



# DS Guide training manual on Digital Storytelling

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"How to use the tools"- Guide for authors and trainers in how to use the DS on European enlargement topics

DeTALES team  
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# DIGITAL STORYTELLING

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## Section 1 Introduction

digital storytelling

Stimulating stories on EU-enlargement topics

Why choose digital stories as the method to deliver EU-enlargement topics?

Introduction:

Digital Storytelling has gathered some momentum globally since 2003, when the BBC organised the first international conference in DS, in Cardiff, Wales. The reach of DS, in terms of styles of delivery and the applications for which the form is used has led to some interesting worldwide developments and resources. There are now a number of DS manuals and training guides, freely downloadable, [click here](#) for a list of links. However, due to the variety of methods now used, they can be somewhat contradictory. For this training manual, specific reference is made to the BBC 'short form' technique developed by Daniel Meadows and the Capture Wales team. The formula here is to produce a personal narrative story of about two minutes, using a collection of the storyteller's own photographs. Video clips are usually avoided, unless central to the story, as is music, unless it has a relevant link to the story or the storyteller.

There are several methods by which to conduct DS activities: in class as part of a formal curriculum, in workshops over a specified timescale, individually/recreationally and on a commissioned basis. This manual will focus on DS in a workshop setting.

The Detales project advocates the use of 'low cost' technologies for the purposes of producing DS. Within a European context, 'low cost' is difficult to define, so the project team has taken as its starting point, European residents with an 'average' amount to spend on equipment. The inventory varies from one partner to another, but each group's kit list is included in the manual, with an approximate cost in Euros.

A choice has been made in writing this manual to avoid creating tutorials for specific pieces of software, partly because software changes constantly and therefore manuals become quickly outdated, and partly because our partners want the flexibility to use software available in their own countries, so to produce a number of tutorials would be too time consuming and costly. However, there are links to specific tutorials online and they are signposted within this manual.

## Section 2 How to use this part of the manual

This part of the manual bears reference to and makes links with much good practice in the production of DS around the world. The intention of this manual is to signpost good practice and share a number of practical tools for workshop trainers and storytellers in producing their own stories. Rather than being a single volume to be printed and referenced, this section is designed to be an active document, which dynamically offers tools, guidance and examples of other's work and perspectives from the world of digital storytelling. It contains freely downloadable, printable resources and links to support the production of DS within the context of the Detales project.

## Section 3 Stimulating stories on EU-enlargement topics

See activities at the end of module 1

## Section 3 Tools for digital storytellers

Quick Start Guide [to follow](#)

Links to free training manuals and resources [click here](#)

Script template [to follow](#)

Storyboard template [to follow](#)

Mouse mat/ print out of important DS settings [click here](#)

#### Section 4 Tools for Trainers

[The Digital Storytelling process explained](#)

[Choosing the right environment for the workshop to follow](#)

[The Storytelling Circle session](#)

Sample Scheme of work for a DS workshop [click here](#)

Equipment lists from the Detales project [to follow](#)

### **The Digital Storytelling process explained**

There is more than one model for the DS process. [Click here](#) to view a variety of styles and methodologies. But in simple terms, the DS process follows the path illustrated below:

Let's take each section in more detail here:

1: Briefing. Often known as the gathering, where potential storytellers are introduced to the concepts, processes and some examples of DS. This is a chance for storytellers to mix with each other and with their trainers. The atmosphere should be collaborative and informal, efforts must be made to allay any storyteller's fears about what lies ahead, and they should have the space to ask any questions about what is required of them. In this session it is important to demystify any issues surrounding DS, like the fear that their ideas for stories aren't very good, or that their skills/ confidence are lacking. Important areas to cover in the briefing:

- Exploring the elements of a DS
- Clear explanation of the process and timescale involved
- Advanced notification of requirements for the coming sessions i.e. when to write a script, bring in photos etc.
- Basic but essential legal/ copyright advice
- Introduce the signing-off process

2: Writing. Normally the writing process starts with a 'story circle'. This session is designed to bond storytellers as a group and to tease out of them their innate powers of storytelling. The story circle can be tailored to suit variable time slots between 2 and 4 hours. The ultimate goal is to get scripts drafted and finalised ready for voice recording. The three underlying principles of the story circle are:

- everybody gets involved (including trainers, technicians, observers etc.)
- nobody is allowed to apologise for their lack of understanding, ability or confidence
- what is said in the story circle, stays within the room i.e. confidential

There are a number of activities involved in the story circle and they are covered in the next section. These activities can be time-consuming, so trainers tend to pick a selection, depending on the time allowed.

[Click here](#) to see some important tips on how to get the most out of the story. At the end of the story circle, every storyteller should know the subject of their story and ideally a first draft should be typed up ready to read. In the case of any storyteller who has difficulty reading, there are alternative options to consider, like producing an interview-generated narrative. Once again, by the end of the story circle, these storytellers should be content with the method they will use and the focus of the interview.

The final aspect of this phase is the creation of a storyboard for the piece. As an approximate rule, one image per sentence is recommended. This organises the storyteller and highlights any areas in the script where there may be missing images. Often storytellers find that in their mind's eye they have all the pictures they need to tell a story, but the storyboard quickly tells them they may have several images to cover one sentence, and nothing to cover the rest of the the film! A template for a storyboard can be [found here](#)

3: Recording. This is the point at which the technical aspects of DS begin. Both the technical quality and the 'feel' of the voice recording are vital to the success of a DS. Some skill and judgment is required by the trainer to pick the right room and to settle the storyteller ready for the recording. [Click here](#) for a full account from a professional sound recordist.

Included in the 'recording' phase is the capturing of images and the gathering of any music track or sound effects. Many of the pictures used in a DS may only be available as photos, so they will need to be scanned, or photographed using a digital camera. It is becoming regular practice to download photos from the internet, from social networking sites and the like. There are two important considerations here:

1: the image sizes and resolutions

2: copyright

For the appropriate image size and resolution for a DS, [click here](#).

For information about copyright and legal issues, [click here](#) or [here \(pages 16-21\)](#).

4: Editing. There are several forms of editing required to produce a DS:

- the recorded voiceover track needs to be gapped and mistakes removed
- photographs need to be edited, especially if they have been scanned
- the edited soundtrack, edited photos and titles are combined to create an edit of the DS.

It is easy to underestimate the amount of work that goes into an edit. It's predominantly a technical process but the creative aspects are crucial to the production of a successful story. There are some magnificent moments during a DS edit, when the elements start to come together and tiny changes make massive improvements. Once the edit is finished, the DS is exported as a completed movie file, for sharing.

5: Sharing. Storytelling is a multidirectional process, so every story should be shared. Some DS are too personal to be put out to a wider audience but the rest, which accounts for the absolute majority should be made available for people to see. Three ways to share stories are:

- Burn a DVD and show family and friends
- Put them on a website, like Detales, Vimeo or YouTube
- Hold a screening event for a batch of stories and invite guests to marvel at your work

## Choosing the right environment for the workshop

Less than a decade ago, to organise a DS workshop meant using a centre with specialist IT equipment, sound recording facilities, technical support personnel and quite possibly an in-house photographer or TV professional to ensure everything ran smoothly. Due to the digital revolution, the situation is a little less specialised these days, but in order to work effectively and efficiently, some of the skills employed by our predecessors are still vital elements of the DS process, like choosing the right environments to work in. These areas are:

1. Venue for the briefing
2. Venue for the storytelling circle
3. Sound recording space
4. Venue for the editing of stories
5. Venue for screening

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, so to a certain extent, the workshop environment is likely to be predetermined by external, institutional factors but there are a number of issues to consider carefully when planning a workshop. Always check out the rooms that will be used for the workshop in advance and try to change rooms that simply won't work.

1. For the briefing, any space where the trainer can show stories to their true potential is acceptable. Always check that the sound is clear at the back of the room and the image on the screen can clearly be seen by all. Avoid bright rooms with sunlight blazing in and noisy spaces, because the aim of this session is to inspire new storytellers, not have them wondering what is going on.
2. The storytelling circle environment must be a closed space in order to work best, free from all interruptions besides emergencies. Participants should be able to sit comfortably around the right number of tables for the group size, in a way that everyone can see each other. It needn't be a circle at all, a rectangle or square is fine. Avoid rooms with noisy corridors outside and external visual distractions. The last thing one wants in a story circle is half the participants watching a delivery to the building next door!
3. The recording space is so important and requires some experimentation for best results. Try to pick a room with plenty of soft furnishings, like curtains and carpets and without much visible wall space. This will reduce echos. As a test, clap your hands and listen for the echo. In a perfect situation, you shouldn't notice the echo at all. Also, listen for outside noises, like a nearby road, or pedestrians, or people talking. Anything you can hear, the microphone can hear and audible distractions on a DS soundtrack can ruin the story. One useful idea is to record the voiceover in a modern car. Providing it is parked in a quiet place and the doors are shut, the

acoustic environment in a car can be excellent for DS. Always do a test recording and scrutinise it carefully for clarity and quality.

4. Nowadays, using laptops for DS editing means that they can be used effectively almost anywhere, a complete contrast to just a few years ago. However, for the sake of giving software tutorials, choose an environment with a data projector, where all storytellers can see the screen and the trainer can see all the storytellers computer screens.
5. quite often, the venue for the briefing would be acceptable for the screening of the stories, but if large numbers of family and friends are invited, then a room with the appropriate projection facilities will be required.

Helping the storytellers get through the process.

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

## The Storytelling Circle

An important part of any workshop is ensuring all participants are happy to share stories with others. The Storytelling Circle introduces story games which help break the ice for any new group and allow people to get to know each other. Some people come to a workshop with no real idea of the story they may tell, or perhaps feel they have nothing of interest to say. The storytelling circle and games are not only a fun way start to a workshop but also boost participants' confidence and may provide them with an idea for their own story. For those participants that already have an idea for their own story, the storytelling circle gives them an opportunity to not only share their idea with the group but to also pick up ideas from other people's methods of communication, thereby improving their own story. The key focus of this session is to arrive at a place where all the participants are able to finalise their scripts, ready to record their voices, so the clock is ticking and the trainer must be aware of this throughout.

### **Setting the Scene**

It is important that the room used is fairly quiet and private, so that the participants can feel isolated from interruption. The Trainer should arrange the seating in a circle in the room so that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. The Trainer leads and takes part in the story games, helps boost individual confidence and provides feedback at the end of the session. Everyone should be made to feel at ease and the atmosphere should not be pressurised. There should be no technology visible around the table; no computers, mobile phones (switched off), or digital recording devices of any kind.

### **Props for the Storytelling Circle:**

#### **The Trainer should provide**

Pens and paper

A Flipchart (game 3)

A bag containing household objects (game 4)

A box of matches and a glass of water (game 9)

**The Storyteller should provide**

An object of significance to them – this may be a photograph, which could possibly be used to tell a story.

A draft of a script for their own story, printed out.

**The Games**

The word ‘game’ should be used with caution at the start of the storytelling circle, as some participants can feel intimidated, threatened or just turned off by the idea of playing games. Once the confidence of the group has developed, then the word can be introduced more. The first three activities below are ice breakers and a way for the group to start to get to know one another. They help conquer nerves and make people aware that everyone has a story to tell. All the games should be fun and not competitive. There are far more games below than are needed for a single storytelling circle, so pick a collection and give it a go! For example, the author recently ran a short storytelling circle for the Detales project and chose numbers 3, 6 and 10 from the list below. The activity had 13 participants and took 2 hours.

**1. Interview the person next to you (ice breaker)**

This is a useful way of getting to know people within the group and helps provide more information about them than would normally be gleaned if people introduced themselves. It is easier to share information about someone else than it is to talk about yourself. This interview is a good way for the group to relax and feel confident enough to tell their story.

**2. Remembering Names (ice Breaker)**

This game is particularly well suited for a younger age range workshop.

One member of the group introduces themselves and provides one fact of interest they wish to share, the person sitting next to them then repeats this information and adds their own introduction and shared item. By the time the last person is reached there will be a lot to remember – the Trainer may choose this role for themselves.

Example: John says *“your name is Mary and you like golfing, you’re Pete and play the drums, you’re Janet and you make fancy dress outfits and my name is John and I don’t like spiders”*.

**3. Nonsense Word Game (ice breaker)**

This is a useful game for teaching people the art of creating a story out of a selection of non connected words. Each member of the group is asked to write a word onto a piece of paper – nouns or ‘naming’ words work very well. For those that struggle writing words, drawing a picture is equally effective. The Trainer then collects the paper and transfers all the words and pictures onto a flipchart. Each participant then creates a story using all the words on the chart which they then read out to the group. There will rarely be two the same. The quality of the stories is irrelevant, in fact, the more off the wall the better! This game is good for loosening up the participants and making them all feel that they can make a valued contribution.

Example: **Apple, glasses, clock, long, car, pink, wood, shoe.**

Mrs Wood glanced at the clock and was relieved to see that she only had another ten minutes before the school bell rang. She was eager to eat the pink lady apple that she had found rolling around in the back of her car along with the shoe she’d lost earlier in the week and her purse that unfortunately had no money in it. She looked at the apple and wondered how long it had been there for. She was starving and with no money had little choice but to eat it. *“Perhaps the time has come for a trip to the opticians”* she said to herself, *“maybe I need glasses”*.

**4. Mystery Objects**

Each member of the group is asked to randomly choose an item from the memory bag provided by the Trainer. They are then asked to share the memories or feelings that the object conjures up. If a member of the group cannot think of anything to say, choosing something different may make things easier for them. The Trainer should provide help and encouragement when needed so that everyone is able to connect with the item.

Objects may include: **a toy car, a remote control, a watering can, a tin of soup, a train ticket**, anything that may evoke memories.

The Trainer should point out which parts of the story work well and asking questions may help to reveal themes of interest that the storyteller may wish to explore.

Example:

The storyteller chooses the train ticket from the bag.

*“This reminds me of a trip I made to Edinburgh when I was little. I was excited about going because I’d never been to Scotland before. We spent a lovely day visiting the Castle and watching tartan cloth being made. My Dad ordered Haggis at lunchtime because it was a Scottish delicacy but he didn’t like it”.*

The Trainer asks questions about the visit and how they got home.

The storyteller is able to add:

*“We got the train home but were very delayed because the man in the seat opposite became ill and had to be taken to hospital. My Dad and I stayed with him on the journey because he was travelling alone. Our trip to Scotland lasted longer than we thought”.*

Careful questioning by the Trainer reveals a more interesting aspect to the story.

#### **5. A childhood toy or game**

This can reveal a lot about the storyteller. Allowing them to dwell on childhood helps expand the memories and emotions that were important in shaping the way their lives have become. It may show a rebellious streak, a passive nature, the adventurer, the leader of the pack or perhaps illustrate that for the older generation toys were not that easy to come by and so were very precious.

Example:

*“My most precious possession as a child was my bike. It was my means of transport, my ability to escape and explore and it represented freedom for me. It wasn’t new when I first had it, my Mum and Dad bought it at an auction and it had been well used. It didn’t have gears and the chain was a bit loose but it didn’t matter I loved it because it was mine. I would spend hours fiddling with it, adjusting the brakes and pumping up the tyres, and it was cleaned very regularly. I remember spending the whole of one day repainting it dark blue, and it looked fantastic.*

*I was only eight when I had that bike but we had some brilliant adventures together. A bottle of water and a bag of crisps, my friend Clare and I regularly used to ride twenty miles to town. If my Mum had known she would have had a fit. But like Clare my bike was a good friend, it never shared my secrets”.*

#### **6. Personal Photographs**

Photographs are very personal items and for an individual tell a story all of their own. It is useful if storytellers bring significant photographs to the workshop, and swap with another person in the group so that they have an image that is new to them. The Trainer should encourage everyone to write a story relating to the photograph in their hand. When everyone has made up and narrated their fictitious stories, the owner of the photograph then tells their own story. It is an interesting exercise that highlights different perceptions of certain images and allows storytellers the freedom to explore a world they are unfamiliar with.

#### **7. Make Your Mind Up**

Participants are asked to write about a time in their lives when they made an important decision. They are free to describe it as they wish, but they are limited to exactly 50 words. This game fulfils two purposes. Primarily it looks at the theme of important decision making in life and the resulting feelings that were created. Secondly, it attempts to instil in them the value of tightly edited text.

### 8. **The First Time**

The storyteller spends 10 minutes writing about an occasion when they did something for the first time and how it made them feel and the impact it possibly caused for others. The story is then shared with the rest of the group.

### 9. **The Match Game**

**The Trainer should ensure that the use of matches in the room will not trigger the fire alarms and that each storyteller holds a glass of water for the match to drop into before it burns fingers.**

This game is good for focus, clarity of speech and the ability to say what matters within a very short period of time.

Give the storytellers 10 minutes to prepare a story about passion. This could be about a person, an issue, a place or anything that they feel passionate about. Each storyteller then takes it in turn to tell their story but they only have as long as it takes the match to burn to the end before they have to stop. The burning match helps concentrate the mind on getting to the heart of the story straight away.

### 10. **Love/Hate**

Each participant creates a list of 10 things they love and 10 things they hate, and they read these out to the others in the group. This is useful as the list may produce a topic for a potential story and allows the Trainer to explore the themes more fully. The Trainer then encourages them to re-read the list with emotion and feeling assisting with the range of tones and inflections in their speech which will be useful when it comes to recording their story.

### 11. **Three Objects**

The Trainer asks each participant to list three objects that sum up what is important to them.

Example: A car, a kite and a handbag (the storyteller is a car mad kiting enthusiast who collects designer handbags)

The storyteller is then asked to choose the object that means the most to them and write a story around that theme.

#### **And Then:**

With the assistance of the Trainer one of the themes explored as a result of playing about three of the above games could be expanded to become the basis of their own Personal Story.

#### **Finally**

The participants are invited to read out their first drafts to the rest of the group. Feedback is given by the trainer and supporting comments given by the other participants. The storytelling circle can catapult the quality of the final stories to a new level, emphasizing the need to incorporate a few simple tricks and techniques to produce a strong final script.

