

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS A DIDACTIC APPROACH

Lesson 3: Digital Storytelling – how to create a digital story

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Introduction into the lesson:

This lesson aims to present to readers the main characteristics of digital stories and particularly to provide students and teachers with **didactic tips on how to prepare good digital stories**.

This lesson has the following chapters:

- 1) Types of digital storytelling
- 2) Steps in creating a digital story
- 3) References

For detailed instructions about technical issues in producing the digital video, see the course **Digital storytelling video**, available in e-platform <https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/> - free access. The topic/content of digital storytelling could be everything that is "your experience" and could be interesting for others. In the MED2IaH project, we are elaborating stories from the area of internationalisation **of universities** and **intercultural activities** – see the course **MED2IaH – Intercultural diversity in curriculum and extra-curriculum activities**, available in e-platform <https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/> - free access.

1) Types of digital storytelling

Stories bring us together, encourage us to understand and empathise, and help us communicate. Originally storytelling has been used throughout history as a cultural means to transmit history, culture, and family relationships in the absence of a written language. Digital Storytelling is still a way of communicating but is more visual rather than oral (Lunce, 2011). Digital Storytelling has specific characteristics that make it different from other types of storytelling). The Digital Storytelling Association, 2011, describes digital storytelling as a *modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has shared knowledge, wisdom, and values. Stories have taken many different forms. Stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged, from the circle of the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen.*

Major types of digital stories:

- personal narratives – stories that contain accounts of significant incidents in one's life (memorial stories; stories about events in our lives; about places in our lives; about what we do; recovery stories; love stories; and discovery stories),
- historical documentaries – stories that examine historical themes and dramatic events that help us understand the past,
- stories designed to inform or instruct the viewer on a particular concept or practice.

Digital Storytelling is a type of storytelling that can creatively combine a mixture of mediums such as audio, video, texts and images, social media elements (e.g. Tweets) and interactive elements (e.g. digital maps) to present information on a specific topic. **A digital story is a short digital video Clip (2-3 minutes), most often told in first-person narrative, recorded with your voice, and an optional music track to add emotional tone."**

Digital Storytelling is a highly flexible approach and can be tailored to any subject or theme with a particular message. Further, it allows people to more comfortably craft and tell their story using music, images or art, for example, rather than being limited to the written word.

Digital Storytelling is a great way to connect with people. It enhances the experiences of the storyteller and audience and allows greater interactivity. Digital Storytelling makes an ordinary story more potent with the use of multimedia. Using this popular medium may help challenge long-standing beliefs and how individuals view themselves and the world around them. The method places the stories under the control of the storyteller.

A digital storyteller can be anyone who desires to document life experience, ideas, or feelings through story and digital media. Digital Storytelling allows participants to: tell their own stories, learn digital media skills, and build confidence and self-esteem (MED2IaH manual, 2021).

You are invited to watch short videos that introduce you to digital storytelling:

- *What is DIGITAL STORYTELLING? What does DIGITAL STORYTELLING mean? DIGITAL STORYTELLING meaning* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqQmjPxbCXM>
- *What is Digital Storytelling* <https://www.uow.edu.au/student/learning-co-op/assessments/digital-storytelling/>
- *What is Digital Storytelling?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKZiXR5qUIQ>

How Digital Stories Differ from other Types of Videos

In today's online environment, the lines between what is and what is not a digital story have blurred as more videos are shared online.

Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano, 2015, discusses what she believes digital storytelling is and what it is not:

- is NOT about the tools... but IS about the skills...
- is NOT about creating media, but IS about creating meaning
- is NOT only about telling a story but IS about contributing and collaborating...
- is NOT about telling an isolated story... but IS about sharing and connecting
- is NOT only about the transfer of knowledge but also about the amplification...
- is NOT about substituting analogue stories... but IS about transforming stories.
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2) Steps in creating a digital story

For an introduction to creating a digital story, we invite you to watch the video *Telling your digital story* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIH9NvDwrP0>.

Students are invited to get inspiration from the following steps designed for their reference and presented below (resources used: Friends manual, 2019; and Robin, 2016) :

1. Develop an idea
2. Choose a topic, plan a digital story
3. Conduct Research on the Topic
4. Outline/script
5. Find, Create and Add Images
6. Respect Copyrights
7. Storyboard
8. Film and record
9. Finish and submit

1. Developing an idea - All stories begin with an idea, and digital stories are no different

To create a captivating digital story, you should be passionate about what you want to tell. It is easier to work on a project that has a meaning to you than to feign interest in something you think will impress others. Here are a few key ideas that will help you frame your thoughts and begin your project.

Some questions to help activate your creativity:

- What do you want to tell the audience?
- What creative ways can you express your experiences with intercultural and international experiences, communication, and internationalisation?
- Based on your experiences, awkward encounters, or fond memories, do you have something unique?
- What is a story that only you can tell?
- Is there a particular object that ties you to another part of the world?
- Can you tell the backstory of a picture? Please share it creatively with us!

2. Choose a topic, plan a digital story

Begin by thinking of the purpose of the story:

- First, **choose the topic** of your digital story.
- What is your story, and what is your message?
- Are you trying to inform, convince, provoke, question?
- Who is the audience?
- How do you want your audience to feel while watching your story?

Audience. Firstly, identify who you are making the story for. This will give you an idea about the language level, the background of those viewing your work, and how much introductory information you must provide within your topic.

Materials. Digital Storytelling can combine unique aspects of multiple mediums. For example, you may need to gather backdrops for interviews or a physical object to display for a shot. You may need to work with lights to set the scene. You may need to create props to emphasise points in your story.

Equipment. Depending on how you visualise your project, you will need different equipment. You may be able to create your entire project on your phone if you can record decent audio and have a camera. You may want to use external recorders or microphones for the sound. You may have access to a stand-alone camera

or a video camera that you will want to use. You could have excellent editing equipment on your phone or computer that you will use.

3. Conduct Research on the Topic

Students need to research, explore or learn about the topic to create a base of information on which the story will be built. Students learn about validating input and information bias during this process as they delve deeper into a topic.

You can use online search engines, but don't forget that the library can also be a helpful research tool.

4. Outline/script

Developing an outline/script is vital for the digital storytelling process. Once you have formulated your idea and gathered materials, you will likely have to develop an enticing text to lead your viewers through your project.

You will want some sort of story arc to give a proper beginning, problem, conflict, solution, and closure full of authenticity. How will you "hook" us and draw us in? Does your story have emotion? These things will have to be captured in no more than 3 minutes while maintaining proper tone and tempo.

A.) Write the First Draft of the Script. Then, read aloud what you have written. Make sure that the story's purpose is clearly articulated and includes an identifiable point of view.

Scriptwriting tip 1 – Keep your script short and focused: You are writing a script for a digital story that is typically only a few minutes long. Focusing on a specific problem or topic will help you create a better digital story.

Scriptwriting tip 2- Make it personal: Your digital story is unique. It is your story, and the audience will want to hear it from your perspective. You may even need to reveal personal details in the story to reach an emotional depth, although it is up to you to decide what points you wish to share with others.

Scriptwriting tip 3 – Understand the Story Arc: Most stories consist of three parts: a beginning, middle, and end. The opening is where you set the scene and begin the plot. The middle is where you provide more details about the topic or problem you are trying to explain. The story should be building towards a climax or resolution. The end is where the questions are resolved. Will new knowledge make you stronger? Will you now be able to accomplish more incredible things? What happens next in your life? These questions will be answered, and new insight will be revealed. The conclusion of your story should connect back to the beginning to form a thematic arc.

Here are a few things to keep in mind while scripting:

- Remember honest, and real stories are always powerful
- Don't forget to add a few lines on lessons learned that others can relate to
- What is the plot of the story?
- What will your viewer take back from watching your story?
- Presentation and storyline are equally essential to engage and attract your audience.

B.) Receive feedback on the Script: Share your script with others and ask them to give you feedback on what they thought might make your story clearer or more helpful.

C.) Revise the Script: Use the feedback you received to improve the next version of your script.

Scriptwriting is an iterative process, and it takes several attempts to get good results.

5. Find, Create and Add Images

Use an online search tool specifically for images, such as Google Image Search. You can search for photographs, drawings, clip art, maps, charts, etc. Don't forget that you can use photos you take yourself with a digital camera.

6. Respect Copyrights

Look for material in the public domain or has a Creative Commons license.

7. Storyboard

Storyboarding refers to planning for everything that will appear in the digital story, such as music, pictures, words, text, photos, and video.

The storyboard is a written or a graphical overview of all of the elements you plan to include in the digital story. It serves as a blueprint or an advanced organiser to construct your digital story as you prepare. Storyboarding is a visual that you make to show each scene of your digital story. This is a necessary stage since it can help you visualise your story before it is created. In addition, it may be an inspiration for more ideas, help identify gaps, and improve the overall quality of the digital story.

Tips. Try to draw your story visually, what will be your first shot and why.

8. Film/video and record

Digitise. Using your storyboard, you will combine all the elements for the visual portion of your story. This should give you an idea of how your finished project will look. Once you are satisfied with watching your storyboard come alive, you will add the final touches to your project.

Voice over. The voiceover narrates the visual story for us. The script is an integral part of moving the audience from scene to scene. This is how we know what the representation of the visuals is. You will want to be particularly careful of background noise, static, and buzzes that will distract your audience from your story. You may want to be creative in fading the voicing in or out or creating your sound effects.

Tip: Try to use a high-quality microphone or a voice recording app on a smartphone.

Music. Another aspect you may want to utilise is music to set your mood and tone for the video. However, you will have to be careful with copyright and intellectual property on music. So make sure you have permission to use the music. Another note is to ensure that the music doesn't overpower your voiceover and compete for the audience's attention.

Music that is appropriate to the story's theme can add richness by complementing the narration. Many great sites online, such as YouTube, Canva, Jamendo.com that provide copyright-free music at no cost.

4.6. Finish and submit

Edit. The editing phase is where the planning and recording come together. This is where you combine visual and audio parts to create a final product. Make sure you keep more time than you think you need to edit. Editing is the most extended portion of the process. You may want to utilise peers or lecturers to watch your project with fresh eyes and give you feedback. You will be so engrossed in creating the perfect project that you may overlook distracting visual elements in your work and have to reshoot. You will want to ensure your sound aligns with the scene changes. You may have to shorten your audio or visuals to fit into the time limit. You may need to re-time your subtitles or animation to better suit the flow of the project. Finally, you may need to create your credits or acknowledge those who helped you.

The tools listed in the following tables are commonly-used options, of course, there are also other options beyond this list:

Video editing software	Audio Recording and Editing Software	Photo Editing Software
iMovie	Audacity	Aviary Photo Editor
Windows Movie Maker	SoundCloud	Paint.net
Animoto		Pixlr
Blender		

Additional online digital tools that can enhance the quality of a digital storytelling production include Mind Maps, Coggle, Wordcloud, and Lucid chart.

Submission. Students in MED2laH submit their digital stories to coordinators of digital storytelling of home university, together with a release letter. Stories produced in MED2laH shall not be shared publicly by the students (e.g. posted on locations such as YouTube, Vimeo, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox, etc.) at the time of delivery of the digital storytelling contest (until August 2022). E.g. If students use YouTube for editing the video, the video shall be uploaded to YouTube as unlisted.

Accepted digital stories will be publicly shared on your university's website; best digital stories will also be publicly shared on the E-platform EMUNI (and project YouTube channel) by coordinators of digital storytelling from each University.

References:

- Digital Storytelling Association. (2011.). Digital Storytelling. Retrieved August 16, 2011, from <http://electronicportfolios.com/digistory/>
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- Tolisano, S. R. (2015) Digital Storytelling: What it is... and... what it is not. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://langwitches.org/blog/2015/08/18/digital-storytelling-what-it-is-andwhat-it-is-not/>