

## Storytelling

Method	Storytelling
Introduction	
<p>The storytelling method is very suited to the introduction of new subject content or specific subject issues. It stimulates more than the cognitive : different senses and emotions are tapped into for students which supports the learning process (cf. brain sciences). It also engages attention more than a purely technical explanation alone. This method can also be used to deepen students' understanding of introduced subject content by making them create a story on the subject content or part of it.</p> <p>Creating stories of subject content requires expert knowledge and understanding of the history of the content, the context, the connections to other subject areas or disciplines.</p> <p>Stories can be chosen from or inspired by existing stories in a book (e.g.; autobiographies, non-fiction, ...) or can be completely invented by the teaching staff member. You do not have to learn the story by heart. It might be necessary to prepare it on paper, e.g. 2 sides A4 paper with the sequences, quotations.</p> <p>Test the quality of the story before telling it with e.g. colleagues, family or...</p>	
Aim	To stimulate different senses and emotions in order to support the learning process
Target group	All disciplines can integrate storytelling as a way of teaching new content to students or to process newly learned subject topics. This can be done with small as well as big groups (in auditoria).
Intended learning outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students understand the subject content better because the explanations come with more than only cognitive information.</li> <li>• Enhanced ability to link information to lived experiences, prior knowledge and insights. The learning process is supported by remembering feelings, details, connections, atmosphere, images of recognizable situations,...</li> <li>• In the case of students creating stories on subject content, they build self-presentation skills, social skills, understanding the history, background and structure of the context of the subject content, connection in events related to the subject content.</li> </ul>	
Description	
<p>The staff member tells a story on a specific subject or content area lasting at least 10 minutes but no longer than 20 minutes.</p> <p>There are different styles of storytelling. A story should be presented in a way that emphasises the "what" of the story and not the "how" of the telling. It is important to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere (e.g. students sitting in a circle, semi-circle; indoor or outdoor). For the first time, the staff member has to lead the story. It is suggested that he/she follows the following general guidelines:</p>	

- Relevance – an existing story can be selected or the staff member creates a story / a narrative herself / himself using analogies or metaphorical narrative elements. It is important to keep in mind what’s interesting to the listeners and at the same time important moments / issues in the development of the subject content.
- Consider the structure of the story: “Once upon a time...”, describing context, protagonists, antagonists, threats, difficulties, ...
- Editing: If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate the subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.
- Passion: Why must you tell this story? What’s the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? Use non-verbal and para-verbal (intonation, voice volume, ...) elements and moments of silence. Make eye-contact with students. Impersonate personages if suited. Use gestures and move around.
- Being yourself: What personal experience or emphasis that is linked to the subject content can you integrate in your story? The staff member has to speak slowly and clearly. It is important to give the students time to think, ask questions, look at the pictures, make comments.

It can help to present pictures during the story at crucial moments of the story.

At the end of the session, students should to be asked to reflect on the learning outcomes; they can demonstrate comprehension by: comparing, discriminating, predicting, sequencing, classifying, transferring information, etc. However, it is advisable not to ask too many comprehension questions right after the activity, it is better to leave more time for the inner reflection of students.

Students are asked to then create their own stories about the subject or topic.

As a way of processing newly learned content or subject content to be learned, the teaching staff member can ask students to make a story individually, in pairs or in groups. It can be an academic article, a theory, an interpretation of research results. You could ask students to read something in preparation for the class so they can start creating a story when in class without having to read the information. Instructions could be:

- List the main ideas of the article/theory
- Indicate the target audience: who would you tell the story to?
- Write down a sequence of scenes or events that you observe in the information learned and personages involved
- Imagine how the personages felt, what they sensed
- Think of analogies or metaphors or images
- Write a story
- Tell the story to fellow students

You could ask students to make visual media on telling the story. In order to reinforce the quality to guarantee learning outcomes when students listen to each other’s stories, you can give feedback for improving the representation of the content translated in the story.

Preparation

Make a summary of what you want to tell and in which order.  
Tell the story to someone familiar and observe the reactions.  
Measure the time you need. Make some changes if necessary.

Required resources and equipment	A microphone in an auditorium is helpful. Pictures – drawings when it they support the story.
Success factors	When dividing students in groups, it helps to make sure that every group has visual thinkers, students who have strong imagination skills, who fantasize easily.  Taking a kind of a pause to ask the students what they think is going to happen or what stuck with them so far, can help build curiosity and enrich the story.
Advantages	A fascinating story helps the students to remember a subject better. A disciplinary problem or question becomes more recognisable.
Disadvantages	This method requires imagination capacity from the teaching staff member which is not always easy to start with.  What can go wrong includes a lack of “presence” on the part of the teller, unclear or quiet voice, too much repetition, a muddled storyline, absence of helpful body language, monotonous telling, not believing in the story told can be observed by disengagement, lack of support of movements, ...  This could be solved by using digital tools when storytelling.
Additional information	<a href="#">On the following link you'll find instructions to develop storytelling skills and how to integrate them in your lessons.</a>  Here is an <a href="#">explanation</a> as to how stories make our brains work better for learning.  TALES project, 2015. Stories for learning in European schools. LLP Grundtvig project. [online] Available <a href="#">here</a> .  A further <a href="#">explanation</a> of how digital storytelling can be an effective pedagogical tool.