

Breaking Down Barriers: Exploring Migration Stories
and Local Heritage with Young People

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Digital Storytelling Toolkit: Part Three

Making a DST Video

Storyboarding

Audio recording and editing

Simple video editing for DST

Ways to share stories

Toolkit produced by Melting Pro



1. Storyboarding

A storyboard is a way to plan a visual story in two dimensions. The first dimension is time: what happens first, next, and last. The second is interaction: how the audio—the voice-over narrative of your story and the music—interacts with the images or video. In addition, a storyboard is also a notation of where and how visual effects such as transitions, animations, or compositional organization of the screen will be used.

Storyboarding is the step before video editing: in the film world, it is a high art, bringing to life the vision of a scene.

The art of film storyboarding has taught everyone working on a story (from mega-movies to digital stories) one important lesson: Planning on paper will save time, energy and money when it comes to producing your work.

Some Ways to Make Your Storyboard

1) Get a piece of posterboard, preferably large (22" x 17"), and a packet of Post-it notes. Sort out the image material you plan to use and label each of the Post-it notes with the name and, if needed, a phrase describing the image.

2) Create five or six horizontal rows across your posterboard, leaving room for writing text below each Post-it. Fill in the text of your script in pencil, and place the appropriate images above the appropriate words. The Post-its will allow you to move things round or take them out as need be.

3) Instead of labelling Post-its with the name of each image, you could go to a copy place and photocopy your photos. Tape or glue your copied images to the Post-its, and lay out your storyboard. The advantage here is that, just as on the computer, you can easily move things around.

4) If you'd like to work on a smaller page, photocopy a blank storyboard template like the one below

5) If you are familiar with tables in Microsoft Word, and you know how to scan images, you can make your storyboard on the computer.

Any of these methods will work. Do whatever is convenient and easy for you. A storyboard will speed up your work in many ways. It can show you where your voice-over should be cut before you record, and it may help you to determine if you have too many or too few images before you begin scanning. Storyboarding is a valuable tool, and it can also be fun.

As an approximate rule, one image per sentence is recommended. This organizes the storyteller and highlights any areas in the script where there may be missing images. Often storytellers find that in their mind's eye they have all the pictures they need to tell a story, but the storyboard quickly tells them they may have several images to cover one sentence, and nothing to cover the rest of the film!

Notice how few words of the voice-over are under each picture. Each line takes about six to ten seconds to speak. In general, three to four seconds is about the ideal length for any still image to appear on the screen. If it's too short, then it's hard for the viewer to recognize what's being shown; too long, and boredom sets in. If you're laying out your storyboard and find lines and lines of text under any one picture, rethink your script or your images.

Can the script be cut down, and can the image be left to fill-in for the missing words? If the text remains long, can more than one image illustrate the essential words? You may also want to use some effects to extend the viewer's interest in a single still image. But for now, try to use the best effect of all: letting images speak for themselves, and using words to say the rest.

Storyboarding is a way to finalize the script:

Scene:	Scene:	Scene:
Scene:	Scene:	Scene:

2. Audio recording and editing

This unit will give you guidelines on how to record the voice-over for a digital story. The audio quality of a recording is determined by the quality of each component used, starting with the

microphone and ending with the digital capture device. The equipment you need will depend on the format of your finished piece of media and your budget.

First, we will explore different tools for audio recording, grouped under two categories: Voice recorders and Microphones.

Nowadays, we normally use portable flash-card audio recorders. There is now a huge variety of equipment available for recording audio, from budget to professional quality. Examples include Zoom and Edirol.

Microphones capture pressure waves in the air and translate them into an electrical signal. Dynamic mics are good general-purpose mics with few moving parts. They are sturdy and resistant to handling noise, so good for mobility. They are also suited to handling high volume levels, such as from instruments or amplifiers.

Condenser mics have an internal amplifier to increase the audio signal strength. They tend to be more sensitive and responsive than dynamics, making them well-suited to capturing subtle nuances in voice. However, their sensitivity means they can't be hand-held and so require a sturdy stand.

Connectors

These connect your microphone to your recording capture device. The higher quality the connection, the less noise is introduced through electrical interference. Unless absolutely necessary, avoid plugging a mic directly into a PC sound card as the connections are typically very low quality.

XLR Used on professional microphones. Give best resistance to electrical interference. Plugs into a mixing desk.

6.5mm (mono/stereo) Found on some professional microphones. Plugs into range of capture devices, including computers via a 3.5mm adapter.

3.5mm (mono/stereo) Plugs into most recording devices, including sound cards on most computers.

USB Audio digitised within mic for transfer to computer. Allows high quality recording directly to a computer. Good-quality microphone via a USB are for instance made by companies like Edirol, or MOTU.

If you use a microphone connected to a computer, you need a software to record, such as Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org/>). You can even use an app in your smartphone, but be sure that you phone is connected to a Mic. With iPhones a good tool is IRIG MIC, also compatible with Android system.

Methodology and techniques

In this section we share some tips and procedures to follow in order to record your voice/sounds at their best.

The recording space is so important and requires some experimentation for best results. Try to pick a room with plenty of soft furnishings, like curtains and carpets and without much visible wall space. This will reduce echoes. As a test, clap your hands and listen for the echo. In a perfect situation, you shouldn't notice the echo at all.

Also, listen for outside noises, like a nearby road, or pedestrians, or people talking. Anything you can hear, the microphone can hear, and audible distractions on a digital story soundtrack can ruin the story. Microphones and recorder are very useful tools in order to get your voice or sound recorder. However, they are NOT clever devices - as much as human ears are!

One useful idea is to record the voiceover in a modern car. Providing it is parked in a quiet place and the doors are shut, the acoustic environment in a car can be excellent for digital stories. Always do a test recording and scrutinize it carefully for clarity and quality.

Rehearsal. For many storytellers, reading the voiceover is the most nerve-wracking experience of all. In order to overcome this, the trainer must inspire confidence in the storyteller and make them believe in themselves enough to deliver a "natural performance."

Practice makes perfect and storytellers should be encouraged to read through their scripts several times at home before the recording session. Simple guides, like large text and double line spacing are useful in making a script easily readable. Pay attention to full stops, commas, pauses and silence you have written and mark your script! Make sure your script is conversational and easy to read. Practice reading it a few times to make sure it flows well. Look for words or phrases where you might stumble while recording. Try to avoid common mistakes, like speaking too fast (or too slow), or monotonously, or as if you are "reading a story." Rehearsals are invaluable, and honest but carefully phrased feedback from the trainer should give rise to best results.

Place your microphone in the right position, approximately 30 cm, that is not too close and not too far. Don't talk directly to the mic.

Don't produce extra sound while reading. For instance, pay attention to the sounds you can make when moving or turning the pages of your script.

Be aware of your hands and feet, they can move and make noise (e.g., a hand moving on a leg, as an unconscious gesture while reading).

Ideally:

- You should put your microphone very close to avoid external noise

- You should avoid external sounds by choosing the right location
- You should use a very powerful voice recorder in order to avoid external sounds

3. Simple video editing for DST

You will need

A computer with a video editor (I movie for Mac or Windows Movie Maker are generally installed). We suggest the use of Wevideo (www.wevideo.com), that is an easy multiplatform editor. You will need a good internet connection.

Wevideo is a cloud-based online video editing software. Available on Android, iPhone, iPad, Mac, PC and Chromebook. To start using Wevideo, see the following tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZHhOKmGD-E>

<https://www.wevideo.com/academy>

How to Edit

First of all, gather together all your media elements: voice recording, still images, video footage etc.

On launching the software on your computer, you will be asked to name a new project and select settings. (For professional software: * DV Pal standard 48kHz or DV Pal 16:9 widescreen is what you're looking for. Most basic software packages do not ask for these settings.)

As soon as the software is launched you'll be faced with three main windows, probably surrounded by numerous, overly colourful and rather bewildering little buttons, symbol panels and numbers. Forget about all of them for a minute! Take a deep breath and calm yourself. OK. It's not as bad as it looks. Top left or top right there'll be a monitor (like a small TV screen) and under it, controls just like on your music player.

Next to it will be the project bin. It will be empty and so may seem meaningless. This is where you will drop your media elements. If you're reading this at a machine with editing software on board, why not do this now so you can see what it does to them.

Importing elements into the project

- * Go up to File on the menu bar at the top of the screen and then down to Import.
- * Navigate to the desktop of your machine where you will have placed all of your elements neatly into a folder labelled Film Project.
- * Inside this folder you will have placed subfolders labelled: Voice, Video, Stills, etc.
- * If you haven't done this yet, go and do it now, it'll make life much easier later on.

It doesn't matter what size your pictures, video clips or audio files are, at this stage the software will convert it all for you and place clips on a black background. Just try to ensure your video capture and still photography are the highest quality your device can manage; although I wouldn't bother about HD (High Definition) right now.

Ok, you can now import the elements you need to build your film, and once the programme has finished crunching all this info and is able to show you what you've imported, you're ready to find out what the bottom half of the screen does.

The Timeline

This is the beautiful bit.

- * Grab a voice recording, then drag and drop it into an audio timeline in the timeline window.
- * Now grab a still image or piece of video and drop that into the video timeline above the audio.
- * Be aware that video clips will bring in their own audio automatically but, if the audio isn't needed, there is one of those many buttons situated to the left of the track which will have an audio symbol - a speaker or such like - and if you click on that it will turn the audio track off.
- * Click Play on the monitor controls and a play head will glide from left to right playing what's in the timeline.
- * Click and drag the play head and you can scrub back and forth, purely for fun or to accurately position it at a point where your next clip should come in. By hovering your mouse pointer over the end of a clip on the timeline, a bracket will appear that allows you to shorten or lengthen the clip using your mouse.
- * Click to highlight, then drag the clip to position it at just the right moment.
- * Click on the clip and press the Backspace button on your keyboard to delete it; up to File and down to Undo, to do just that if you get into a muddle.

Working on the clips in the timeline doesn't affect their original form either in the project bin or in your folder on the desktop so, as long as you remember to save a copy of your work into that desktop folder at regular intervals, you can work away to your heart's content by trying the "I wonder what this button does" method of learning, and resorting to the Undo control each time you feel you've blown it, but all safe in the knowledge that your original assets remain uncorrupted on the desktop.

The ability to drop in and work on a clip where you like in the timeline is called "nonlinear video editing". In its most basic form, there you have it. There's a lot more to learn but there's no need to bore you with it all right now. You've enough here to get you started. Just play around with it and you'll soon pick it up. There's a lot of jargon talked about computers but they're just a tool you have to learn to use. Just like a hammer but not as durable.

Get that Story Out!

To get your finished film out of the software and converted into a compressed useable format:

- * Go up to File and down to Export/Share. Now choose from Web or Full Quality Export and the software will crunch out a compressed file ready for sending over the internet or on your USB.
- * There are lots of numbers involved in the exporting of final projects but the most relevant are the sizes of the export.
- * It's always worth exporting the larger of the two for your own archive so that you have a good quality copy of your film for future reference.

And Finally...

If you hover your mouse over any of the buttons, after three seconds a little tab will pop up telling you what it is. There are also help buttons in your menu bar that actually can be helpful and lots of online forums to answer some of the more persistent problems. But the best way of learning is by making sure all your media elements are in the right place and saved and then just exploring, safe in the knowledge that whatever strange mess you make after clicking some odd collection of buttons, you can always go up to File and down to Undo. Usually this function allows you to step back at least 50 steps. But if you can make 50 mistakes in a row without noticing, perhaps it's time for a screen break.

And rest.

4. Ways to share stories

Three ways to share stories are:

- Save the file on a USB stick and show family and friends. As a souvenir of a workshop, learners could also save all stories made by everyone who attended that workshop.
- Put them on a website, like Vimeo or YouTube. Before publication, check that the author and everyone identifiable in their story are happy for it to be on the web. Ask parents or guardians of children and young people too.
- Hold a screening event for a series of stories, and invite guests to marvel at your work. It's great if every workshop finishes with a screening where every story made at that workshop is projected onto a huge screen in a darkened room full of the storytellers. Sometimes, family and friends are invited to share the spectacle with loved ones. This is a fantastic finale to a workshop

Storytellers should be offered the chance to say something about their films before being screened, this can be discussed before the event or announced during the screening.

Storytellers should be praised for their work and information should be given to them about what happens next. i.e. where and how the films will be shown, whether storytellers can enrol on follow-up projects, when they will receive copies of the finished stories, etc.

References

BBC Capture Wales / Ciplwg ar Gymru team (2008), A Guide to Digital Storytelling,
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/yourvideo/pdf/aguidetodigitalstorytellingbbc.pdf>

Lambert, J., (2010) Cookbook. *Digital Storytelling Cookbook. Listen deeply, Tell stories*,
Berkeley, CA 94702 USA