



Storytelling: Engaging ways to present your story

So, you have a great story you want to tell – now what do you do?

There are several ways of presenting your story to capture and engage your learners, especially in an online environment. The University has tools that can help you present your story, whether it be a short story or an overarching story-line that runs across your course, however there are a few things you need to consider before telling your story, such as narrative, point of view or dialogue.

This is the second Guide in this series on storytelling and explores engaging ways you can present your story, the different mechanisms available to you (face-to-face, online, video and audio) and provides further information, examples and templates for you to use.

The [first Guide](#) in the series introduced the storytelling process as well as a range of approaches to storytelling.

Face to face recording

The most engaging way of presenting a story, is face-to-face, in its raw simplicity. In an online environment, the best way to capture this experience is to video the storyteller.

You can also use visuals that **supplement** or **enhance** the story rather than **repeat** what has already been said. While your narrative is certainly the most important part of your presentation, visuals are an effective way of enhancing student immersion.

Using basic words, slides and graphic images, can be a captivating method to engage your students. Every word and image presented can help to create a clear mental picture of the story.

Using Technology to record your story

There are three ways to present your storytelling using technology: audio, video of the narrator and video with supplementary images or PowerPoint. You can use the Green Screen studios on your campus to record your story or use Panopto at your desk. You can also use Panopto

to record an audio file or record your screen using a PowerPoint or supplementary images.

Below are three examples of the same story captured in three different recording methods. The story is a recounting of an event when a colleague's presentation didn't go as planned. The story 'shows' the learner what can happen when you are not prepared for a presentation.

Podcast (mp3) audio recording

The podcast is a quick and easy way of conveying a story to your students using your skills as a narrator to make a story come to life. You can use your tone of voice, use accents or emphasis on different words, pause at certain times for suspense or ask questions to engage your students. Listening to a story rather than reading it is one of the ways in which students learn. Click (*control + click*) on the image below to listen to someone tell a story about a healthy eating presentation that did not go well.



PowerPoint - video

Using a PowerPoint in the story can help your students visualize characters, settings or points of view within the story. Adding a visual element to your story provides students with a visual prompt to go with the narration (audio). Click (*control + click*) on the image below to open a new browser window and watch the same story about the healthy eating presentation but this time the audio recording is enhanced with images in a PowerPoint format.



Video recording with supplementary images

Creating a video of the narrator of the story, provides students with an instant visual identity of the narrator. The narrator can use their facial expressions, body movements, actions **and** their voice to tell the story and engage learners. Click (control + click) on the image below to open a new browser window and watch the same story about the healthy eating presentation but this time as a video narrative.



Written narrative

The [written narrative](#) for the above example was written by the academic and tweaked by the TIU to provide more of an emotional connection to the characters and their situation.

Sensory details

Another way to immerse students in your story is to provide sensory details that will allow them to see, hear, and feel the different stimuli in your storytelling.

Tip: record your storytelling in front of the camera using the greenscreen. To get the same feel and emotion of the story for students as you would when narrating live, it is recommended that you rehearse the story and not use the teleprompter. Using the greenscreen will also allow you to place images in postproduction to enhance the story.

Using video for a whole course narrative (Overarching Storyline)

One of the courses (Principles of Project Management) in the Graduate Certificate in Project Management, created a story which was recorded in several parts and used throughout the course. The story is about relocating a fictitious Zoo (Mawson Zoo) and by following this fictitious project through its' lifecycle, the students learn to apply recognised project management processes and techniques.

The video storyline aligns with the weekly learning objectives and activities, to progressively bring to life the core concepts of the subject.

Follow the link to learn more about the [Mawson Zoo Relocation Project](#).

Use this [template](#) to start an overarching storyline for your course.

Reading

Storytelling requires you to connect with your students, but much of how you captivate them depends on the mode of storytelling you are using. If you are reading a short story to your students, you should bring your gaze off the page every so often to make eye contact with them. Their expressions, questions or gasps of excitement will give you instant feedback as to whether they find the story interesting and if they are captured emotionally.

If you are recording a narrative podcast, you will not have any feedback from students, therefore it is crucial to use your voice to convey the right tone, express emotion and build excitement. If you are using dialogue you could even use different voices or accents for different characters.

The start of your story

When we hear the phrases **‘Once upon a time’** or **‘Let me tell you a story’** or **‘There was a character in a certain place’**, our minds are immediately transported to an imaginary scene. Other ‘hooks’ include asking a question or throwing your main character into a tricky situation in the first few lines of the story. Below are several ideas for starting a story presentation.

Start with the unexpected!

Aim for the unusual. Think of how people will be expecting the story to start, then take the plot in another direction. It could be good news – yay, you’ve won the lottery, or bad news, sorry but you are fired, or you could put your main character into an unexpected situation, for example, Ben was walking to work and tripped over a rock, no, it wasn’t a rock it was a dead body!’



Start with an image

They say an image is worth a thousand words. By focusing on sensory detail right at the start — sight, sound, taste, touch, smell — you can engage the reader immediately at the beginning of the story. An image can convey emotion, a situation or event. Sometimes the image can be misconstrued, which can then spark different ideas or directions for the story and lead to debate.



Start with an action

Starting with action in a dramatic first scene is a good way to create impact and can be a really effective opener. For example, you could start with an action scenario that puts your main protagonist into a situation that they have to get themselves out of or it could be an action from another character that impacts upon them. The action doesn't always have to be anything drastic, it could be something simple, for example, 'Jane handed me the letter, Oh no, what's in the letter? Is it going to tell me I've lost my job? The letter read, Congratulations, you've just won a new car!'



Start with a question

When you start your story with a question, the reader should be looking for an answer. The opening to your story should be a question that can only be answered by reading/watching/listening to the rest of the story. Beginning your story with a question gets your students thinking about a character or an event even before you give them the full context of the story. You can also dispel misconceptions around certain topics by asking a question and then use the story to provide students with the truth/reality.



Start by appealing to curiosity

Humans are curious creatures and a great way to learn is by satisfying our curiosity. Beginning your story by appealing to your learners' curiosity is a great way to lure them into a story so they want to know more. For example, 'Dan heard a knock on the door - his new computer had finally arrived. He tore off the wrapping, eager to set it up, but when he opened the box, it wasn't a computer.'



Narration, Point of View and Dialogue

Narration, point of view and dialogue are important elements to consider when writing your story. They can be used to enhance your story and to engage your students at an emotional level.

Narration is the art of storytelling. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of **narration**. In addition, a **narrative** can be fact or fiction.

Point of view refers to **who** is telling the story. Writers use point of view to express the personal emotions of either themselves or their characters. When writing or narrating your story, you should use the point of view that has the most impact for the reader.

A story can be told (narrated) by a **first person** point of view (someone in the story is telling the story) or a **second person** (the narrator is speaking to the reader) or **third person** (someone outside the story is telling the story).

Download the [points of view resource](#) to find out more.

Dialogue is when two or more characters are talking. Quotation marks are used to tell us when dialogue is taking place. In a novel, dialogue brings a sense of realness and immediacy to scenes by letting readers “eavesdrop” on characters.

When we read dialogue, we are ‘watching’ the story unfold between the characters. You can use dialogue to ‘show’ what is going on in your story rather than ‘telling’ your learners what is going on.

For example:

Show

"The presentation was excellent, Jessica," said Mark.

"Thanks," Jessica said with a smile. "Let's hope the new clients think so too!"

Tell

Mark thought Jessica's presentation was excellent and told her so. Jessica was pleased and hoped the new clients liked it as well.

No matter which type of storytelling you choose or which medium you use to tell the story, make sure you always consider your student group.

Additional resources

- [Akash Karia](#) is a Professional speaker who blends storytelling, research, audience interaction and humor to inspire audiences and create measurable results. As a result, his stories and advice are used by many TED presenters. For inspiration visit his site or go to YouTube and find one of his videos. The following [Youtube](#) is a workshop he has recorded on storytelling.
- [BIOL 1054-transcript](#)
- [Mawson Zoo Relocation Project](#)
- [Overarching storyline template](#)
- [Points of view](#)

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU](#) or complete the online modules as part of *[Introduction to Engaging Learners Online](#)*.

References

White, M. (2020) Your Dictionary. Examples of Point of View

<https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-point-of-view.html>