

How to be a good storyteller: Best practices

1. Tell stories that you like and your listeners will like

- Why must you tell *this* story? What's the belief burning within you that empowers this story?
- What's important to these listeners? How will this story connect to their experiences, priorities, values, questions?

2. Take the time to prepare.

- Learn your story before you tell it in front of others. Learn the story well so that you know the content well enough that you can focus on delivery.
- Practice with a recording device or a gentle-yet-truthful friend for feedback.

3. Speak with a strong and confident voice.

- Being prepared makes you confident.
- Speak with clarity and confidence.
- Enunciate and project your voice towards the listeners.
- Use a microphone if one is offered to you for larger groups.

4. Make eye contact with your listeners.

- Look people in the eye. A moment of eye contact can cause a listener to think, "I feel as if this person is talking to me personally."
- If telling the story to a group, try not to tell the story to only one person in the audience (that's awkward), but don't shift your focus too rapidly around the room either (that's frantic). Make eye contact with a variety of people throughout the room.

5. Use good pacing.

- Speak slowly enough so that the story is easily absorbed by the listeners but not so slowly that the listeners' attention wanders.
- Tell your story with intentional pauses, in small, quick chunks. This helps the listeners process the story and also keeps them interested. Take a breath in between chunks to invest some energy in each part.
- Vary speed, pace and volume of your voice, as appropriate.

6. Dialogue/sounds

- Role play dialogue with character voices. Let the audience know who is speaking simply by using different voices for different characters.
- Use other sounds. For example, weather sounds, like wind or rain; action sounds, like explosions or rustling; animal sounds, like a snake's hiss; emotional sounds, like sighs, sobs, yawns. Where appropriate, you can involve the listeners by asking them to help you by making the sounds themselves.

7. Facial expressions

- Use facial expressions to show the feelings of your characters, their nature or personality, or the situation they are in, like shy or cold.
- Let the audience see your face. Don't hide behind dark glasses, unless it's part of your story of course.

8. Gestures

- Prepare the gestures you will use and practice using them so that they are natural and relaxed.
- Use your hands, shoulders and body as much as you can, to show shapes of objects, scenery, actions and feelings. Use mime and gesture to "paint the story," like a picture.
- Gestures often tell the punctuation of the story. Remember when using hand motions that low gestures (below the waist) are quiet or secret parts of the story, whereas high gestures (above the shoulders) are loud or exciting parts of the story. Let your gestures match the part of your story.
- If you do mime something, don't forget where you put it! Care about the object you mimed so your audience will care too.

9. Believe in the power of stories

- Storytelling is very effective. Let the story speak to the listeners in its own way.
- Your authenticity will be evident and will empower the story to persuade people of its truth.