

# How to **Share Your Story** in the Digital Space



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# STORYTELLING 101: BEFORE WRITING

## 1. Generate many ideas

- Become a thought machine.
- Read broadly and talk to a wide range of people, those inside and outside your daily circle.
- Explore the full arc of an experience you're having, not just the moment.
- Reflect on the problems you've encountered and how you're resolving them.

## 2. Know your audience

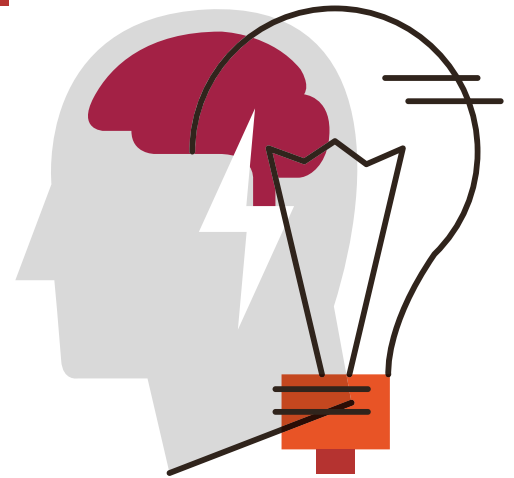
- Consider the professional and personal backgrounds of your readers.
- Keep the scope broad when writing for national and global audiences.

## 3. Beware of bias

- Know your vantage point.
- Balance viewpoints.
- Seek to close gaps of understanding.
- Maintain a bias of hope.

## 4. Showcase your individuality and knowledge

- Let readers get to know you and your expertise.
- Know why you are writing about this topic and what you uniquely bring to the conversation.



## Before putting words on the page, frame your thinking

### Write with a person in mind.

Who is your ideal reader? Write to that person for conversational intimacy.

### Write with your purpose in mind.

What do you want people to remember and apply?

### Write with the end in mind.

What are the key points? Summarize — and spin ideas toward the future.

### Write with engagement in mind.

What questions can you ask readers? Aim to stir an ongoing discussion.

# STORYTELLING 201: WHILE WRITING

## 1. Employ storytelling principles

- Ensure there's a beginning, middle, and end.
- Build tension by including messiness, failure, and progress.
- Describe turning points, pivot points, or aha moments.
- Create a transformative experience for readers.

## 2. Craft a compelling lede

- Begin with a question, an area of widespread agreement, then vs. now, a mini-story, alarming statistics, or a sense of urgency about a problem.

## 3. Explain why your topic matters

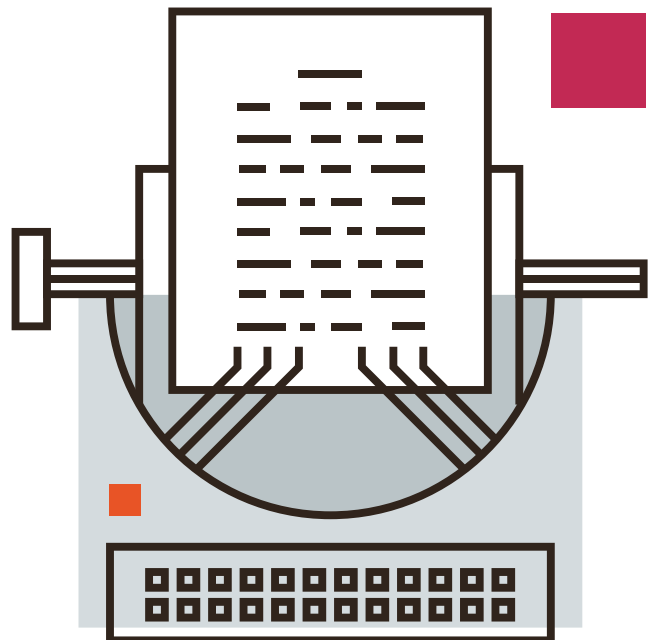
- Be clear and concise.
- Place the why toward the top.

## 4. Focus on tone

- Write with warmth and authority.

## 5. Be evocative

- Write with emotion, empathy, and self-awareness.
- Display vulnerability and authenticity.
- Use imagery but do not mix or saturate with metaphors.
- Engage the senses.
- Infuse with a sense of place if applicable.
- Take readers behind scenes and closed doors.



# STORYTELLING 201: WHILE WRITING

## 6. Guide the reader

- Break up dense text with subheads, bullets, and numbers.

## 7. Hone basic mechanics

- Aim for clarity.
- Refer to a dictionary and a thesaurus.
- Use high-powered verbs; limit linking verbs.
- Use fewer modifiers, such as adverbs and adjectives.
- Vary sentence structure.
- Shorten paragraphs.
- Avoid passive voice, academic language, and jargon.
- Cut extraneous words and phrases.



## 8. Make details meaningful

- Use data and research to add value and heft.
- Tell a story around numbers.
- Share anecdotes strategically to highlight broader points and trends.
- Nail down numbers, percentages, trend lines, and cite research from journals and news articles.
- Paint pictures on readers' minds with vivid descriptions of circumstances.

## 9. Showcase solutions

- Leverage your experience to help readers enrich their own, both personally and professionally.

## 10. Conclude with grace and foresight

- End with heart.
- Spin ideas forward into the future.

## STORYTELLING 301:

### VISUAL COMMUNICATION

#### 1. Keep graphics simple

- For icons and illustrations, use simple, flat graphics over complex imagery.
- When conveying data or statistics, focus on a few key points rather than trying to show everything.

#### 2. Use high-quality visuals

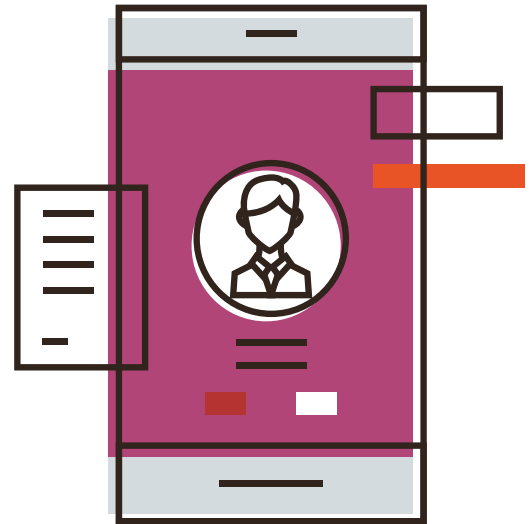
- If you have the funds for it, hire a designer to help you convey your ideas.
- If you are on a budget, consider investing in stock graphics rather than trying to do it yourself or get it for free. It makes a big difference.

#### 3. Use images to help viewers scan

- Place photography or graphics throughout content to give viewers anchors.
- Remember that text is also graphic, so don't forget about headers as a way to help lead viewers down the page.

#### 4. Be inclusive

- When depicting people in photos or graphics, be sure to include a range of ethnicities, ages, and genders, according to who you are trying to reach.



#### 5. Remember mobile users

- Particularly when designing anything with text, like an infographic, don't forget that over 50% of internet sites are viewed on tablets and phones. This means creating images that scroll vertically, rather than horizontally.
- Make sure that you review your graphic content on multiple devices to ensure it is legible.

#### 6. Keep social media in mind

- If you want your graphics to be shareable, know your preferred social media outlets and format accordingly. Facebook and Twitter images must be horizontal, Instagram square, and Pinterest vertical. There is a wealth of resources online to determine exact dimensions for each.

# STORYTELLING 401: USING AUDIO/VIDEO

## The best way to decide what type of audio/video components to use is to find out how your audiences consume media.

- Do they read blogs or digital articles with images and a/v clips sprinkled throughout?
- Do they mainly subscribe to audio podcasts?
- Or do they consume media via videos on their social media feeds?

## What stories benefit from audio/video?

- Stories with complicated data, stats, product demonstrations, or other practical resources
- Biographical stories or news pieces where it helps to hear an interview subject speak
- Stories about music, art, or other sensory subjects

## DISPELLING FOUR COMMON MYTHS ABOUT AUDIO/VIDEO PROJECTS



**Myth:** If I throw a few video clips and photos into my blog, I will definitely get more views!

**Truth:** Just like writing a story, when you are preparing audio/visual material you need a plan. A fancy video clip will not stand on its own; there needs to be a reason you are using it in the piece.

**Myth:** I will just upload the entire two-hour interview as an audio podcast so that my audience can hear the entire piece!

**Truth:** For audio podcasts the ideal time is 25 minutes (the amount of time of the average commute), and no longer than one hour. For videos, 90 seconds for social media is ideal, with 3 minutes being the max.

**Myth:** All video projects need to look like Hollywood films.

**Truth:** Like in written stories, content is king. Give your audience great content and they will forgive dark and shaky footage.

**Myth:** I don't have a studio/fancy camera/or a large budget. There is no way I can make a podcast or a video!

**Truth:** Many audio podcasts are recorded via a person's laptop or phone and some of the biggest viral videos were shot on phones.

# STORYTELLING 401: USING AUDIO/VIDEO

## TIPS TO CREATE AUDIO/VIDEO PROJECTS

### Recording audio

- Use a microphone!
- Place the microphone as close to the subject as possible.
- Use headphones and monitor your audio while recording.
- Don't be afraid to have a subject repeat a line or re-answer a question if there is an audio issue.
- If you are in a location with lots of noise like a busy street, make sure your video shot includes the cause of the noise. If the audience sees cars, they will not be bothered by hearing honks and engines. If they don't see cars, then those noises may distract them from the story.

### Setting up your shot

- Use a tripod!
- "Rule of thirds" Place all points of interest where the lines intersect.
- Interesting images and videos have a foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Vary shot sizes. Close-ups, extreme close-ups, medium shots, wide shots, and extreme wide shots.
- Vary angles. The camera does not always need to be straight in front of the subject. Go high, low, or to the side.
- Record several "takes" and capture multiple photographs to ensure you have what you need.
- Do not rush! Rushing through a shoot is how you make mistakes.



# STORYTELLING 401: USING AUDIO/VIDEO

## HOW TO SHARE VIDEO/AUDIO ON SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

### Delivering videos

#### Facebook

- Upload your video directly. The algorithm prefers when files are natively uploaded and will push your videos higher in the feed than if you linked to them via a third-party site.
- Audiences on Facebook tend to spend more time consuming material so longer videos are OK, as are longer posts that give context to your piece.

#### Twitter

- Videos uploaded directly will play automatically in a person's feed. This makes it much easier to grab a viewer's attention.
- Videos can be no longer than two minutes.
- Videos that rely on text instead of audio do much better. Twitter audiences tend to use the platform on mobile devices with the sound off.



#### YouTube

- A great platform to make your video searchable. Keywords are very important so be sure to add them during your upload.
- There is no time limit for videos so if you have longer form pieces, this is the platform for you.
- If you are embedding video clips into a blog or digital article, YouTube should be where you add them.

### Delivering audio podcasts

#### iTunes and Google Play

- The biggest draw for audio podcasts is that listeners can subscribe and get new episodes as soon as they are released. iTunes and Google Play are the biggest podcast platforms and where most listeners go to find new series.



To reach your desired audience, keep these tips in mind when creating and sharing your story. For more support, contact the contributors of this guide below.



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Ari is a writer, drawing on her insatiable curiosity about everything to engage people through lively narrative, intelligent interviews, and thoughtful commentary. She is currently Senior Editor/Writer and Project Manager for the American Communities Project at The George Washington University's School of Media & Public Affairs.

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Pamela has more than 10 years of multimedia production experience, producing projects for marketing firms, software developers, government agencies, documentary filmmakers, nonprofit organizations, and Fortune 500 companies. She is currently Video and Digital Producer at Population Reference Bureau.

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Kate is a freelance designer who works with mission-driven organizations to develop brand identity, messaging, and ongoing brand strategy. She designs and manages the development of organizations' websites and creates brand design and print materials.

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