



Creating a Digital Story

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Getting ready

1. Write a story, then locate the photos, video and music you would like to use.

2. Write a script for your voice-over. Estimate a 5-7 second “read” for each line of type, 9-12 lines of text per minute. Break up the script into single lines. You will record one line, save with a file name, then read another line, save with a different name.

3. Create a storyboard. Either use a storyboard document that includes a box for your sketch per main frame (keyframe), narration, music and video (for time frame) lines, OR get some posterboard and yellow Post-it notes. Use the Post-it notes to represent a frame that includes your video or still images, then use one color pencil for music, another for voiceovers and another for still/video file names. Sort your images and label a Post-it note with the file name and description. Mark a Post-it note for each video clip including the name, description and duration. On your posterboard, write out each line of narration, leaving room above each for Post-it note space. Do the same for your music, showing a line to mark the duration of the music (you don't have to use the whole music clip).

4. Prepare your media: (These instructions are not necessary for iMovie2, Final Cut Pro or Premiere 6. It may help reduce the sizes of your files, however) Scan your art at 150dpi. Save the original scans and then downsize them to 320 pixels by 480 pixels at 72 dpi if the final result is a web or CD movie (640 pixels by 480 pixels if you plan to export to video). If you have a vertical photograph, set the photograph for 240 pixels high, then make sure you have black selected as your background in PhotoShop, click on “Canvas size...” in the Image menu and set the width for 320 pixels, Centered. This will float your photograph in a black background, which works well for video and projection. If your photo is wide enough but not tall enough, set the width at 320 pixels wide, then make sure you have black selected as your background, click on “Canvas size...” in the Image menu and set the height for 240 pixels. Keep the 150 dpi images because you may want to zoom in on a photo in Premiere and you will need the higher dpi for quality. Otherwise, anything above 72 dpi only adds file size without a quality gain.

If you have video, locate the clips you want to use (keep each clip at no more than 20 seconds), and digitize it.

Storytelling

- **Tell a story that makes a point** (asks a question internally, usually not out loud The story answers the question: “I never knew what friendship was until I met Mary.” Introduces dramatic question: What is friendship?) The question sets up the pay-off and draws the viewer into the story.

- **Tell it in first person.** The personal perspective is usually the strongest.

- **Build emotional content.** You must have passion in the story. The story must mean something to you, be important to you. Ask yourself what your feelings are about the story, what emotional buttons does it push and how can you express those emotions?

Structure of media

Voice: The power of the human voice should not be under-estimated. “The eyes may be the windows to the soul, but the breath is the spirit.” Trust in your voice to transmit your emotions within the story.

Images: Unlike traditional storytelling, not every detail need be described. Your images can carry much of your story. You can minimize your words by relaying some of the story through the images. If the emotions in a photograph are obvious, don't state them.

Music: Instrumentals work best because you can lower them when you are speaking yet allow them to keep playing in the background to add depth. Often, although lyrics tend to move us emotionally, lyrics can fight our storytelling because words are clashing against words. If you choose to use lyrical music, make certain that the words conform to your story. For example, “Butterfly Kisses” is a song about a father and daughter. It would not be appropriate for a story about dating.

Sequential visual narrative: Your visuals change the writing style of your story. It can affect pacing (movement and speed of images, music and narrative) and help get to the heart of the message. It is the blending of visuals with sound to create an efficient digital story.

Pacing: The natural rhythm of a story needs to be found. If the story is modern and upbeat, it may call for a fast pace. A remembrance set back in time may be melodic. Pacing within a digital story should change according to the emotion and purpose. It helps keep the viewer interested. Think of it as a CD. When a record company chooses the song sequence, pacing is a major consideration. If the CD is getting bogged down in slow music, a fast one is thrown in for interest and vice versa. Movies follow the same rule as does storytelling.