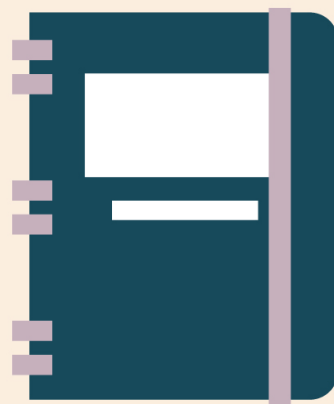


# Digital Storytelling Toolkit

A resource to support educators and  
facilitators in gathering students' voices,  
experiences, and concepts of flourishing



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The Renée Crown Wellness Institute  
University of Colorado **Boulder**

# Facilitator’s Guide

|                                          |                                                     |                                      |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>How To Use This Toolkit</u> . . . . . | <u>Requirements &amp; Recommendations</u> . . . . . | <u>Additional Readings</u> . . . . . |
| 7                                        | 10                                                  | 16                                   |

## Unit 1: Framing Digital Storytelling

|                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Lesson 1:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 3:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 5:</u> . . . . . |
| Building Relationships     | Writers Workshop Part 2    | Writers Workshop Part 3    |
| 1-1.5 hours                | 1.5-2 hours                | 1-1.5 hours                |
| <u>Lesson 2:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 4:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 6:</u> . . . . . |
| Writers Workshop Part 1    | Story Circle               | Storyboarding              |
| 1.5 hours                  | 2-3 hours                  | 1-1.5 hours                |

## Unit 2: Content Creation

|                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Lesson 1:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 3:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 5:</u> . . . . . |
| Recording the Voice-over   | Folder Organization        | Creating the Credits Page  |
| 20-30 minutes              | 20-30 minutes              | 10 minutes                 |
| <u>Lesson 2:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 4:</u> . . . . . |                            |
| Using Photography          | Using Music & Audio        |                            |
| 20-30 minutes              | 20-30 minutes              |                            |

## Unit 3: Film Production

|                            |                            |                                                   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Lesson 1:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 2:</u> . . . . . | <u>Lesson 3:</u> . . . . .                        |
| Video Editing              | Video Feedback             | Creating the Companion Piece & Internal Screening |
| 4-6 hours                  | 30 minutes                 | 2 hours                                           |

# Acknowledgements

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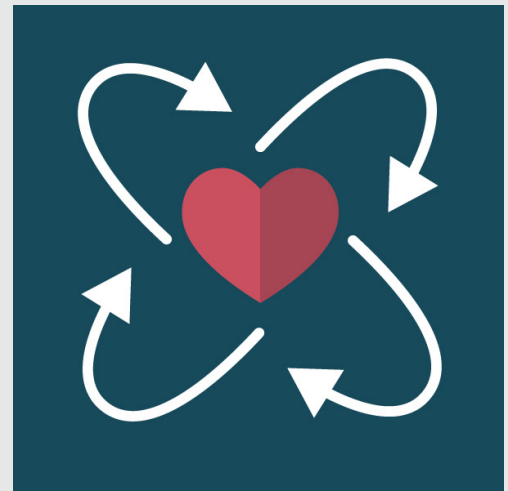
# Facilitator's Guide

# Welcome!

**Flourishing initiatives on college campuses are essential for promoting students' overall well-being, engagement, and academic success. Empirical research shows that programs fostering positive emotions, relationships, purpose, and resilience—core elements of flourishing—are linked to improved mental health, higher retention rates, and stronger academic performance (Vanderweele & Case, 2025; White et al., 2024).**

Studies also indicate that when institutions intentionally create environments that support flourishing, students experience greater belonging and motivation, which buffer against stress and depression (Waters et al., 2021). By investing in flourishing initiatives, colleges not only enhance individual student outcomes but also cultivate thriving campus communities that promote both learning and lifelong well-being.

While flourishing is generally thought to include constructs of mental and physical health, happiness, purpose, and relationships, there is no singular definition. How students define, experience, and seek flourishing is contextually bound. As such, it is important to center student's voices in the process of articulating a definition and vision for flourishing.



## Why Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling is a tool to elevate individual and community voices and perspectives. It is an art form that shares experiences, perspectives, and realities in accessible and creative ways. It also is a process of building social solidarity among community members who share in a collective manner their narratives on issues important to them.

Digital storytelling reclaims narrative power for everyday people—amplifying diverse voices that might otherwise go unheard. By combining personal reflection with digital media, it invites participation, dialogue, and empathy, helping bridge divides and foster social understanding. Digital storytelling also emphasizes visual cultures, which enable the interpretation and evaluation of people's lives in subjective, and often very personal, ways. In this way, digital storytelling becomes not just an artistic or educational practice, but a democratic one: it cultivates agency, transparency, and connection, empowering citizens to shape the collective stories that define their communities and influence the public good.

Often people view digital storytelling as a tool to build proficiency in video editing. While strengthening video editing skills is part of this process, it is secondary to individuals and communities developing and sharing their own stories rather than other people telling their stories for them.

## Digital Story Examples

Several of the lessons in the toolkit indicate that digital story examples should be viewed by the group. Below, please find links to various stories and collections of stories. Facilitators should familiarize themselves with examples for viewing in class. Additional resources about digital stories can be found at the [StoryCenter website](#).

- The Crown Institute piloted this toolkit with a group of undergraduate students at CU Boulder in 2025: [Crown Institute playlist](#).
- [This page](#) on StoryCenter's website contains many examples of digital stories organized by theme.
- Here are more digital stories created by youth: [Youth Voices](#), [Distance](#), [Strength in Love](#), [A Movie](#), and [Sacrificios](#).
- [Not Enough](#) is a digital story produced by two of the authors of this toolkit.



# How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit was written to be adapted to many different learning environments on a university campus. It is organized into three units.

## Unit 1: Framing Digital Storytelling

Unit 1 consists of 6 lessons that take the group of students through a series of Writers Workshops to draft the narrative of what will eventually become their digital story. This unit emphasizes group connections, icebreakers, teambuilding, and sharing vulnerable parts of oneself with the group.

### UNIT OVERVIEW

**Lesson 1:**

Building Relationships  
1-1.5 hours

**Lesson 2:**

Writers Workshop Part 1  
1.5 hours

**Lesson 3:**

Writers Workshop Part 2  
1.5-2 hours

**Lesson 4:**

Story Circle  
2-3 hours

**Lesson 5:**

Writers Workshop Part 3  
1-1.5 hours

**Lesson 6:**

Storyboarding  
1-1.5 hours

### GOALS OF UNIT 1:

- 01.** Students will understand the difference between a written story and a digital story.
- 02.** Students will gain clarity on the central theme or message of their story by participating in Writers Workshops.
- 03.** Students will write a digital story script of approximately 400 words answering the question: "How am I flourishing [at my school]?" or "What does it mean for you to flourish at this university/school?"
- 04.** Students will share their draft story in the Story Circle.
- 05.** Students will provide feedback to their classmates.

### STUDENT DELIVERABLES

- Written story draft, approximately 400 words
- Drafted storyboard

### TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:

8.0 hours minimum

## Unit 2: Content Creation

In Unit 2 the students will mostly work independently on finalizing their storyboard and gathering content (photos and audio) that will eventually be incorporated into their digital story. The unit is organized as a series of shorter lessons (10-30 minutes each) that are interchangeable and can be taught throughout the unit. Facilitators can decide on the right time to bring students together as points of connection and learning, as they work independently on their projects.

Throughout this unit, the facilitators can also create intentional space for students to work with their feedback partners. This portion of the project can be organized into four or five group meetings of approximately 60-90 minutes each. The facilitators can share one or two mini-lessons during each workshop, and students can use the rest of the time to create and gather their content and finalize their storyboards.

### UNIT OVERVIEW

#### **Lesson 1:**

Recording the Voice-over  
**20-30 minutes**

#### **Lesson 2:**

Using Photography  
**20-30 minutes**

#### **Lesson 3:**

Folder Organization  
**20-30 minutes**

#### **Lesson 4:**

Using Music & Audio  
**20-30 minutes**

#### **Lesson 5:**

Creating the Credits Page  
**10 minutes**

### **TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:**

**4.0 hours minimum**

### **GOALS OF UNIT 2:**

- 01.** Students will finalize their storyboards.
- 02.** Students will record their audio voice-over.
- 03.** Students will have photos and background music selected.
- 04.** Students will have their folders organized and files named properly.

### **STUDENT DELIVERABLES**

- All audio (including recorded voice-over and background music selections) is finalized, organized, and ready to be uploaded into the video editing software.
- Photos are finalized, organized, and ready to be uploaded into the video editing software.
- Text files are finalized, organized, and ready to be uploaded into the video editing software.



## Unit 3: Film Production

In Unit 3, students will focus on creating, editing, revising, and finalizing their digital stories using video editing software. Students will work both independently and collaboratively as they transform their storyboards and gather media into polished, shareable films.

Please note: the Digital Storytelling Toolkit is not designed as a video editing curriculum. The lessons in this unit are framed to introduce a video editing software program, so students can create their digital stories using the basic building blocks.

Throughout this unit, facilitators can hold 3–5 editing workshops (60–90 minutes each), where students receive focused instruction, work independently on their projects, and check in with peers or feedback partners. Intentionally rotating feedback partners throughout this unit can provide a broader scope of creative approaches to digital storytelling as a technique and reiterate the importance of drawing out individual's voices in their stories. Students will also create a written companion piece in the form of a one-page handout to deepen or contextualize their film's message.

On the last day of class, students will share their digital stories and companion pieces. This celebratory group screening will allow everyone to see the finished products and provide closure for the project. A public screening may also be planned (see below for more information about creating a public showcase).

### UNIT OVERVIEW

#### Lesson 1:

Video Editing  
**4-6 hours**

#### Lesson 2:

Video Feedback  
**30 minutes**

#### Lesson 3:

Creating the Companion Piece  
& Internal Screening  
**2 hours**

#### TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:

**6.5–8.5 hours**

### GOALS OF UNIT 3:

- 01.** Students will learn to navigate video editing software and complete a basic edited sequence.
- 02.** Students will give and receive feedback to improve the clarity and impact of their visual storytelling.
- 03.** Students will revise and finalize their films using transitions, titles, and effects.
- 04.** Students will create a companion piece to reflect on and deepen their message.
- 05.** Students will share their final film projects in a public or classroom celebration.

### STUDENT DELIVERABLES

- Completed digital story
- Completed companion piece

# Requirements & Recommendations

## Facilitators' Skillsets

We recommend composing a team that represents these skill sets:

- A deep understanding of wellness and flourishing literature. It would be helpful for the facilitator to also have experience teaching about wellness and/or flourishing.
- Experience teaching writing composition/ Writers Workshop
- Video editing expertise
  - In most cases, student digital stories contain only still images, and no video clips, in the visual portion of their stories.
  - Depending on the expertise and skillset of the facilitator who will guide this portion of the project, students may be invited to use short video clips (original files of their own creation) and background music in their digital stories. This requires a staff member or graduate student who can assist with the tools needed for editing these more complex pieces.
- We recommend maintaining approximately a 2:10 facilitator to student ratio.

## Time Required

We recommend that at a minimum, 24 contact hours with students be scheduled for this project. In some cases, it may be helpful to frame the project as requiring some out-of-class work time (homework). If that is not ideal for your situation, the number of contact hours would need to increase to allow for more independent work time.

In some cases, this project may be set up such that students are required to have a draft of their written story prior to the first session. These drafts will certainly require revisions and further work, but this can substantially decrease the number of hours needed to complete the project.

Most of the lessons in this toolkit are written to last approximately 1-2 hours, but they can be adapted or combined if the timing of each workshop in your program is longer or shorter.

The toolkit can be adapted as a semester-long course, or it can be used as curriculum for a club, workshop, or enrichment program.

## Software/Technology Required

Each of the participants will need access to video editing software. We have created a table of software options to help you decide what is best for your setting.

Once a program is determined, it is recommended that the team engage in the tutorials and familiarize themselves with the ins and outs of that specific software. Because of the variability in options, this toolkit does not “teach” a specific software. Rather, it will guide the process of creation of digital stories without specific technical information that may vary among different editing platforms.

In addition to video editing software, you will also need a means of recording the voice-overs. There are many digital audio recorders widely available, and your institution may also have an audio recording studio that you may be able to schedule time in. Audio recordings from a smartphone or an external microphone connected to a computer through a USB cable may work. However, optimal quality audio files are best obtained using a digital audio recorder and an external microphone with an XLR connection.

### VIDEO EDITING SOFTWARE OPTIONS

|                        | PROS                                                                               | CONS                                       | SUBSCRIPTION                                       |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DAVINCI RESOLVE</b> | Professional program with extensive features; works across platforms               | Relatively high learning curve             | Free version exists                                |
| <b>ADOBE PREMIERE</b>  | Professional program with extensive features; works across platforms               | Relatively high learning curve             | Subscription required                              |
| <b>CAPCUT</b>          | Online program; works across platforms; easy to learn                              | Internet/Wifi connection required          | Free version but watermark exists on video exports |
| <b>WEVIDEO</b>         | Basic video editing program; online program; works across platforms; easy to learn | Internet/Wifi connection required          | Free version but watermark exists on video exports |
| <b>IMOVIE</b>          | Easy to learn                                                                      | Limited to Apple computers and IOS devices | Free                                               |
| <b>CANVA</b>           | Basic video editing program; online program; easy to learn; works across platforms | Internet/Wifi connection required          | Limited file export options                        |

## Writers Workshop Facilitation Tips

The Writers Workshops are at the heart of the first phase of the digital storytelling process. The workshops provide a space for students to brainstorm, shape, and revise the personal narratives that will become their digital stories.

As a facilitator, your main goal is to create a space that feels safe, supportive, and creative. The following tips can help you guide your students through that process:

### 01. Establish a safe and supportive space

- Begin by creating an environment grounded in relationship building. Set clear community agreements and norms that promote respect, confidentiality, and attentive listening.
- Model vulnerability by participating in activities yourself. Ensure that no one feels pressured to share before they're ready.
- Be mindful of group dynamics and help balance participation by addressing dominant voices, checking in with quieter students, and assessing each student's comfort level and growth over time.

### 02. Model the writing, feedback, and reflection process

- Demonstrate what constructive feedback looks and sounds like by offering your own reflections while also inviting peer input.
- Scaffold the writing process so students feel supported at each stage (from brainstorming to final product).
- Emphasize that writing is iterative and often messy. It evolves through reflection, revision, and dialogue.
- Encourage students to view the process itself as the main learning experience, rather than focusing solely on the final product.

### 03. Use time wisely and flexibly

- Structure each workshop with clear time frames for reading, writing, discussion, and editing.
- Build in periods for individual writing to allow for uninterrupted, quiet focus time.
- At the same time, remain flexible. Students should have the freedom to explore where their stories want to go, while still receiving guidance to stay connected to their core message of flourishing or the main story prompt.

## Student Pre and Post Surveys

Brief pre- and post-workshop surveys can help facilitators understand where students are in the process, what support they might need, and what they're taking away from each session. These surveys are designed to be short and accessible, taking no more than a few minutes to complete. We recommend including up to 5 multiple-choice or short-answer questions. To make participation easy, share the survey via a QR code or direct link so students can complete it on their phones at the beginning and end of the workshop.

These brief reflections can help facilitators adapt their approach (if needed), track learning over time, and ensure the workshop experience remains supportive and effective.

## Recording the Voice-Over

The voice-over for the digital story is an audio file of the student reading their story aloud. You will need to determine the best way to create these recordings in your setting. You will want to find a very quiet setting for the recording. A sound studio or sound-proof location is ideal, but if that is not available to you, think about location and time of day for the best results.

It's often best to have a facilitator work one-on-one with each student for the recording, so the student can focus on reading, and the facilitator can focus on the hardware and on giving feedback. Students will often require several takes to get the recording right, so patience is key! It's reasonable to improvise and encourage a participant to share their story without reading in cases where an individual experiences difficulties reading their stories in a recording session.



### Example recording kit contents:

- ☐ Card for audio recorder
- ☐ SD card, card reader, cable
- ☐ Spare batteries for microphone and audio recorder
- ☐ Carrying case for the kit
- ☐ Microphone
- ☐ Microphone stand
- ☐ XLR cable to connect microphone to audio recorder
- ☐ Digital audio recorder

## Conducting Student Interviews (optional)

After the project is complete, you may wish to conduct student interviews to learn more about the process as they experienced it. It is beneficial to video-record these interviews, provided you have permission from the student to do so.

These interviews may be useful in seeking funding for a project such as this one, creating a behind-the-scenes piece to accompany the digital stories, or to improve the process the next time you decide to do it.

## Public Exhibition/Showcase

Digital stories are designed to be the start of a dialogue, not the end. These stories center first-person narratives and collectively provide insight into how students experience flourishing. It is important that the project culminates with a community gathering where the stories can be shared, and dialogue can be fostered. Storytellers should be oriented to this event from the start of the workshop series, with the reassurance that they should only share what they are comfortable with.

When planning a public showcase or film screening, prepare a digital flyer for the event (including date, time, location, and a brief description of the project). Students and facilitators can then share the flyer with friends, colleagues, family members, or other interested parties.

### Tips for hosting a viewing:

- Prepare written bios for each student, including year, major, interests, and one sentence about their digital story.
- Invite students to introduce their digital story with a brief (previously written) introduction, if they choose to.
- Make companion pieces available after the showcase. Sharing them prior to the film screening may create distractions during the showcase.
- Save the Q&A until after all digital stories have been viewed.
- Consider providing audience members with a survey at the end of the showcase. Audience survey questions may include:
  - What is your definition of flourishing?
  - What did you learn from these digital stories?
  - What questions do you have for the filmmakers?
  - Would you recommend that friends watch the digital stories?

## Using Externally Created Media

Facilitators should make students aware that they are not to violate any copyright laws in creating their digital stories. Students should never use photographs, illustrations, videos, or any other media that they did not create themselves, unless that content has been shared with the specific permission to be reused in this fashion.

However, students may use background music that is copyright-free. Several music resources are listed in Unit 2 Lesson 4. All content that the students did not create themselves must be properly credited on the digital story credits page.

## Risks/Permissions

If the student-produced digital stories will be shared with anyone outside the group, you will need to obtain written permission from the students. You may offer students the option to remain anonymous by not including their name or identifying information (i.e., photos of faces) in their stories. Regardless of anonymity in the story, permission to distribute is still required.

We recommend that you seek counsel from the legal department in your institution prior to distributing or sharing the digital stories.



# Additional Readings

## Readings on Flourishing

Vanderweele, T. J., & Case, B. (2025). Academic flourishing and student formation. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 15(2), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v15i2.5003>

Waters, L., Algoe, S. B., Dutton, J., Emmons, R., Fredrickson, B. L., Heaphy, E., ... Steger, M. (2021). Positive psychology in a pandemic: buffering, bolstering, and building mental health. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 17(3), 303–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.1871945>

White, H. C., Allen, D. M., Buffinton, K., Humphrey, D., Malpiede, M., Miller, R. K., & Volin, J. C. (2024). Cultivating long-term well-being through transformative undergraduate education. *PNAS Nexus*, 3(9). <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae372>

## Readings on Digital Storytelling

Brushwood Rose, C. (2016). The subjective spaces of social engagement: Cultivating creative living through community-based digital storytelling. *Psychoanal Cult Soc* 21, 386–402. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pcs.2015.56>

Fiddian-Green, A., Gubrium, A., & Hill, A. (2023). Digital storytelling: Public health storytelling as a method and tool for empathy, equity, and social change. In Liamputtong, P. (Ed.), *Handbook of social sciences and global public health* (pp. 877–898). Springer Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25110-8>

Otañez, M., & Lakota, W. (2015). Digital storytelling: Using videos to increase social wellness. In Cohen, J. L., Johnson, J. L., & Orr, P. P. (Eds.), *Video and Filmmaking as Psychotherapy: Research and practice* (pp. 119–130). Routledge.



# Unit 1: Framing Digital Storytelling

## UNIT OVERVIEW

### Lesson 1:

Building Relationships

**1-1.5 hours**

### Lesson 2:

Writers Workshop Part 1

**1.5 hours**

### Lesson 3:

Writers Workshop Part 2

**1.5-2 hours**

### Lesson 4:

Story Circle

**2-3 hours**

### Lesson 5:

Writers Workshop Part 3

**1-1.5 hours**

### Lesson 6:

Storyboarding

**1-1.5 hours**

**TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:**  
**8.0 hours minimum**



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# Building Relationships

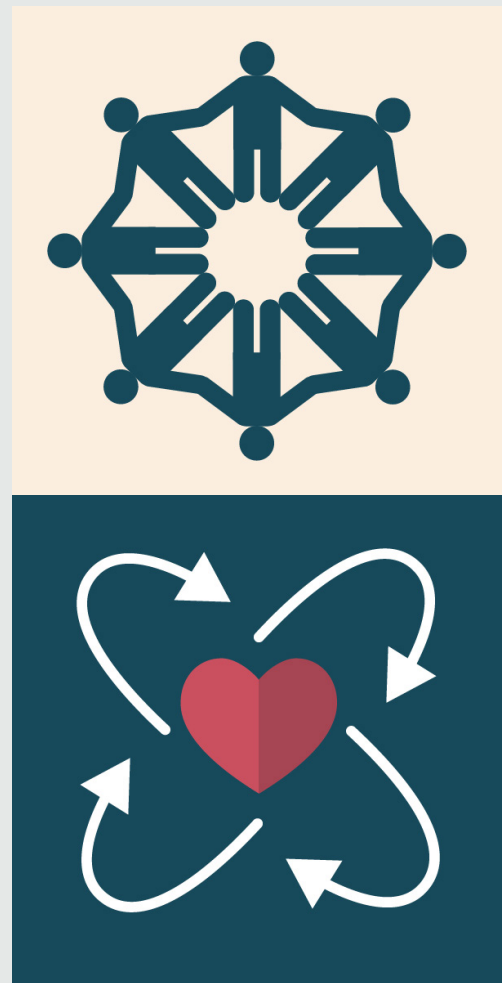
1-1.5 HOURS

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** How do we build trust and relationships within our group?
- 02.** What are our shared agreements?
- 03.** What is flourishing?

## Summary

In this session, participants will begin the process of building relationships and building trust. They will define flourishing for themselves individually and collectively. Additionally, they will be oriented to how storytelling, digital storytelling, and flourishing are interconnected for this project.



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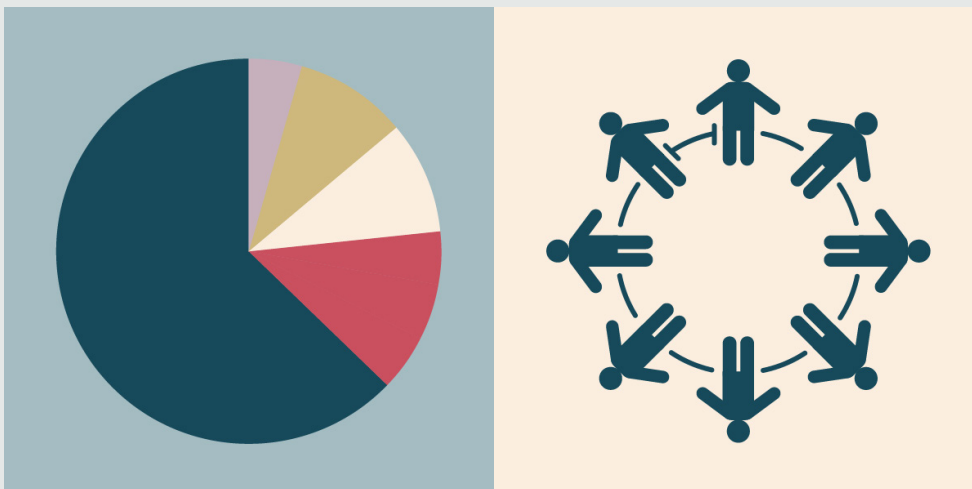
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## Materials

- Lined paper or journals
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Slides (if you like to present with them)
- Pencils/Pens
- Post-it notes

## Preparation before class begins

- Set the room up so that there is space for participants to begin in a circle, away from desks or distractions. Desks or tables should be available for the writing portion of the session.
- Draw a simple diagram of the circle, and as students enter the room, write their names where they choose to sit. Learn how to pronounce each person's name.
- Test AV prior to the session, making sure video and audio are functioning properly.
- **Optional:** provide each student with a writing journal and invite them to bring a computer where they can create a digital journal for this project if they feel more comfortable typing. They will return to this journal frequently throughout the project.



# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (25-30 min)

**Overview:** This lesson aims to start the workshop series with strong connections, prioritizing relationship before task. Establishing positive group dynamics at the start of a learning experience sets the stage for rich discussions, authentic connection, and deep learning.

#### 01. Digital Storytelling Project overview:

- a. Offer a brief orientation to the Flourishing Digital Storytelling Project. Remind students of the projects' aims: to foster connection, uplift student voices, explore concepts of flourishing, and build storytelling skills. Keep logistics minimal—this is about inviting students into a shared purpose.

#### 02. Facilitator introductions

- a. Facilitators introduce themselves by sharing a brief personal introduction that includes their academic background and their connection to this work.

#### 03. Agenda

- a. Share the flow of the day with students.
  - Introductions and icebreaker
  - Develop group agreements
  - Defining flourishing
  - View and discuss a flourishing digital story.

#### 04. Introduction and icebreaker whip around

- a. Each participant (including facilitators) share:
  - Name
  - Pronouns
  - A song you've been listening to lately and how it makes you feel. Facilitators can create a setlist using these songs, to be played later during the project time.

#### 05. Develop group agreements

- a. If a shared set of agreements already exists for the hosting institution, please refer to those and allow time to expand upon existing agreements, explore definitions, and how the agreements may look or be enacted in practice.
- b. If a shared set of agreements does not exist, brainstorm this list together, seeding it with a few to start with (e.g., we will respect all points of view in this space; we will approach differences of opinion with curiosity rather than judgment, what is said here stays here, what is learned here can leave, confidentiality, etc.). [See this lesson](#) for more specific instructions on developing shared agreements if it is a new practice. You might need to dedicate an additional 10-15 minutes to this activity if you are starting from scratch.
- c. Create or display a poster (can be digital) with the agreements so they can be posted, reviewed, and revised each week.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 2:

### Defining flourishing (20 min)

**Overview:** The group will develop an understanding of the complexity of the definition of flourishing, and each person will draft a definition of what flourishing means to them at this time in their life. Definitions of flourishing may include individual and sociocultural elements, such as environmental, social, historical, cultural, or political factors.

**01.** Start with a whole-group brainstorm on the board – “What is flourishing?” or “What does it mean to flourish?”

- a. Allow students to respond, creating an idea web on the board.
- b. Some prompts to encourage deeper reflection:
  - What does flourishing look like, sound like, feel like?
  - Where does flourishing occur usually?
  - How is it individual and collective?
  - What are the conditions—individual, social, and structural—that facilitate flourishing?
  - When was a time that it was difficult to flourish?
  - What elements of flourishing are enduring and which elements of your definition might change over time?

**02.** Student individual engagement

- a. Students use post-it notes to demonstrate more connections to the concept of flourishing through lived experience. They can write the name of a song, a book they’ve read, draw an illustration, or write a short narrative, think of a place, etc.
- b. Post-it notes get added to the idea web, and the result is a rich multi-modal representation of their collective understanding of flourishing.

**03.** Whole group discussion

- a. Bring everyone together and have students share out to synthesize the representations of flourishing and to hear the definitions and interpretations of flourishing of their peers. The objective of this process is to co-create a collective understanding of flourishing to keep coming back to. Continue to return to this concept throughout the following workshop sessions to revise it together.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### Viewing a flourishing digital story (20 min)

**Overview:** Students will view a digital story from a past participant. The purpose is not to critique the form or production, but to focus on meaning, message, and emotion. Please view one of the stories from the [Crown Institute Digital Story Playlist](#). Suggestion: “Intertwined” by Sabrina.

**01.** Frame the viewing: “We’re watching this story to help you begin thinking about your own story of flourishing and how you might share that story. Think about how this connects to our definitions and your own experience. As you watch this story, pay close attention to what made the story compelling and what is conveyed as the message around flourishing.”

**02.** Discussion prompts:

- What made the story compelling?
- What was the messaging around flourishing?
- What ideas or questions does this raise for your own story?

**03.** Closing

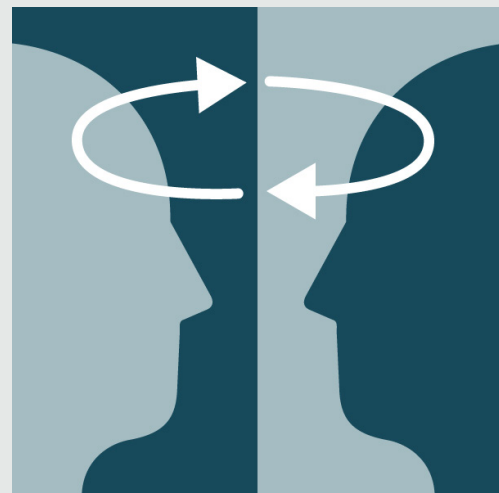
- Wrap up by inviting students to revisit their definition of flourishing over the next few days.
- Share the digital story example links and ask students to view one or two of the stories on their own before the next session.

## Assignments

- Ongoing assignment for Sessions 1-4: Watch digital story examples. Examples can be found on [page 6 of the Facilitator’s Guide](#).
- Revisit your writing about the concept of flourishing, revising as desired.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- Be aware of accessibility needs in the circle and movement around the room.
- Be sure to only show and link digital stories that have captions.



# Writers Workshop Part 1

1.5 HOURS

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** What does flourishing mean to you?
- 02.** What is digital storytelling?
- 03.** What makes a compelling story?

## Summary

In this session, students are introduced to digital storytelling as a creative, embodied, and reflective practice for exploring personal definitions and experiences of flourishing. Through connection rounds, somatic reflection, writing, and story sharing, they begin crafting a written narrative that gives voice to their lived experience.

## Materials

- Group agreements poster or slide
- Printed questions or slides with the Connection round activity
- Journals or lined paper
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Slides (if you like to present with them)
- Pencils/Pens
- Student story example for sharing

## Room set-up

The ideal room set-up has space for students to stand or sit in two concentric circles and desks or tables for writing.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (20 min)

**01.** Welcome students and center the project aims.

### 02. Agenda

a. Share the flow of the day with students. You might write it on the board or display it visually:

- Icebreaker: Connection rounds
- Embodiment practice on individual flourishing
- Writers Workshop
- Group share and reflection

### 03. Connection Rounds

**Overview:** This is an icebreaker, but also a learning experience where students actively participate and share ideas, providing opportunities for students to get to know each other's perspectives.

a. Before beginning the icebreaker, review the group agreements that were presented/developed in the first session. Invite students to revise or expand on the agreements if needed.

b. Students form two lines facing each other (e.g., 5 pairs for 10 students). One line rotates before each round, so everyone connects with a new person during each round.

c. The facilitator reads aloud a question from the Connection Rounds prompts below at the beginning of each round.

d. Both partners respond to the question (30-45 seconds each).

e. After both respond, call "Rotate!" and one line shifts down.

f. Final round prompt: When students return to their original partner, ask: "What does flourishing mean to you?" OR ask a question that connects with flourishing.

g. Debrief questions (whole group):

- Did any answers surprise or stick with you?
- Were there any themes across the conversations?
- What emotions arose as you shared?
- Did you choose not to share something? What influenced that?
- What did you learn about others and/or flourishing from this experience?

# In-Person Steps

## h. Connection Rounds prompts (sample list)

- What was your favorite childhood book and why?
- What is your favorite movie and why?
- What is your favorite thing to do in the summer?
- What is a smell you love and why?
- If you could visit any place in this world, where would you go and why?
- Are you more of a morning person or a night person?
- What is something you are passionate about?
- What is something you feel knowledgeable about?
- What is your favorite show and why?
- What are some things that bring happiness into your everyday life?
- What is something you wish you could change in today's world?
- Can you tell me some things about where and how you grew up?
- Where did you grow up? What was it like?
- What do you do on a typical night out?
- What was an embarrassing moment in your life?
- What is a silly childhood memory?
- What is one thing you cannot stand?
- Last Question: What does flourishing mean to you?



# In-Person Steps

## 04. Embodiment exercise:

### Flourishing in the body

**Overview:** Facilitator leads a guided somatic reflection, with options for engagement. Students can engage in whatever way feels right for them.

#### a. Script excerpt (can be read aloud):

- Sit comfortably, both feet on the ground, noticing the breath. I invite you to close your eyes, but you can also keep them open.
- Notice your breath as it enters your nose, your windpipe, your lungs, your belly, your toes...for about 30 seconds or more and just follow your breath.
- Bring your attention to the bottom of your feet and sense the ground beneath you, slowly move up to your head.
- Move up your body slowly sensing what it feels like. For example, notice your back area against the chair supporting you or holding you...the key here is slowly, move slowly and notice.
- Now, think about a time that you were not flourishing at the university. Where were you? Who was with you? What did you smell, taste, see, feel, hear? Bring all the senses into it. What was the vibe? What meaning were you making? What emotions and sensations do you feel in your body when you are recalling that moment?
- Now think about a time you were flourishing at the university. Where were you? Who was with you? What did you smell, taste, feel, hear. Bring all the senses into it. What was the vibe? What meaning were you making? What emotions and sensations do you feel in your body when recalling the moment of flourishing?
- Focus on the sensation of flourishing. Where do you feel it in your body?
- I will now give you space for 1 minute of quiet reflection.
- Slowly, start moving your body and opening your eyes, if they were closed. As we come back together, reflect on what, if any, part of your reflection on flourishing you want to share.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 2:

### Writers Workshop:

#### Drafting a flourishing story (60 min)

**Overview:** In this portion of the workshop, students will begin writing about flourishing and crafting their digital story. This is a writing activity and will briefly introduce stories and storytelling.

#### 01. Prompt and framing:

- a. Prompt: “What does it mean for you to flourish at this university/school?” or “How am I flourishing at my school?”

#### 02. Framing: Introduction to stories

- a. Last time we met, we talked about the definition of flourishing, and we learned that these definitions can be fluid and unique to each person. You will be writing a story around 400 words about your sense of flourishing at this university. Your story will become a 3-minute digital story, similar to the one we watched last time. Prompts for partner/small group/whole group discussion (facilitators decide on best structure based on group dynamics):
  - What makes a compelling story?
  - What parts of you are you comfortable sharing in a story?

- What do you want your story to say about flourishing? (Note: it’s ok to not be flourishing at this time – can you envision how you will get there?)
- What message might you offer to your ancestors or future generations?

#### 03. Introduction to digital story

- a. A digital story is poetic, personal, multimedia narrative using:
  - Voice-over narration
  - Images, videos, artwork
  - Music or sound design
  - Metaphors, visuals, and emotional storytelling
  - A clear message or “golden nugget”

#### 04. Show a written story example, either one that the facilitator has written, or one from a student in the group, with their permission (optional):

- a. Facilitator reads the story aloud and asks:
  - What components does the story have?
  - What made it strong?

# In-Person Steps

## 05. Build success criteria together

- a. The facilitator shares criteria and the students add on from their own experience and what they notice from the examples that have been presented.
- b. Story success criteria examples:
  - Clear point of view
  - Emotional authenticity
  - Know your audience
  - Clear lesson or point of story
  - Show don't tell
  - Rise and fall of plot

## 06. Solo free write

- a. Revisit the prompt.
- b. Let students know that they will start working on their first draft now, and that this is the time and place to get their initial ideas on paper. It does not need to be polished or even make a lot of sense right now. Remind students that as they develop stories and receive feedback the length of their draft stories will increase and this is normal. As the deadline approaches, stories can be re-edited and synthesized to reach the word count of 400 words for a 3-4 minute digital story.
- c. Give students 10-15 minutes of silent writing to begin their story draft.

## 07. Small group share and feedback

- a. Students share their drafts in small groups. Two peers offer:
  - One thing they appreciated
  - One suggestion for development
- b. Facilitator rotates among the groups to listen and support.

## 08. Solo revision notes

- a. Invite students to return to their drafts and spend about 5 minutes making notes about how they would like to revise, expand, or deepen their stories in the next session.



# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### Closing (10 min)

- 01.** Initiate a whole group discussion based on these reflection questions:
  - a. What are you walking away with today?
  - b. What are you most excited about?
  - c. What makes you nervous?
  - d. What are your next steps?
- 02.** Remind students that in two classes everyone (including the facilitators) will participate in a Story Circle to share their story. They'll have one more in-class Writers Workshop, and then it will be up to them to finalize their draft for the Story Circle in two class periods.
- 03.** Remind students that they should watch 1-2 digital story examples provided by the facilitators on their own before the next class.

## Assignments

- Ongoing assignment for Sessions 1-4: Watch digital story examples. Examples can be found on [page 6 of the Facilitator's Guide](#).
- Bring a draft of your flourishing story to read in front of your peers for the next class and email a copy of draft stories to the workshop co-facilitators. Finished stories of approximately 400 words generally translate to digital stories that are about three minutes long.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- Connection rounds: it can be challenging to hear your partner with others talking around you at the same time – make accommodations as needed – make the circle as big as possible, perhaps moving into a large open space for this part (or perhaps it's a zig-zag line if no space for a circle).
- Embodied practice: this may be challenging for some participants as it could bring up trauma or unsettled feelings, especially during the envisioning of not flourishing. Advise students to take deep breaths, to open their eyes as needed, to take a break if needed, etc. Keep an eye on folks as they do this and check in later with anyone who looks like they might have been struggling.

# Writers Workshop Part 2

1.5-2 HOURS

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** What does flourishing mean to you?
- 02.** What is digital storytelling?
- 03.** What makes a compelling story?

## Summary

Students deepen their understanding of digital storytelling as both a creative and scholarly practice by revising their personal stories of flourishing. Through an introduction to digital story elements, a Writers Workshop, and peer feedback, they work to further develop their story drafts.

## Materials

- Group agreements poster or slide

## Facilitation Tip

Students should have a draft of their stories from Lesson 2, which they will continue to build on in this lesson.



# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (15 min)

01. Welcome students and remind them why they are here.
02. Agenda: Share the flow of the day with students. You might write it on the board or display it visually:
  - a. Icebreaker: The Object in Your Bag
  - b. Introduction to Digital Stories
  - c. Introduce Story Circle
  - d. Writers Workshop Part 2

### 03. Icebreaker: The Object in Your Bag

**Overview:** This icebreaker invites students to choose an everyday object from their bag or body and share either its real-life significance or an imaginative, magical backstory. It encourages creative expression, personal reflection, and connection through storytelling.

#### Instructions:

- a. Ask students to take a moment to find an object on them or in their bag—anything small they can hold (e.g., a pen, bracelet, keychain, lip balm, book, etc.). They can choose to share the real-life significance of the object (Why is it meaningful to you?).

#### OR

Give it a magical or imaginative backstory (What power or story does it hold?). Encourage creativity, vulnerability, or playfulness—whatever feels right to each student.

#### Example:

- Object: Computer charger
- Real significance: “This charger has been with me through every late-night paper, job application, and Zoom call. It’s not just tech—it’s been my lifeline during grad school.”
- Magical twist: “This isn’t just a charger—it’s a tether to an invisible realm of ideas. When I plug it in, it doesn’t just power my computer, it recharges my imagination. Without it, the stories I write would stay trapped in the shadows.”

- b. Sit in a circle and everyone takes a turn sharing their object with the group.



# In-Person Steps

## PART 2:

### Introduction to Digital Stories (30 min)

**Overview:** Students will walk away from this experience with two things:

- A final product—a 3-minute digital story
- A process—writing, reflection, recording, and creating

**01.** Digital stories are poetic, multimedia snippets of our lives. They are not full autobiographies—they're glimpses into a moment, feeling, or question that reveals something true about who we are. These stories blend narration, images, text, and music to humanize data, express identity, and create connection. This kind of storytelling is not only art—it's also scholarship, activism, healing and transformative along individual and collective lines. Please see the [Additional Readings section in the Facilitator's Guide](#).

### 02. Purpose & expectations:

- Students will learn the tools of digital storytelling and personal narrative writing.
- Students will gain comfort in first-person storytelling.
- Students will embrace imperfection and find humor in technological hiccups (they will happen!).
- Know that nothing will be shared publicly without your full approval.

### 03. Anatomy of a digital story

- Every digital story contains some combination of the following:
  - Narration – a spoken story
  - Imagery – photos, drawings, video, collage, etc. (no copyrighted, copyright-free or royalty-free imagery)
    - Reminder: no copyrighted images can be used; use royalty-free or copyright-free images
  - Text on screen – words that complement your voice or highlight meaning
  - Background music/sound design – sets tone and emotion (this is a character too!)
  - There are some themes and frameworks that are often present in digital stories:
    - Storytelling as healing and resistance
    - Digital stories as visual scholarship and personal archive
    - The balance between individual experience and collective meaning-making

### 04. View digital story examples

- Ask students which of the digital stories they watched on their own. How did the stories make them feel? How did they contribute to how they went about thinking about their own story?
- We'll view two sample digital stories. Choose two from the list on [page 6 of the Facilitator's Guide](#).
- Engage the group in a short discussion after each film.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### Writers Workshop (60 min)

**Overview:** The goal should be deepening and shaping the draft for read-aloud impact. This includes refining structure, enhancing emotional clarity, and revisiting voice—not just for written polish, but for the listening experience.

#### 01. Opening prompt:

- a. Invite students to reread their writing from the last session.
- b. Invite them to free-write or add edits and notes on their draft on one of the following:
  - What do you want your story to say about you, about flourishing?
  - What part of your story feels unclear, stuck, or messy?
  - What is the emotional center of your story?
  - Is there anything in your story that maybe you are not yet comfortable sharing?

#### 02. Mini lesson: Writing for a digital story

- a. Briefly discuss writing for spoken storytelling. Key elements:
  - Keep it simple—conversational writing reads better aloud.
  - Write in first-person
  - Use strong images or metaphors to anchor key ideas.
  - Pace matters—short sentences help rhythm and clarity.
  - Say it how you'd say it—use your storytelling voice, not academic language.

#### 03. Solo revision time

- a. Use the success criteria created from the last session OR
- b. Give students the following questions for revisions:
  - Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?
  - Does the theme of flourishing show up?
  - Does my story have a takeaway or message?
  - Where can I show instead of tell?
  - Are there any places I can add sensory details?
- c. Encourage students to read their drafts out loud as they revise

#### 04. Paired peer work: Listening to the story

- a. In pairs, students read their current draft aloud to a partner. Partners respond with feedback:
- b. Where was the heart of the story?  
How did flourishing show up in the story?
- c. What's one suggestion for improving flow, structure, or clarity?

#### 05. Optional: Final writing time

- a. Students return to their stories and incorporate feedback

#### 06. Closing reflections

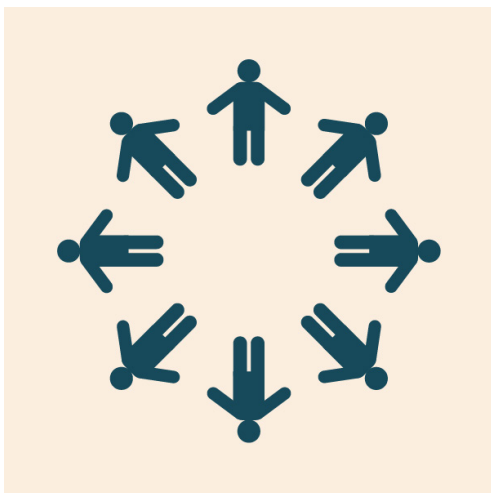
- a. What changed in your story today?
- b. What do you want to keep working on before the Story Circle?

# In-Person Steps

## PART 4: Closing (5 min)

### 01. Next class: Story Circle

- a. Next time, we will gather in a Story Circle, where everyone—including facilitators—will share a draft of their story aloud. This is a space of mutual respect, vulnerability, and growth. Students will receive supportive feedback from peers using clear, kind, and constructive approaches. We will also talk about how to offer and receive feedback thoughtfully—this process is about listening, learning, and evolving together.



## Assignments

- Ongoing assignment for Sessions 1-4: Watch digital stories. Examples can be found on [page 6 of the Facilitator's Guide](#).
- Continue to work on your story so that it's ready to be shared aloud in the next session.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- Include a range of digital story examples that reflect diverse identities and experiences to ensure representation and engagement.
- If students need help getting started, facilitators can provide scaffolded writing support through sentence starters or prompts.
- Offer flexible peer feedback structures—students can work in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class depending on their comfort levels.
- Story sharing can also be adapted to different preferences: students may share aloud, read silently while peers add comments, or submit written reflections instead.
- For virtual settings, adapt activities such as the icebreaker by inviting students to share an item found at home rather than something from their bag.

# Story Circle

**2-3 HOURS**

Depending on how many students are in the group

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** What does flourishing mean to you?
- 02.** What is a Story Circle?
- 03.** How can we provide kind and helpful feedback to our classmates about their stories?

## Summary

This workshop may need to be completed over a series of sessions, depending on the number of students participating in the project. Before the Story Circle begins, facilitators will lead a mini-lesson focused on compassionately providing feedback to other people's stories. During the Story Circle, each student will share their story orally as the group listens attentively. After each reading, students will be able to ask questions and share feedback with the reader. The Story Circle is a crucial part of this project, as it allows students to hear all of their classmates' stories.

## Materials

- Group agreements poster or slide
- Post-it notes or other note-paper
- Lined paper or journals
- Writing utensils
- Audio-recording device (optional)

## Preparation before class begins

- Room set-up for this workshop should not involve desks or tables. Students should be seated in a circle.
- Facilitators should bring their own written story to share in the circle with the students.
- It may be helpful to audio record and then transcribe each of these readings in the Story Circle as well as the question-and-answer session so that each student can refer back to the conversation after the fact. Additionally, it is also helpful for facilitators to take turns taking notes during the question-and-answer sessions, to be shared with each student after the session.



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# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (5-7 min)

01. Welcome students and remind them why they are here.
02. Agenda: Share the flow of the day with students. Write it on the board or display it visually:
  - a. Introduction to Story Circle
  - b. Mini workshop: Giving feedback
  - c. Story Circle

## PART 2:

### Mini workshop: Giving feedback (10 min)

**Overview:** This part of the session builds essential skills for offering and receiving feedback with care and purpose. In the mini workshop, students learn that feedback in storytelling is not about correction but about deep listening and supporting one another's voice and vision. Through shared norms and structured prompts, students practice offering kind, specific, and constructive feedback that honors each storyteller's intent.

#### 01. Framing

- a. Feedback is not about fixing, judging or imposing what you might do with the project; it's about offering your peers a different perspective that will uplift their voice and vision. Ultimately, feedback helps each other grow and makes our work better. In storytelling, feedback is also about learning to listen deeply and respond with care.

#### 02. Feedback norms and agreements

- a. Be kind
- b. Be specific
- c. Be helpful
- d. Accept messiness
- e. Honor personal stories; be aware of trauma, identity, and context.
- f. Feel free to reject feedback—the storyteller decides what is fit for their vision.

#### 03. Feedback structure and question prompts:

- a. Praise: Offer what resonated with you or what was powerful or moving.
  - I really felt \_\_\_ when you talked about \_\_\_.
- b. Suggestion: Offer one idea for clarity.
  - Have you thought about \_\_\_?
  - I wonder if you could \_\_\_?
  - I noticed that \_\_\_. It might be more powerful if you \_\_\_.
  - When you said \_\_\_, I felt \_\_\_. Have you thought about expanding that?
  - You might try removing \_\_\_ and adding \_\_\_.
- c. Question: Ask something that invites reflection or possibility.
  - I heard you mentioned \_\_\_—can you say more about that?
  - What do you want the listener to take away?
  - Do you feel like you captured flourishing?
- d. Practice feedback (optional activity).
  - Provide a short practice using a sample paragraph and read out loud. Have students turn and talk and go through what they might say to the writer in the three categories of feedback (praise, suggestion, and question).

# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

**Story Circle (10-15 min per student; this may need to be done over multiple days)**

**Overview:** The Story Circle is a key milestone in the digital storytelling process. It offers each student the opportunity to share their draft aloud in a trusted environment. This is the first full unveiling of each story, witnessed by peers and facilitators who respond with thoughtful, supportive feedback. This collaborative moment invites deeper reflection, refines the stories, and strengthens the storytelling community.

### 01. Introduction

- a. Now we will all share our drafts of our digital stories on flourishing. Each person will share, and each person will witness. Facilitators will share too, because we don't ask students to do what we're not also willing to do ourselves. You'll read your draft aloud while others listen and take notes to provide feedback. After your story, your classmates and instructors will provide feedback that is kind, specific and helpful. We will have a note-taker, so you don't need to worry about remembering everything that everyone said.
- b. Pass out post-it notes and pens. Ensure that no one is working on anything else during the Story Circle. Instruct students to use the paper to jot down brief notes, questions, or observations while they listen.
- c. Start with the first volunteer and have them read their entire story aloud. The facilitator may also choose to go first, as a way to model and share alongside the students.
- d. After the reading is complete, ask students to share their feedback one by one.
- e. Someone should be taking notes on this, or it should be recorded and transcribed after class.
  - Allow the student who shared to respond to each question.
- f. Suggested feedback questions that the facilitators can ask if the students don't ask them (based on specific points, lines, or words from the story):
  - Was there ever a time when you \_\_\_\_?
  - You said \_\_\_\_ take us there.
  - What does \_\_\_\_ mean?
  - How would you capture the idea of \_\_\_\_ in a still photo?
  - What does this story mean to you?
  - What kind of feedback are you looking for?
  - What kind of music are you imagining goes with this story?
  - You use the word \_\_\_\_ a lot. Can you try to tell the story without that word so your listeners can realize it on their own?
  - When people hear this story, what message do you want them to get from it?
  - What title do you have in mind for your digital story?
  - Would you agree that you are flourishing at [school name]?

# In-Person Steps

## PART 4: Closing (10 min)

**01.** Reflection: Invite students to share one takeaway or feeling from today's session. This can either be done out loud, or students can write in an online survey or on a sticky note and hand it in to the facilitator.

a. Prompt options:

- What are you leaving with today?
- What moment or story stuck with you?



## Assignments

- Students may wish to work on revisions to their stories based on the feedback they received during the Story Circle. Remind participants to take their stories in whichever direction they want following the story prompt, and not to worry about the length of their draft stories at this stage in the process.
- Optional: have students select or take one or two photographs that they may want to use in their digital stories. These photographs will be used in the next lesson.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- To accommodate different group sizes and comfort levels, consider breaking the Story Circle into multiple sessions if the group is large.
- Offer flexible sharing options—students may read their stories aloud, have a facilitator read on their behalf, or submit pre-recorded audio if they prefer not to share live.
- For feedback, allow students to share written comments instead of speaking aloud to give them more comfort or processing time.
- Recording or transcribing the Story Circle can help students revisit ideas and feedback later.
- Finally, when meeting in person, adjust the physical setup by forming semi-circles or smaller circles to maintain a sense of connection and intimacy, particularly in large or mixed-ability groups.

# Writers Workshop Part 3

1-1.5 HOURS

## Guiding Question

- 01.** What makes writing clear, powerful, and meaningful for a digital story?

## Summary

Prepare written narratives for digital production/storytelling by editing for clarity, structure, and audio/visual impact.

## Materials

- Feedback protocol handout or slide from Unit 1 Lesson 4

## Preparation before class begins

- Identify a photo that you want to share during the ice breaker. Select one that is not too personal but that can be symbolic or generate meaningful connection.
- Set up the room in a way that allows for dyads to work together.



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# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (15 min)

#### 01. Welcome students

- a. Welcome students to the day and refresh the big-picture goals.
- b. Check in with students as they come in to see how they are doing in general and in relation to the project, asking where they might need help with the project.

#### 02. Agenda

- a. Share the flow of the day with students. You might write it on the board or display it visually:
  - Icebreaker: Photo connection
  - Writers Workshop #3 (edit and revise for final digital story)
  - Group share and reflection

#### 03. Photo Connection

- a. Photo Connection: Invite students to share one or two photos that they are considering using in their digital story. They can either bring them to class, as assigned in the previous lesson, or you can give them several minutes to look through their photo album and select a couple.

## PART 2:

### Writers Workshop (edit and revise for final digital story) (45 min)

**Overview:** This session helps students shift from thinking about their story as a written piece to preparing it as a spoken, visual digital story. Through analysis of a model story, mini-lessons on editing for voice and visuals, peer feedback, and solo revision time, students refine their drafts with performance, pacing, and imagery in mind. The goal is to make their stories sound natural when spoken aloud, convey vivid imagery, and prepare for the next step—storyboarding and recording. A whole group reflection at the end supports integration and helps students identify their final steps toward a polished digital story.

#### 01. Digital story dive in (5-7 min)

- a. Show a short (1–2 min) digital story, preferably one with a clear narrative arc and voice-over.
- b. Ask:
  - What do you notice about how the story is told visually?
  - What role does the narration play?
  - How is this different from just reading the story?
- c. After going through this story say: “Today we aren’t just editing for grammar, we are editing for the story to be performed visually and audibly.”

# In-Person Steps

## 02. Mini-lesson editing for digital storytelling

- a. Present the success criteria that were co-created in Lesson 2 and discuss with students. This is a good overview for students to remind them of what constitutes a high-quality digital story.
- b. Now, create a chart for editing and revising the story to prepare it to be spoken out loud as a voice over for the digital story. This includes:
  - Sounds natural being spoken aloud
  - Is concise (no longer than 2-3 minutes when spoken aloud)
  - Has visually compelling elements
  - Organized by scene (think moments in the story)

## 03. Script read aloud and mark-up

- a. Review the feedback protocol from Lesson 4.
- b. Have students read their stories aloud to themselves.
  - They will highlight or mark:
    - Anything that feels awkward or clunky
    - Sentences that are too long for audio
    - Parts where visual might replace a narration

## c. Some guiding questions for editing and revising:

- What's working well? What do I want to hear more of?
- What part confused me or needs clarity?
- Does the introduction set the stage for the rest of the story?
- Is the ending satisfying or am I left with questions?
- Are the transitions smooth?
- Is there any place that a bit more detail would be helpful?

## d. Students read their story to a partner two times each.

- After the first read they will workshop their first highlights in Step 1 and then add any more feedback that their partner might have for them.
- They then switch roles.

## 04. Solo edit and revision time

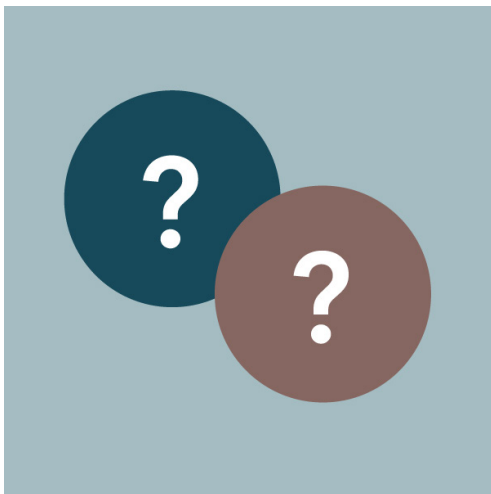
- a. Give students time to go back and create the final edits and revisions for their story to prepare them for their storyboard.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### Whole group reflection and closing (10 min)

01. Reflection questions to share as a whole group:
  - a. What changed in your story when you thought about it as a digital story vs. written story?
  - b. What do you still need to do to prepare your story for recording next week?



## Assignments

- Students complete final edits and revisions to their digital story scripts.
- Students continue to gather visual elements for their story.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- To support student comfort and engagement, provide options for participation and expression. Students who feel uncomfortable reading aloud may practice silently first or record themselves instead. Encourage multiple modes of expression—such as visuals, annotations, or brief written notes—to supplement storytelling and help students communicate ideas in ways that feel natural to them.
- When incorporating peer work, pair students flexibly, mixing strong and developing writers to build confidence and collaboration.
- Offer prompts or sentence starters to guide feedback for students who may need additional structure during peer review or discussion.

# Storyboarding

1-1.5 HOURS

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** What is a storyboard?
- 02.** What is the core message or takeaway of your digital story?
- 03.** How will your storyboard reflect the core message of your digital story?

## Summary

Students will transform their written narratives into storyboards in preparation for creating their digital stories. They will break their narrative into scenes and plan their visuals, voice-overs, sounds, videos, and pacing for the story. They will collaborate and give feedback on the storyboard drafts.

## Materials

- Printed or digital storyboard templates (3–6 frames per page)
- Student story drafts (final or near-final)
- Pencils, pens, colored markers
- Laptops/tablets (optional, for digital storyboarding using Canva, Adobe Express, Keynote, etc.)
- Example storyboard (optional: teacher-created or from a known digital story)
- Projector or whiteboard



# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Connecting (15 min)

#### 01. Welcome students

- a. Welcome students to the day and refresh the big-picture goals.

#### 02. Agenda

- a. Share the flow of the day with students. You might write it on the board or display it visually:
  - Connection
  - Storyboard Workshop
  - Group share and reflection

#### 03. Photo Connection

- a. Explain that there are many different learning styles – some of us make connections better with visual cues, some with auditory cues, some with hands-on experience, and some with text or words.
- b. Have the students consider an image, phrase, photo, song, or movement that captures the mood of their digital story or the process of creating their digital story. Allow students 5-10 minutes to create or find their artifact.
- c. Go around the room and have students share what they chose and give a brief explanation of why they chose it.

## PART 2:

### Writers Workshop (edit and revise for final digital story) (45 min)

**Overview:** In this lesson, students will begin transforming their written digital stories into visual narratives by creating a storyboard. They will learn how to break their story into key scenes, consider how visuals and narration work together, and plan for timing, emotion, and pacing. Through this process, students will organize their ideas, identify what the audience will see and hear, and prepare their story for the next phase: recording and editing. The goal is to bring clarity and intentionality to how their story will be experienced as a multimedia piece.

#### 01. Framing

- a. Orient student to the task: “Now that your story draft is written, the next step is visualizing how it will come to life through images, videos, sounds and audio. Today you’ll begin to transform your written story into a visual script using a storyboard. This will help you prepare to record your voice-over and choose the images or video clips for your final piece.”
- b. Define storyboarding as a planning tool used in film, animation, and multimedia storytelling.
- c. Emphasize that storyboards don’t have to be artistically perfect—stick figures and simple shapes are fine.

# In-Person Steps

## 02. Mini-lesson:

What makes a good storyboard?

- a. Discuss how digital stories are composed of scenes or moments (e.g., a turning point, a memory, a description).
- b. Model breaking one paragraph from a sample story into a few storyboard frames.
- c. Think aloud: “What will the viewer see during this part? What will they hear? What emotion is this moment carrying?”
  - You might want to have these written or on slides for students to refer back to when they move into independent work time.

## 03. Independent work:

Storyboarding your story

- a. Distribute [storyboard templates](#).
- b. Students reread their story silently and begin dividing it into 6–10 key moments.
- c. For each frame, they will:
  - Sketch or describe the visual
  - Write the part of the narration that goes with that scene
  - Include any notes about sound, music, or transitions

## d. Ask guiding questions:

- What does the audience see here?
- Are you showing or telling in this frame?
- Is the pace working?

## 04. Partner share/Feedback

- a. Students pair up and share part of their storyboard.
- b. Prompt them to ask:
  - What do you understand about my story from these visuals?
  - Do the visuals and narration feel connected?



# In-Person Steps

## PART 3: Closing (10 min)

### 01. Invite students to reflect:

- a. “What did you notice about your story once you started visualizing it?”
- b. “Which part of your story are you most excited to bring to life?”
- c. “What questions do you still have about turning this into a digital story?”

### 02. Preview next steps: recording voice-overs, gathering images, and editing

## Assignments

- Students should finish their storyboard if not completed in class.
- Optional: Have students submit a photo or digital copy of their storyboard for feedback.
- Students can start gathering images or audio clips they might want to use in their digital stories.
- Students should rehearse reading their story aloud with storyboard pacing in mind.

## Modifications & Virtual Adaptations

- This lesson allows for visual and creative flexibility—students’ storyboards do not need to be perfect; simple sketches, stick figures, or icons are all acceptable.
- Students may choose to create their storyboards digitally (e.g., using Canva) rather than on paper if that format better supports their learning style or the virtual setting.
- To support all learners, provide scaffolded guidance such as a sample storyboard or a partially completed template that models how to break a story into scenes.
- Offer sentence starters or guiding prompts to help students describe narration, visuals, or sound in each frame, along with a checklist to support pacing, emotion, and transitions.
- For accessibility, students who find drawing challenging can describe their visuals in words or use collage-style images, while those with language or writing challenges may record audio notes or voice memos to capture their ideas.

# Storyboard Template

## Digital Storytelling Workshop

How to use this template:

01.

Add key sections of your story in separate rows in column 2.
02.

Add a text description of the elements you plan to use in your digital story in column 3. Elements may include imagery, photos, text on screen, and background music.
03.

You can start to upload files into your shared folder at any time. We will be covering file naming conventions and folder organization soon. Imagery should be horizontal, not vertical, and should not be obtained from social media accounts because these platforms recompress images and they look pixelated on screen in a digital story.
04.

Add additional rows as needed.

This is just one way to visually organize your ideas into a storyboard. You can use a different template or organization system as long as the order of shots, key sections of story, and media descriptions are included.

| Order of shots | Key sections of story | Media descriptions |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|                |                       |                    |
|                |                       |                    |
|                |                       |                    |
|                |                       |                    |



# Unit 2: Content Creation

## UNIT OVERVIEW

### Lesson 1:

Recording the Voice-over  
**20-30 minutes**

### Lesson 3:

Folder Organization  
**20-30 minutes**

### Lesson 5:

Creating the Credits Page  
**10 minutes**

### Lesson 2:

Using Photography  
**20-30 minutes**

### Lesson 4:

Using Music & Audio  
**20-30 minutes**

**TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:**  
**4.0 hours minimum**



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# Recording the Voice-over

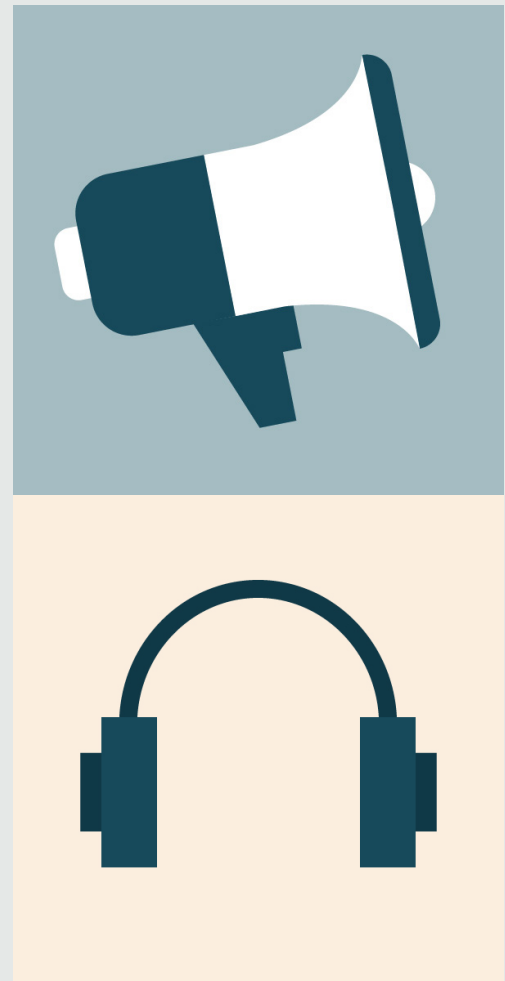
20-30 MINUTES

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** How can we maximize the reading of our stories in our voice-over recording?
- 02.** What are some basic dos and don'ts in recording the voice-over?

## Summary

This mini-lesson shares practical tips for students as they prepare to record their voice-overs clearly, confidently, and expressively to center emotional impact and clarity of their digital stories.



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## Materials

- Headphones for all students
- Voice recording equipment.  
Two options:
  - A microphone that connects to a laptop via USB or USB-C
  - A microphone that connects via XLR to a digital recorder such as the Zoom 4hn Pro
- Sample recording kit contents:
  - Microphone
  - Microphone stand
  - XLR cable to connect microphone to audio recorder
  - Digital audio recorder
  - Card for audio recorder
  - SD card, card reader, cable
  - Spare batteries for microphone and audio recorder
  - Carrying case for the kit

## Facilitation Tips

The voice-over for the digital story is an audio file of the student reading their story aloud. You will need to determine the best way to create these recordings in your setting. You will want to find a very quiet space for the recording. A sound studio or sound-proof location is ideal, but if that is not available to you, think about location and time of day for the best results.

It's often best to have a facilitator work one-on-one with each student for the recording, so the student can focus on reading, and the facilitator can focus on the hardware and on giving feedback. Students will often require several takes to get the recording right, so patience is key! Additional tips include:

- Normalize imperfection—recording is a vulnerable practice.
- Encourage students to find their natural voice, not a “performance” voice.
- Offer quiet zones or allow recordings outside workshop time if needed.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Introduction: Why voice matters (5 min)

- 01.** Whole group discussion question:  
Why do you think voice-overs are such an important part of a digital story?
- 02.** Play one or two short audio clips selected from a digital story from [page 6 of the Facilitator's Guide](#).
- 03.** Ask: What do you notice? What styles of voice-overs make you feel more connected to the story? Which ones make you feel more disconnected? Why?
- 06.** Multiple takes are okay – You're not expected to get it perfect on the first try.
- 07.** Speak as if you are chatting with a friend – Use an informal/conversational voice to record your story.
- 08.** Ideally the voice we capture is one that sounds like you are talking and not reading.
- 09.** If you mess up a line, take a breath and start that line over.

## PART 2:

### Voice recording tips (5-7 min)

- 01.** Pace yourself – Speak slowly and clearly; pauses matter.
- 02.** Warm up first – Take a few deep breaths, try a tongue twister, or read a sentence aloud a few times. Have a bottle of water nearby in case you experience dry mouth while recording.
- 03.** Use emotion, not drama – Let your natural tone reflect the feelings of your story.
- 04.** Mark your script – Add symbols or notes for pauses, emphasis, or breath.
- 05.** Record in a quiet space – Background noise can be distracting. Use headphones with a mic if possible.

## PART 3:

### Practice activity (10 min)

- 01.** Students choose a short 3–4 sentence section of their story. They will mark it up for emotion, pacing, and pauses.
- 02.** Students pair up and practice reading their passage aloud expressively.



# In-Person Steps

## **PART 4:** **Recording the voice-over** **(10-20 min per student)**

When students are ready to record their voice-over, follow the steps below.

- 01.** Bring two printed copies of the story script – one for the reader and one for the audio recorder to follow along.
- 02.** Connect cables to microphone and digital recorder; select proper input.
- 03.** Place microphone in the stand and power up microphone and recorder; if appropriate turn on phantom power for those microphones that require it.
- 04.** Confirm that sounds made in microphone are reaching the headphones and that you are receiving sound through the headphones.
- 05.** Read the script out loud, reviewing for flow and impact. Make any final changes needed. If many changes are made on the printed copy, print two updated copies of the script before proceeding.
- 06.** Press “record”. With headphones, check and adjust the audio levels. While the storyteller reads the first three lines, move the microphone closer or farther from the storyteller as needed. The recommended distance between the storyteller’s mouth and microphone is 6 inches.
- 07.** Keep the recording going as you adjust audio levels. Make sure you’re adjusting levels of the recording, not the headphone volume. Optimum levels are around -12 to -6 without hitting the 0, which may cause clipping or blowing out.
- 08.** Review these tips with storyteller before they read the script:
  - Use a conversational voice to record your story
  - Put emotion and feeling in your voice, but avoid excessive dramatic readings
  - If you mess up a line, take a breath and start that line over
  - You may be asked to read the script several times to ensure there are a variety of options to edit the video
- 09.** After you finish recording, press stop to end the recording and turn off the recorder.
- 10.** Remove the media card and put the card in a protective case.
- 11.** If changes were made to the script, it would be a good idea for the student to make those revisions in their digital file.

## Optional Extension

Watch videos of other digital stories to dive in deeper on the voice-over.

# Using Photography

20-30 MINUTES

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** How can we visually tell our stories through photographs and other imagery (drawings, paintings, collage)?
- 02.** What feelings, memories, and sensibilities do different photographs evoke for us?
- 03.** Which photographs are right for my story?
- 04.** What are the best practices for photography?

## Summary

In this mini-lesson, students will learn basic photography concepts for maximizing the photographs that they use in their digital stories.

## Materials

- Most students will feel comfortable using their mobile phone's camera for taking photos. However, that may not be an option for all, so we recommend having a few digital cameras available for students who may need them.

**Optional:** Adapt [Bryan Wee's photography slides for Digital Storytelling](#).

## Facilitation Tip

Encourage play and fun with photography. Position students as experts, as they likely use photography all the time.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Introduction (1 min)

Write on the board or a slide:

#### 01. Photos can:

- Capture a moment
- Provide a perspective
- Help us relive a memory
- Convey emotion
- Reflect a particular reality

## PART 2:

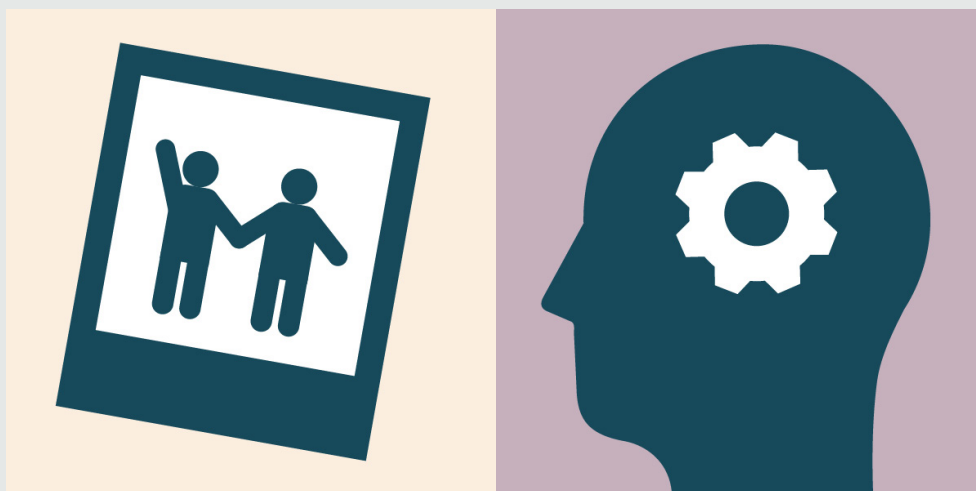
### Activity: What do you notice? (5-10 min)

#### 01. Show a few photos and have students share:

- What do you notice about the photo?
- What do you like or dislike?
- What stands out and why?

#### 02. If these photos are connected to a digital story, then you can play the digital story so they can see the effect of the photo in the digital story with the other content pieces. Then, ask:

- What do you notice?
- What do you feel?
- What story is this photo telling?
- What do your photos help you remember or express?



# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### Mini Lecture: Photography 101 (10-15 min)

Share the foundational tips. It would be helpful to find photos (maybe even some of the students' photos from their folders) to show these photography tips.

#### 01. Practice observation

Take a breath and notice what is around you. What draws your attention? What do you notice in your environment?

#### 02. Breathing matters

When pressing the shutter, hold your breath for a steadier shot, especially when using close-up or zoom.

#### 03. Think in emotions

What should the image make you feel, make your viewer feel?

#### 04. Photos reflect perspective

Images are choices that we make, and they are different depending on the person and the vision of the person.

#### 05. Use natural light

Know where the light is coming from. Whenever possible, keep light on your subject, not behind them.

#### 06. Try leading lines

Look for paths, roads, or shadows that draw the viewer's eye through the image.

#### 07. Avoid clutter

Check the background. Simple and clean is often more powerful.

#### 08. Explore angles and abstract

Try shooting from different angles, heights or an unusual perspective. Use the zoom to show texture or an alluring mystery that has the viewer curious about what it is.

#### 09. Use the rule of thirds

- Imagine your frame is divided into thirds. Place key elements along the lines or intersections to make your image more dynamic.
- Some cameras have thirds lines that can be added for guidance.

#### 10. Composition tips

- Use horizontal orientation (landscape). The vertical will have a thick border that doesn't look appealing for the eye.
- You can photograph artwork, collages, or meaningful objects to add variety.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 4:

### Practice Activity (5-10 min)

**01.** Have students look at the photos they've already selected for this project. If they don't have photos in their folders, they can look for one in their personal photos on their phone and/or on the internet (open source) that they might want to use. Prompt them to see if they have a photo that displays the tips above and/or:

- One that shows setting
- One that shows a symbol or object
- One that captures a feeling

## 02. Reflect

- What do these images say without words?
- Do they match the tone or moment of the story?

## Optional Extensions

- Have students go take pictures around campus and share back.
- Go over a few of their photos in the whole group or with a partner.



# Folder Organization

20-30 MINUTES

## Guiding Question

- 01.** How can we organize our folders and content to make our digital film project more manageable?

## Summary

Keeping a digital storytelling project and materials organized will help students focus on their creativity and save time in the long run. Well-labeled folders will make it easy to find what they need and track their progress as they will have different drafts through this process. Additionally, when working on larger projects in the future, on a team or individually, a common organization system will greatly reduce errors in finding documents and materials.

## Materials

- Computer folder system with example files to share

## Facilitation Tip

It is very important that students and facilitators get into the habit of backing up their folders after each class so that potential data loss is minimized.



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# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Introduction: Why organize? (5 min)

#### 01. Prompt students:

- a. Have you ever lost a file and had to start over?
- b. How do you keep track of all your photos, videos, writing drafts, and recordings?
- c. Why might folder organization matter in a project like this?

## PART 2:

### Folders (5 min)

01. Have students create 6 sub-folders in their main folder. The names for the folders and a description of their contents are:

#### a. Writing

- Brainstorming documents
- Story drafts
- Storyboard
- Final script
- Feedback form from peers

#### b. Photos

- Raw images (or drawings, paintings, collage...)
- Edited selections
- Possible backgrounds

#### c. Videos

- Raw footage
- Edited clips
- Background footage

#### d. Audio

- Voice Recordings
- Natural sounds or background music

#### e. Final Project

- Completed digital story file or link
- Companion piece



# In-Person Steps

## PART 3:

### File naming convention (2 min)

- 01.** Explain that all files in each folder should have the same naming convention for ease of finding what you're looking for later.
- 02.** Insert here the naming convention that seems the most fitting.
- 03.** For example: "Lastname\_  
filedescription\_yearmonthday" or  
"Smith\_mountains4\_20250922"

## PART 4:

### Practice activity (10-15 min)

- 01.** Give students time to create folders and label their documents. If they have any questions, they can ask the facilitator at this time.
- 02.** Have students rename all their files (photos, audio files, drafts, etc.) using the new naming convention.
- 03.** Have students move all of their files into the appropriate folders they created in Part 2 of this lesson.
- 04. Optional:** Have students color-code or star important folders and files for easier access.

## Optional Extension

Conduct "folder checks" frequently at the beginning of class in order to reinforce good habits.



# Using Music & Audio

20-30 MINUTES

## Guiding Question

**01.** How does background music contribute to a digital story?

## Summary

This mini-lesson introduces students to utilizing background music to enhance the mood and tone of their digital stories.

## Materials

- Each student should have a computer or phone on which they can listen to music and a pair of headphones that connect to the computer or phone they will be using.
- Only use copyright-free background music tracks. Create and provide a digital file with a list of clickable websites that offer copyright-free music tracks (and encourage students to add to the list if they are familiar with related web pages).

Suggested websites with copyright-free music:

- <https://artlist.io>
- [www.audiolibrary.com.co](http://www.audiolibrary.com.co)
- <https://musopen.org/music>
- <https://pixabay.com>
- <http://dig.ccmixer.org>
- <http://freemusicarchive.org/curator/Video>
- <https://uppbear.io>
- <https://mobygratis.com>
- [YouTube Audio Library](#)

(Must have a YouTube Premium subscription)

## Preparation before class begins

- Decide if you want the inclusion of background music as a requirement of participants' digital stories. In some cases, a participant may design their visual story without the use of background music.
- Review the file types that are allowed by the video editing software that you have selected. For instance, DaVinci Resolve accepts the following file types: WAV, AIFF, MP3, AAC (M4A), and CAF.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Introduction: What do you notice? (5 min)

- 01.** Start by playing 1-2 short clips from digital stories and ask students to reflect with sound and then play the same clips on mute. Then, ask:
  - What role does sound play in the story?
  - How does music or natural audio make you feel?
  - What changes when the video (or background music track) is put on mute?

## PART 2:

### Working with audio: Mini-lecture (15 min)

Share the following foundational tips:

- 01.** Consider using still images from the video editing program that students will be using to help visualize the points or reference examples.
- 02.** Choose instrumental background music with purpose (remind students that music with lyrics will compete with audio voice-overs so it is best to use instrumental music only).
  - What mood are you trying to create?
  - Does the music support your message or distract it?
  - Select one background music piece for each digital story.
  - Background music that is instrumental (without lyrics) works best.

- 03.** Keep it balanced.

Don't let the music overpower your voice or narration. Make sure to reduce the volume of music when you are speaking.

- 04.** Layer sounds.

Combine music and natural sounds (birds or chatter or violin) strategically. Each sound should have a reason to be there.

- 05.** Sync audio with emotion or action.

Use music or sound to enhance a turning point or key moment. Use fading in and out during scene changes or emotional shifts.

- 06.** Silence can be a powerful tool.

A quiet pause can draw attention to something and create an emotional tone.

- 07.** Watch for cacophonous or competing sounds.

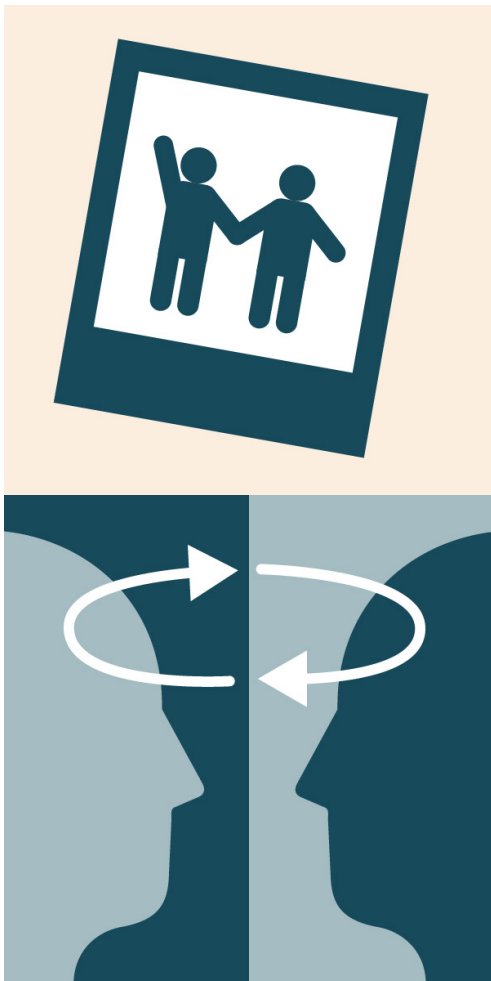
- Try to avoid too many competing sounds.
- What sounds can you take away that can highlight other parts?

- 08.** Make sure to use royalty free, copyright-safe music.

**Very important:** If students use background music tracks obtained from a web page, they should obtain a screenshot of the web page to refer to later when creating text for the closing credits. Screenshots should be named appropriately and placed in the participants' audio folders.

- 09.** One instrumental music track is best for these short videos.

# In-Person Steps



## Optional Practice Activity

After students become familiar with the video editing software (Unit 3 of this toolkit), you can revisit this lesson and hold another mini-lesson with the suggested steps below.

- 01.** Students should bring up a clip or photo and experiment with layering, music, voice, or sounds effects.
  - Try adjusting the volume of each element to find a balance.
  - Record a 10-20 second voiceover for one clip and add background music.
  - Note: If students don't have the clip or don't have access to the video editing software, they can indicate what they want to do on their storyboard.
  - If there is time, have them share and get feedback from a partner to determine next steps.
  - Make sure students export and save their practice to use as a guide for the future.
- 02.** Reflect and share with a partner.
  - How does the sound make the viewer feel?
  - What did you learn about using your voice or choosing music?
  - What would you change or try next time?
  - What are your next steps?

# Creating the Credits Page

10 MINUTES

## Guiding Question

**01.** Who should be credited for our digital stories?

## Summary

A credits page honors the people, places, and materials that supported your story. It's also a way to practice ethical storytelling—by giving proper credit where it's due.

## Materials

- Approved copy from university, funder, or other institutions for credits
- Digital logo files, if necessary
- Optional: you may wish to provide a template of the credits page for the students.

## In-Person Steps

**01.** Ask students:

- Have you ever seen credits roll at the end of a movie?
- Why do you think filmmakers include them?
- What might it feel like to not be named when you contributed to someone else's story?

**02.** Your credit page should include:

- Producer (the student, or they can remain anonymous)
- Collaborators
- Funding (if appropriate)
- Logos (if appropriate)
- Names of folks you want to thank
- Music/photo credits (if appropriate)

**03.** Activity

Have students create their credit page during this lesson. Be sure to provide a handout or template for what is required by the institution, and what is optional.



# Unit 3:

# Film Production

## UNIT OVERVIEW

### Lesson 1:

Video Editing

**4-6 hours**

### Lesson 2:

Video Feedback

**30 minutes**

### Lesson 3:

Creating the Companion Piece  
& Internal Screening

**2 hours**

**TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:**

**6.5-8.5 hours**



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# Video Editing

90 MINUTES IN-PERSON  
4-6 HOURS INDEPENDENT\*

\*Can be divided up into several days

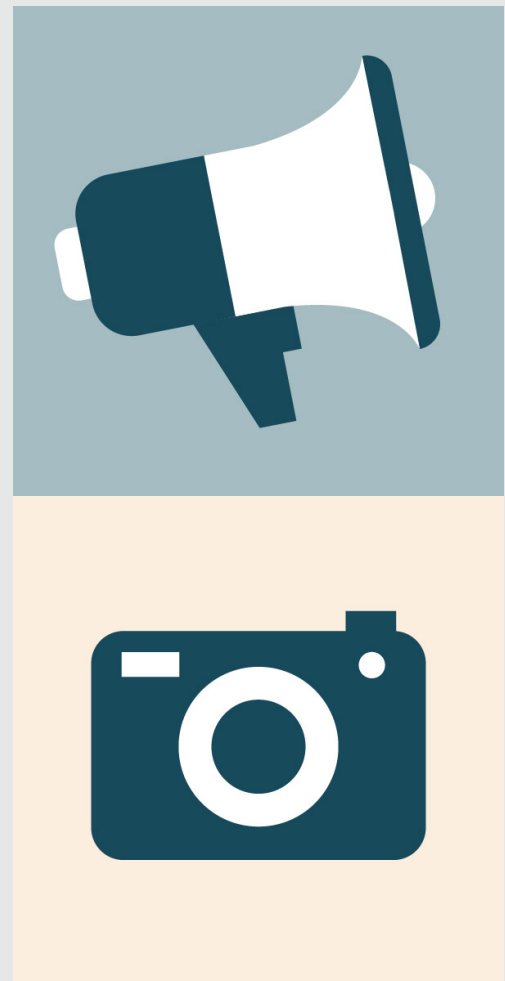
## Guiding Questions

- 01.** What is video editing and why is it important in storytelling?
- 02.** What are the core features shared across most video editing platforms?

## Summary

This lesson introduces students to the fundamentals of video editing software, as well as the process for putting the pieces together to create their digital stories. The lesson will cover importing media (e.g., photographs, background music, text, and logos), creating a sequence (also called timeline), assembling the sequence, making cuts, adding transitions, and exporting video files.

**Please note:** the Digital Storytelling Toolkit is not designed as a video editing curriculum. This lesson and others in this unit are framed to introduce video editing, so students may create their digital stories using the building blocks they have assembled.



## Materials

- Computers with software loaded; one device for each student participant
- Sample video and audio files (can be the content that students have already organized into their folders)
- Video file dimensions of 1920 x 1080 (e.g., HD) recommended
- Projector or screen sharing device for demonstrations
- Wired headphones; bluetooth headphones are not advised
- Students should have their storyboards and access to all of their organized files



## Facilitation Tips

- Keep the pacing slow and check for understanding frequently—video editing software can be overwhelming at first.
- Students will likely have a range of knowledge – use what’s in the room. Consider pairing students who are more tech-comfortable with those who may need extra support.
- Be certain that the software is installed on the computers that the students will be using prior to the session, and that all updates are complete.
- Provide a printed or digital “cheat sheet” with key terms and shortcut keys specific to the software application that the students will be using.
- When the facilitator is teaching new skills, the students should not be on computers or devices. This is important so everyone stays together and so students don’t miss important information if they are experimenting with the tools during the session.
- Encourage exploration and reassure students that hiccups or mistakes are inevitable in this process.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 1:

### Introduction: video editing (5 min)

01. Ask: Has anyone ever done video editing? What programs did you use?
02. Watch a short, well-edited clip (30–60 secs)
03. Group reflection: What stood out in the editing?

## Facilitation Tip

Slow the video down and preview to students the different skills they will be doing in today's lesson and how that shows up in the final edits of a video.



## PART 2:

### Video editing software overview (10 min)

01. Highlight common video editing tools: import, timeline, trim, transitions, audio control, titles, export.

## PART 3:

### Software introduction (15-30 min)

01. Open a new project in the software students will be using.
02. Introduce the workspace, giving a “guided tour” as an overview.
03. Demonstrate how to import audio files and images (once a file is imported do not change the file name or move the file to a different location in the student's folder on the computer. If the file name is changed, the media in the video editing project needs to be relinked).
04. Demonstrate how to create a timeline.
05. Explain how students will use the storyboard as a guide in creating the video.
06. **Important:** all of the video editing works around the voice-over. The voice-over should be uploaded into the project as one of the first steps in the process.

# In-Person Steps

## PART 4:

### Guided hands-on practice

(30–40 min; can take up to 3 hours)

- 01.** Students will begin to work independently at this time, with frequent check-ins with a partner and/or instructors.

**Suggestion:** students can be paired up to support each other. This alleviates some pressure from the facilitator to check to be with multiple students who may need support at once.

- 02.** Pause student work as needed when whole-group instruction is beneficial.

- 03.** Instruct them in the following processes:

- Creating a new project
- Importing media (e.g., audio files, photographs)
- Dragging voice-over to the timeline; most decisions about placement of imagery follow the voice-over
- Dragging imagery to the timeline
- Rearranging media in the timeline, following details in student's storyboard
- Adding transitions and brief breaks between two or three key sections in the story

- Adding the title and credits slides, selecting font type and size and placing text on screen; add institutional and/or project logos as needed
- Placing audio, adding audio transitions, and adjusting audio levels
- Saving and exporting the file

## PART 5:

### Reflection and share out (10 min)

Students reflect on what they learned, guided by the following questions:

- Where are you with your digital storytelling project?
- Do you need any support on a specific skill?
- What will be your focus for the next class?

## Optional Extension

Students may volunteer to share short video clips with the group.

# Additional Information and Guidance

## Basic workflow steps for video creation and editing

- 01.** Create a new project and save project in the student's folder
- 02.** Import voice-over file to timeline
  - Drag from Media Pool to Timeline (in Edit or Cut Page)
- 03.** Import media
  - Drag File > Import > Media or drag files into the Media Pool
- 04.** Add image files to timeline
  - Drag from Media Pool to Timeline (in Edit or Cut Page)
- 05.** Trim and arrange clips
  - Use blade tool (B) to cut, selection tool (A) to move
- 06.** Resize and/or alter placement of images on screen
- 07.** Add transitions and effects
  - Go to Effects Library, drag desired transition between clips
- 08.** Add titles
  - Effects Library > Titles > Drag to timeline
- 09.** Add background music
  - Drag background music file below video track
- 10.** Adjust audio levels
  - Click clip > Adjust volume in inspector or audio mixer
- 11.** Export video
  - Go to Deliver Page, choose format (H.264 for .mp4), click 'Add to Render Queue', then 'Start Render'



# Additional Information and Guidance

## Editing tips for audio files

- 01.** Be sure audio file format is compatible with formats accepted by the editing program.
- 02.** Add transitions at beginning and end of audio (e.g., slight fade up volume and fade down).
- 03.** When background music is added in sequence, ensure that the volume is not too high to make voice-over difficult to hear.
- 04.** The volume of the background music over the title and closing credits sequences should be the same volume as the voice in the main portion of the sequence.

## General film editing tips

- 01.** Save your project every few minutes to avoid loss of work if the program crashes.
- 02.** Do not change file names after files have been imported into the program.



# Video Feedback

30 MINUTES

## Guiding Questions

- 01.** How does the digital story that I am creating land with viewers?
- 02.** What do I like about my story?
- 03.** What do I need to work on to make my story better?

## Summary

In this mini-lesson, student digital storytellers will show all or parts of their draft videos to a partner or small group to obtain actionable feedback to improve their creative work.

## Materials

- Computers, headphones

### Preparation before class begins

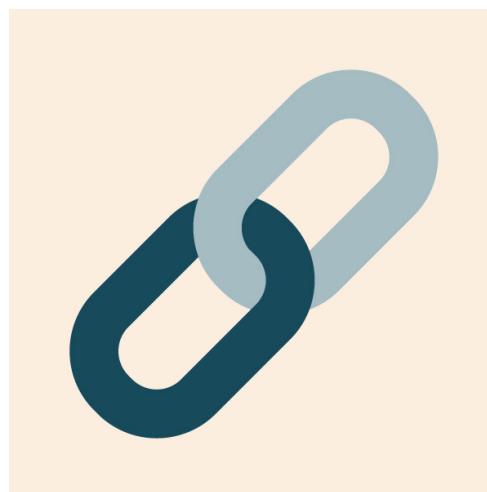
- Each student should have at least a portion of their digital story in a format such as an .mp4 file that is sharable.
- Students will be working with partners or small groups for this activity, and they will need access to the computers where the digital stories are stored, so consider room arrangement with this in mind.
- This mini-lesson can be incorporated into the independent work time in which students are editing their digital stories.



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# In-Person Steps

- 01.** Gather the students and ask for volunteers to share how they are doing with the process of editing their videos. Encourage them to share:
  - a. What parts of this project are joyful and affirming?
  - b. Which editing processes are they having challenges with?
  - c. How is this process of creating a film helping them think about the messages in their story?
  - d. How does this process change the way they think about watching short films?
- 02.** Divide the students into small groups or pairs, attempting to provide each person with a “fresh” set of eyes with which to view their film.
- 03.** Remind students of the Writers Workshop feedback sessions from Unit 1, explaining that this mini-lesson will work much like those sessions. Remind students that these stories and the creation of these films are highly personal, and everyone is likely feeling a degree of vulnerability in sharing a work in progress with their peers.
- 04.** Students will then take turns showing their film (or a portion of it) and receiving feedback from the others. Suggestions for feedback prompts are:
  - a. What I noticed about your film...
  - b. What I appreciate about your film...
  - c. Questions or curiosities I have about your film...
  - d. One or two suggestions for you to consider for your film...
- 05.** Continue this process until everyone has had a chance to share.
- 06.** After the sharing sessions have concluded, encourage students to take some time to write some reflections about the process and how they would like to incorporate the feedback while they continue to work on editing their films.



# Creating the Companion Piece & Internal Screening

2 HOURS

## Guiding Question

- 01.** What are the most meaningful elements of my digital story that can be shared in a one or two-page handout?

## Summary

In this lesson, students will create a companion piece to go along with their digital story. The companion piece is a one- or two-page supplementary document containing images and text, providing an overview and artist statement about the digital story. The companion pieces may be printed and shared at the community showcase event. This lesson can also be converted to an out-of-class assignment, if appropriate in your setting.

## Materials

- Example of a [companion viewing guide](#)
- Template for creating a companion viewing guide (optional)
- Computers with software downloaded and ready for use

## Preparation before class begins

- Students will be using computers with access to their online folders and to a word-processing or desktop publishing software such as Canva.
- Prior to this lesson, the facilitators should determine which components of the companion viewing guide will be required and which ones will be optional.



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# In-Person Steps

## PART 1: Creating a companion guide

- 01.** Share the example companion guide.  
You may do this on the screen for all to see together, or you may print copies of them and pass them out to the group and allow students to review them on their own.
- 02.** Discuss as a group how the companion guide can be an additional source of information for a viewer of the digital story. It can provide background information, discussion questions, and it can be a takeaway piece for audience members so they can remember and revisit the story at a later time.
- 03.** Provide the students with a set of required elements if you choose to do so. A suggested list may include:
  - Header: Name, major, university, and date
  - One line summarizing the digital story
  - Brief description of your digital story with details on how your story represents flourishing
  - Three representative images from your digital story
  - One compelling quote from your story
  - Acknowledgements



# In-Person Steps

## PART 2: Private film screening for the group (can be done on a different day)

**Overview:** The closing activities of this project include an internal (private) film screening, and in some cases, organizers may also plan for a public showcase or screening. The internal screening, described here, is only for class members and facilitators. If there will be a public showcase, students and facilitators can invite friends, family members, other faculty, and other interested parties (see [page 14 of the Facilitator's Guide](#) for more information about planning a public showcase).



- 01.** For the internal screening, prepare the space such that students do not have any distractions, and so the digital stories can be projected onto a central screen in the room.
- 02.** Screen each digital story one at a time and invite the group to offer feedback and words of reflection after each of the stories. Some suggested prompts are:
  - How did viewing this completed story make you feel?
  - What emotions or thoughts did it bring up for you?
  - In what ways can you relate to this story?
  - What is one new thing that you learned about this person from their story?
  - Optional: provide note cards to students after each digital story is shared for people to write messages to the student who created the story.
  - Provide copies of each student's companion guide.
- 03.** In closing, thank the students for their participation, and discuss next steps for the stories, including details about the public showcase if applicable.

## “Growing Through Stillness”

October 2025

Jane Doe, Producer

University of Colorado Boulder,  
Nutrition Major

Anticipated graduation date: May 2027

***This digital story is about finding  
strength and self-connection through  
mindfulness after burnout.***

### Brief Description & Flourishing Connection:

In *Growing Through Stillness*, I share how learning to pause transformed the way I move through challenges. After a semester of overwhelm and self-doubt, mindfulness practices helped me reconnect with what matters: my values, my community, and my sense of purpose. My story highlights how flourishing isn't about constant productivity, but about creating space to breathe, notice, and grow from within.

### Compelling Quote:

“When I finally slowed down, I realized I wasn't falling behind. I was finally arriving.”

### Representative Images:



### Acknowledgements:

Thank you to my mindfulness class at CU Boulder for encouraging me to share my story and reminding me that stillness is strength. I also want to thank the facilitators of the Digital Storytelling Workshop for providing me with the tools and teaching me the skills to share my story.



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University of Colorado **Boulder**

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