

How to Create Simple Digital Stories

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Introduction: What are digital stories and why create them?

Read the article, "Digital Stories in ePortfolios: Multiple Purposes and Tools." Visit Dr. Barrett's web page on Digital Storytelling and explore the resources listed there, either education, family stories, or examples from around the world. .

- [Digital Stories in ePortfolios: Multiple Purposes and Tools](#)
- [Dr. Barrett's Digital Storytelling Web page](#)
- [David Brear's Website on Digital Storytelling](#)
- [Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling \(University of Houston\)](#)

Topic I: What tools do you need to create digital stories?

[Tools to create digital stories](#)

Look at the web page above, and select the column with your current operating system. You will see software that is recommended for each stage of the digital storytelling process. Select the computer platform you use, and select one program from each section, (the recommended item is listed first).

Tutorials for using different tools

1. [Center for Digital Storytelling Tutorial for iMovie5](#) (PDF) (Macintosh OS X)
2. [Online tutorial for MovieMaker2](#) (Windows XP)
3. [Online tutorial for PhotoStory](#) (Windows XP)
[University of Houston tutorial for PhotoStory](#)
4. [Online tutorial for Audacity](#)
[University of South Florida's Tech-Ease Audacity Video Tutorials](#)
[Updated tutorials for Audacity \(audio editing\)](#)
5. [Apple iLife online tutorials](#)
6. [Nipissing University MovieMaker2 Tutorial](#)
7. [Digital Storytelling: A Tutorial in 10 Easy Steps](#)

Here is a quick hands-on Tutorial using a standard set of seven images and a single audio clip: (Download these files to use in the tutorial)[\[download Zip file\]](#)

- [MovieMaker2](#) (PDF)
 - [iMovie](#) (PDF)
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Topic II: Creating Your Digital Story: A Sequence of Activities

Overview of the process - How to prepare for developing a digital story

Learners create a 1–4 minute digital video clip, told in first person narrative [begins with a written script ~ 400 words], told in their own voice [record script], illustrated (mostly) by still images, and with a music track to add emotional tone. I have created several resources to help you here. Since I facilitate hands-on workshops, I created a short digital video for participants in that workshop, so that participants know how to prepare: [Individual preparation for a digital storytelling workshop](#)

Here is an overview of the process of creating a digital story.

1. Script development: write the story, often with a group called a story circle to provide feedback and story development ideas
2. Record the author reading the story (audio recording and editing)
3. Capture and process the images to further illustrate the story (image scanning and editing)
4. Combine audio and images (and any additional video) onto a timeline, add music track (video editing)
5. Add Background Music, Titles, Transitions, and Effects (Optional... if there is time)
6. Present or publish finished version of story

For further information, check out this website in the UK: <http://www.digistories.co.uk/> and the [Center for Digital Storytelling's Cookbook](#)

NOTE: in the following sections, instructions are provided for iMovie or MovieMaker2. Consult the tutorial on PhotoStory if you are using that program, since it is not structured like a standard video editing program.

1. Write a script for your story and get feedback

Look at examples of specific stories on the WWW. Use the [Script template in Word format](#) that I have provided online, answering these questions: Who is your audience? What is your dramatic question? You may want to go over your script with a facilitator or another person before recording your voice-overs. In hands-on workshops, we spend some time sharing the stories in a group process called a "story circle."

Keep your story to less than 400 words, which works out to about a page of single-spaced text. One of the video clips that you watched talks the seven elements of digital storytelling. One of these, economy, emphasizes the simplicity of digital stories: where you have images you may not need narrative explanation. Think of your story as a multimedia sonnet, with characteristics

of poetry. Use the script template to identify the images that you will want to match with your narration. Or consider using [GoogleDocs](#) or any wiki for collaborative or group story writing and editing.

2. Create a digital audio clip of your story

You will need to use a microphone to record your story. There are several types of microphones:

1. Microphones built into laptop computers (only use if you have nothing else)
2. USB microphones (I really like the [Samson USB microphone](#) - it gives studio quality sound)
3. Standard computer microphone that plugs into a microphone port or sound card
4. iPod with microphone (I recommend the [Belkin microphone](#)) - this is a quick and easy way to record audio, especially when computers are not available, such as on field trips
5. Digital audio recorders, such as the [Sony MP3 recorder](#) or the [Olympus brand with USB connections](#) or the [Edirol digital audio recorder](#) that saves audio files on an SD Memory Card

For options 1-3 above, you will need to have a software package on your computer to record the audio. (Options 4-5 just require you to download the files that you have recorded with the device.) The open source software **Audacity** is a good software package to use. Here are [tutorials](#) for using this software ([other language versions](#)). Great new resource on Audacity: [updated tutorials for Audacity \(audio editing\)](#) If you are using PhotoStory, you can also record directly into that program (see the tutorial above).

When you are ready to record your script, find a quiet place to record. Surprisingly, a great place to record audio is in a walk-in closet with lots of clothes (deadens the sound). Record only short sections of your story at one time. You can pause recording in a single file, or record separate clips, which you should name as sequentially numbered files. You might use the script template to write down the names of the files, if they are not all in the same file. Put all of your recorded audio files in a folder.

3. Select and edit the images you will use in your story

You can find images in many places: taken with a digital camera, scanned with a scanner, or found on the Internet. Most cell phones have cameras that work very well for digital storytelling. You don't need really high quality images (under 2 megapixels works fine). When searching Google images, though, select only the Large images – scanning from a book use no higher than 200 DPI.

You should use a program to crop your images and fix the color and contrast. The preferred program is PhotoShop Elements. However, a simple program such as Graphic Converter would also work. Place your final images into a folder. You could use the same folder as the audio clips, or set up another folder.

iMovie users: the easiest way to import images should begin with organizing them in iPhoto (rather than folders), where you can then see them in the Media tab. You can also use iPhoto to crop and edit your images, and select the specific files you want to create an Album for only that pictures that you have selected for your story. Use the album to organize the pictures in the order that you will want to use them in your story.

4. Combine the sound and the images together in a video editing program

If you are using a regular video editing program such as iMovie for Macintosh or MovieMaker2 for Windows, I recommend the following sequence of activities:

1. Import your audio clips in order. Usually, you will need to place the cursor on the timeline where you want the audio to be placed.
2. Import the still images and place them on the timeline on the video track. Match them up to the audio track, changing the duration (length) of the still image.
3. iMovie users: as you import images, apply the "Ken Burns" effect (panning and zooming in still images) as you place the image on the timeline (preview first). MovieMaker users: once the image is imported onto the timeline, you can apply different effects.
4. Transitions often change the timing of your images, so you might want to insert the transitions
5. Create a Rough Edit (Place your narration, sound track, and images on the timeline in approximate locations.)
iMovie users: Wait to apply very much of the "Ken Burns effect to images until the next step. Show your movie to someone else and ask for feedback.
6. Insert Background Music, Titles, Effects.
7. Polish or Final Edit (Ask for final feedback)
8. Export your movie to a playable format.

iMovie users:

Import your audio clips first, so that you know where to place the images.

If you don't use iPhoto, then you will need to import the images onto the Clips tab. Import one image at a time, checking the settings in the Ken Burns effect BEFORE importing.

To leave a copy in the Clips window, hold down the Option key when dragging the image down the timeline.

Once the project is complete, you should remove any images that still remain in the Clips window (to reduce the overall size of the project folder).

MovieMaker2 users:

Open Moviemaker2 and create a New Project [File Menu -> New Project] Give the project a name and save it in a "Movies" folder or on the Desktop.

From the Tools Menu select New Collection Folder and Rename it and Select that folder.

Select "Timeline" on the [View Menu (the top item toggles between Storyboard and Timeline views)]

Select File Menu -> Import into Collections (CTRL + I).all of your clips into the Project Window. Then drag your audio clips onto the timeline so that you know where to place the images.

Drag the images onto the video track in the order, adjusting the

length of each image.

5. Add Background Music, Titles, Transitions, and Effects

Background Music: If you intend to publish this digital story on the Internet, you should not use commercial music from a CD or the WWW. Freeplaymusic.com is a good starting point. If you purchase any music from iTunes, it is protected to the computer where you downloaded it when you purchased it. You will need to burn any purchased song on a Music CD (with iTunes) and import the music directly from the CD.

Music often overwhelms voiceovers. Edit volume on the low end under your narration (> 10%) but you could increase the volume when no voice is present. (or add with Garage Band on the Macintosh). The following websites are good places to find royalty-free music to use in your project.

- [Freeplay Music](#) - a good collection of royalty-free music
- [Soundzabound.com - Royalty Free Music For Schools](#) - short clips free, reasonably-priced CDs available
- [MagnaTune](#)
- [download.com](#)
- [Partners in Rhyme](#)
- [Free piano music by William Cushman at Ghost Notes Blog](#)

<p>iMovie users:</p> <p>There is a second audio track for background music.</p>	<p>MovieMaker2 users:</p> <p>There is no second audio track. To get around this limitation, you can use Audacity to create a multi-track audio clip with your narration and your music track. Export it as a single audio file that you can import into MovieMaker2.</p>
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Titles, Transitions, and Effects. Fine-tune as you have time (follow the order). Many transitions take time out of adjacent clips, so plan image durations to keep alignment with audio. Fade Out/Fade In (to/from black screen) or Wash In/Wash Out (from/to white screen) will NOT shorten your clips

6. Publishing your story

NOTE: the project file that you have been working with is your working file, but cannot be distributed. You will want to export your movie into a stand-alone file, which you can play with either QuickTime player (if you create a QuickTime movie) or Windows Media Player (WMV files). You can also insert a link to these movies in PowerPoint (be sure the movie files are saved in the same folder with the PowerPoint file). You may also create a DVD with your video.

<p>iMovie users:</p> <p>Publish: Share or Export two versions of your file (File Menu -> Export or Share Menu):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QuickTime -> CD-ROM (and name it your "yourprojectname".mov) (which can be played from a CD) • QuickTime -> WebStreaming (and name it "yourprojectnameweb".mov) (which can be posted online). <p>If you plan to create a DVD, then select iDVD.</p>	<p>MovieMaker2 users:</p> <p>File Menu -> Save Movie File (becomes a WMV file format - pick different formats for different types of publishing, such as CD or WWW) Navigate to My Computer (click Next) Name the file and Folder (click Next).</p> <p>It takes a few minutes to render.</p> <p>If you plan to create a DVD, then save as full quality AVI (will take at least 250 MB per minute of video). There is not a standard DVD authoring program for Windows, so you will need to check the instructions for the software that comes with the DVD recorder that you have on your Windows computer.</p>
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Publishing on YouTube - [Useful information about posting to YouTube \(PDF\)](#)

YouTube video: [Macintosh PowerPoint and QuickTime Pro](#)

SlideShare: [Posting Narrated PowerPoint to YouTube](#)

YouTube video: [PowerPoint to YouTube using Windows Movie Maker](#)

Websites where you can publish your videos online:

- <http://www.youtube.com> (a very public space... maximum 10 minutes video length)
- <http://teachertube.com> or <http://schooltube.com> (two video hosting sites especially for schools)
- <http://video.google.com> (only available through GoogleApps account, limited to 2 GB per account)
- <http://blip.tv/> (I have a group of movies stored there: <http://eportfolios.blip.tv/>)
- <http://ourmedia.org> (a community of individuals dedicated to spreading grassroots creativity: videos, podcasts and other works of personal media)

- <http://www.motionbox.com> (750MB free storage, unlimited video uploads for \$29.95 per year)
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Topic III: How do we evaluate digital stories?

- Bernard Robin of the University of Houston has created [a great web page that covers this topic](#).
 - [A Digital Storytelling Rubric](#) (PDF file)
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