

Storytelling Tips

Storytellers videos are generally three minutes in length. This is not a rule, but it seems to be an achievable goal.

Whether a story is three minutes long or one hour long, there are several questions that nearly every good story will answer: Who, Where, When, What, Why and How.

- **WHO** is the story about?
 - In a short video, you may want to focus on one or two main people. You want your audience to emotionally connect with this person.
 - As a twist, the WHO is your story might be a thing. Imagine telling a story about a family heirloom that has traveled with you across continents.
- **WHERE** and **WHEN** does your story take place?
 - If the story takes place in the present, you can plan to shoot video at a time and place that supports your story.
 - If the story is about an event or person from the past, you may need to use pictures to visually describe the times and places.
- **WHAT** is the conflict in the story?
 - The conflict in a story doesn't have to involve a bad guy or a fight. It should, however, involve some type of challenge or obstacle.
 - Think of movie you have watched recently. What was the main conflict in that story?
- **WHY** does your story matter?
 - Know why you're telling this story. Choose a topic you feel strongly about. Ask yourself, “Why should others care?”
 - Before you get too far in the planning phase, try summing up the purpose of your story in one or two sentences.

[*Adapted from Storytelling the Stillmotion Way on Vimeo.](#)

Organizing Your Story

- **Beginning**

- This is the set up. It usually involves identifying the topic of your story and offering a little background information.
 - One way of going about this is to first identify the Who, When and Where of the story.
 - Example: *When I was a child growing up in Iowa, I loved spending a few days alone with my grandpa. Grandma was there some of the time, but she still worked when I was a kid. Grandpa, on the other hand, was consumed by other things.*
 - This introduction identifies the main people, places and times that are important to the story. It even hints at a potential conflict.

- **Middle**

- This is where you will describe what the conflict is in your story. You can break this up into parts based on times, places or events. The main person and conflict in your story will continue to develop throughout this portion of your story.
 - Example: *Fishing was one of our favorite summertime activities. Camped out on the muddy banks of a green pond in some farmer's field, we'd cast for bullhead and large mouth bass all afternoon. There was a time when my parents wouldn't have allowed me to go fishing alone with grandpa, but the summer of 1987 was special. Grandpa was sober for the first time in my childhood.*
 - Here I begin to elaborate on the special relationship I had with my grandpa. I also reveal my grandfather's weaknesses and create tension and conflict in the story.

- **End**

- Here is where you resolve your story. There's lots of ways to do this. Some stories have a lesson. Other stories leave their audience with a lingering question. There are happy endings and sad endings. Ultimately, if you fulfill your purpose, your audience will walk away feeling personally impacted.
 - *Looking back now as a parent, I wonder if I would have let my own child spend time with an alcoholic grandparent. The truth is, though, the time I spent with my grandfather helped shape me, and I'm not sure who I'd be without them.*

