

STORYTELLING GUIDE: RESOURCE 5

Getting Stories Started: For Speakers

It can be hard to come up with ideas for stories!

Even if you tell stories naturally in your everyday life, your mind might go blank when coming up with topics or you feel like you ramble and lose the attention of your audience. Use this guide to get started the next time you have to tell a story. Note: These suggestions can take place in any order that works for you and is intended to inspire ideas rather than used as a formula. Feel free to skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

Know Your Audience

- 1) Build upon past experiences with this type of audience. What stories have you heard before? What themes did they enjoy? What is your personal take on these themes?
- 2) Read the room and figure out a tone for your story: funny, serious, reflective, emotional.

Focus Your Main Idea

- 1) Ask yourself what little moments in life represent you and how you see the world. It is okay if they seem random or insignificant at first.
- 2) Think about a general theme for your story. When in doubt, choose a classic, universal theme like family, change, good vs. evil, transformation, triumph, fear.

Reflect on Memories

- 1) Think about memories involving people, places, or events that remind you of the topic or theme. What happened? What was said?
- 2) Think about thoughts or opinions you've had related to the topic or theme and what events made you think that way. What events shaped those thoughts?

Sketch the Journey

- 1) Select a memory and figure out whether to describe the central problem or incident in terms of:
 - Past to Present
 - Compare and Contrast
 - Struggle and Resolution
- 2) Map out the beginning, middle, and end. When in doubt, start with time and place.

Set Destination

- 1) Memories are extensive, so figure out the best place to end your story before it goes on to become a new story. You don't have to tell everything in one sitting.
- 2) End your story with a takeaway, moral, or connection to a universal theme the audience understands. Keep conclusions short.

Find a Twist

- 1) Practice figuring out a "twist", or something unexpected about your story—a turn of events, something surprising someone said, a conclusion you couldn't have predicted at the time.
- 2) Structure your stories around the twist by guiding the listeners one way and then surprising them.

