share personal stories that include failures and lessons learned. Personal stories that come from the heart tend to resonate with learners and give them a safe space to learn what to do (or not to do). After all, it is safer—and much more fun—to learn from the mistakes of others than it is to fail by yourself.

#### Good Stories are Memorable

Start by coming up with a strong hook and ending, then focus on storyboarding the various elements that will help make your story memorable. Add conflict to make your characters human. Think about how you will visually depict your story. Determine whether you will tell you story all at once or weave it throughout the learning deliverable.

#### Good Stories are Simple

Read and reread the story, editing yourself along the way. Ask others to review your story and help tweak it to make it simple yet engaging, relatable, conversational, personal, and memorable.

#### Good Stories are Fun

If you are using animations, for example, consider focusing your story on a theme, such as superheroes. Have fun creating learning activities that tie back to your theme. For example, use

villains to ‘misbehave’. When you have fun telling your story, learners will enjoy learning much more.

## SLIDE 11: Design Thinking and Storytelling

1. **Empathise:** Empathy is the centrepiece of human-centred design thinking. In order to create an innovative solution to a problem, it is essential to observe people—what they do, how they live, and their stories. Observing people builds an understanding of how they think and feel, what they value and how they see the world. Empathy almost always includes some sort of engagement with people. Engagement may be a conversation or a step-by-step explanation on how things are done.

2. **Define:** Defining a question or challenge based on empathy often changes the original problem you thought you understood how to solve. Defining a problem or challenge based on the needs of users provides focus, frames the issue, inspires and empowers, informs criteria for evaluating competing ideas and keeps the question in the realm of “actionable.”

3. **Ideate:** Celebrate the power of possibility! Ideate is the space to imagine without judgment a variety of “wild, darling and practical” ideas. Ideation discourages linear thinking and helps people step beyond obvious solutions.

4. **Prototype:** Once you have ideas, it is time to experiment with prototypes. A prototype is a possible solution that allows time for feedback. Prototypes are simple — storyboards, hand-made models, posters, or role-playing. It is important to create something very quickly in order to see if the original question has been answered. Perhaps the question itself was wrong and it is time to go back to the drawing board. Better to fail quickly and cheaply before moving on to formal assessments.

5. **Test:** Testing is the culmination of the empathise-define-ideate-prototype spaces of design thinking. Problems have been framed and reframed. Now it is time to engage in real-life, real-time testing in which the users are involved. It is only when we allow ourselves, our teams, our students to experience spaces of design thinking that we can implement authentic assessments.

Design thinking is active and inclusive. And kids are embracing design thinking with gusto. Schools around the world are embracing it as a new way of learning and a way to increase student engagement.

## How to Create an Effective Story

### Focus on one main concept at a time

Keep it simple! When you begin to compose a storyline, it is important to focus on just one main concept at a time. You don't need to convey all of the information you would in class or in a text, but you need to isolate the key points you want the students to remember. What is the most important point for your students to walk away with? Let's say you are trying to help students understand the concept of positive correlations. Your tale must focus only on positive correlations and not anything else but positive correlations. Think through what the concept actually needs to convey as a message. Write it out the message and keep it simple.

### Plan with a script

It is recommended that you script, if not word for word, then at the very least with a detailed and strong outline.

Some key things to remember before you dive in are:

**Accuracy** – check your facts. Even if you know your content intimately, double check dates, locations and facts in general. Is your data up to date? And if you do use data, be mindful that it should not be too time sensitive if you want your video to have a lifespan.

**Length** – Research and our own anecdotal experiences show that attention spans are short. We try to keep our videos/animations under 7 minutes and even better under 4. You don't need to pack all the information into your video. It's one story. Your other content can be presented in the form of readings, other kinds of videos, text & graphics, and student focused activities.

**Audience** – Is your story for undergraduates? Graduates? Professional students? Do they have context for the story and is jargon familiar to them? Are they global? If you're mentioning a geographic location in the United States, is that a town or city known by students in Abu Dhabi? Be sure you are speaking globally – both geographically and culturally.

### Analyse the content and set goals

To begin, look at your own content as it currently exists. Your lectures in person may be an hour and a half long, and they probably contain several different modalities of teaching. Many people begin with the assumption that they will record all of their lectures as they currently exist, but video or animation cannot replace lectures. It has real limits that need to be accounted for:

- It is linear
- It moves at its own pace, not the students' pace
- It is not interactive
- The video frame cannot hold dense graphs, diagrams, or text well.

Think about the full structure of your lesson, and the full toolset of technologies you have available. We find that the biggest determinant of whether a video or animation is successful or not happens before you ever record or script, when you select what content you will record in the first place.

Telling good stories means having good stories, and most of us have good stories within our lectures, even if the lecture as a whole cannot fit that structure. Look for the following: Anecdotes, historical narratives, case studies, allegories, thought experiments— these are all great places to start. Don't underestimate the importance of personally relating to a story. If there is something in your work or research that moves you, it's all the more likely that it will move your students.

### **Open with a hook**

It is important to open your story with a hook that catches the attention of your audience. A hook is an interesting incident, question, or problem that encourages the student to keep listening. For example, if you are teaching the concept of positive correlations, start your story with an incident, mystery, or problem that the story will eventually solve.

### **Make your main characters likeable and relatable**

Your main character(s) need to be relatable to your students to the point that your students care about the them. In some cases, if you are scripting a fable or allegory, the characters do not have to be real people or even human. They can be animals, aliens, or inanimate objects. But they must feel real in the sense that they are not perfect but have strengths and weaknesses like everyone else.

### **Develop a theme, setting, & well-defined character(s)**

What is the theme of your story? Where does it take place? And who is the main person or character in the story and who are the supporting characters?

### **Start with the end and work backwards**

Know where the end is from the start so that you resist going down rabbit holes that confuse or distract the listener from understanding the central theme or message. Create a timeline by working backwards from the end to start. Then think about what comes right before the end and so on. Keep working backwards until you arrive at the beginning of your story.

### **Transition to the middle**

From your hook, transition to address the question or problem stated in the hook. Develop the central theme, characters, and setting that leads the listener/viewer down the path towards a resolution.

### **Bring the message home with an ah-ha moment**

Make your ending the ah-ha moment that brings home the central theme of your story. The ending should allude to the truth, moral of the story, resolution, or big meaning.

### **Be comfortable with creating drafts and storyboards**

Start with a draft of your story to get all the points down that you need to cover. Then put the story down, walk away, and pick it up again in a day or two. When you pick up the story again read it for clarity and coherence. Rework the story to develop the theme, details, and flow. Make sure there is a beginning, middle, and end with a clear arc to the story.

## Consider the use of visuals and movement

Sometimes you can carry your story without any visuals at all and rely completely on the audience to use their imagination. In other cases, visuals are essential to understanding and driving home the message. Visuals can take the form of photographs, drawings, or animations. Visuals, especially animated ones, can help bring the story to life. You can use your body to enact the story or develop drawings. This will help keep their attention focused on the message you are communicating.

If you're using images, you don't need to explain each image and similarly images can replace words. In fact, some of the most effective images are shot outside of the studio or classroom. We encourage you to think about getting out into the field – into the city to show your students samples of your story, or to interview other experts.

You don't have to be an artist to create visuals to accompany your story, but if you don't feel comfortable doing the visuals, see if you can find a motion graphic artist or graphic artist to help you storyboard and build up your story. Students in the visual arts can be very helpful in this area and they are eager to build up their portfolio with real work. Put your story into a 3-column script (see example) and develop the visuals or work with your visual artist. The storyboard process will help refine the story further.

If you do fully script, remember that writing for the screen is more succinct and conversational.

IF YOU ARE DOING THE STORYTELLING:

## Invite interaction & align with your learning objectives

Here are some strategies:

- Follow up with questions and discussion prompts after your story.
- Ask learners to retell the story in a one minute paper.
- Ask learners to solve new problems (demonstrate learning and transference).
- Have your learners create their own stories about the concepts they are learning.
- Employ good principles of media design.
- Don't add too much visual detail that confuses the learner.
- Keep a pace with audio and visuals that allows the learner to process the message.
- Don't use music and audio narration at the same time.
- Don't use text and narration at the same time.
- Use techniques such as zooms and pans appropriately.
- Edit, edit, edit.

## Feedback and revisions

Once you've completed a draft of your script and you're pleased with it, show it to a colleague – someone who is familiar with the content or better yet, someone who is a novice and might be more apt to read it as one of your students would. Find out if there are any areas of confusion, and if the story is conveying what you intend. Be mindful of the voice in which you're writing, as well – again the screen requires a more conversational tone than the page. Don't assume all terminology is clear to your audience.