

Story Planning Tool

Your Name:_____ Story Topic:_____

Story Background

What point do you want your story to make?

What specific story do you want to tell that clearly makes that point?

Story Elements

Directions. Use the following worksheet to develop the elements to your story. The column on the left defines each story element and suggests possible starter sentences for that element. Use the right-hand column to make notes about the elements of your own story.

| Story Element and Suggested Starter Sentences | Your Story Details |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p>Story Link: The link between your story and something that's important to your listener. It should be clear from the outset (or very shortly thereafter) why you are telling the story and how it applies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I've got a story that I think you might find interesting." ▪ "I heard a story the other day that seems to apply to your situation." ▪ "Imagine a situation in which someone much like you, in a company much like yours..." | <p>Why tell the story:</p> |

| Story Element and Suggested Starter Sentences | Your Story Details |
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| <p>Main Character: The person the story is about. The story should be about one person, or at most a small group.</p> <p>Your description should enable your listener to empathize with the main character. Include any information that will help your listener understand his or her situation, and feel sympathetic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Let me fill you in on the person this story is about.” ▪ “This is a story about a person who...” ▪ “This is a story about me when I was a lot younger.” | <p>Who is the story about?</p> |
| <p>Setting: The background your listener needs in order to appreciate the story: where, when, important circumstances.</p> <p>Keep the details short. A common mistake is giving the listener too much background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Currently this organization is in the midst of...” ▪ “Here’s what was going on in her world...” ▪ “I was a freshman in college, and...” | <p>What’s the background?</p> |

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| <p>Conflict: First, what specific event or incident has thrown the main character's world into some kind of turmoil? And how does that conflict continue until the resolution?</p> <p>The conflict must be important to your main character. The stakes should be high.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Things were going well for her group until the merger, when seemingly overnight..." ▪ "Then, two days before the deadline, their system crashed and if that wasn't bad enough..." ▪ "Because I needed money for next semester's tuition, I had to scramble to..." | <p>What happened:</p> |
| <p>Resolution: How did the main character finally resolve the turmoil he or she was thrown into?</p> <p>Be careful that you don't make the resolution too easy. Suspense is a powerful tool to draw your listeners into the story as they cheer for the main character to overcome obstacles on the way to a happy ending. Or not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "At first the plan didn't seem to be working. But then..." ▪ "Every day the team had to..." ▪ "To get to my job, I had to get up at three in the morning." | <p>How does it end?</p> |

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| <p>Main Point: This is the reason you told the story; what you want the other person to take away.</p> <p>If you reach the end of your story and your listeners aren't sure why you told it...you've wasted your time—and theirs.</p> <p>Test your main point after you've planned your story. See if it makes the point you wanted to make from the Story Link.</p> <p>You might say, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “So the point I want to make is...”▪ “What this story shows us is...” | <p>So what?</p> |