

# Story Development Worksheet

Shaping stories that clarify, connect,  
and move your audience forward

**Stories don't earn attention just because they're personal or interesting.**

Before your audience decides whether your story matters, they are silently asking:

“Why are you telling me this?”  
“What does this have to do with me?”  
“Where is this going?”

If those questions remain unanswered, even a well-told story can feel indulgent, confusing, or disconnected from your message.

This worksheet is designed to help you develop stories with intent — so they support your message instead of competing with it.

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Important: A story is not the message. It exists to *serve* the message.

# What Is This Story Doing for the Audience?

A story earns its place in a presentation only when it **helps the audience understand something more clearly, feel something more honestly, or see the situation differently than they did before.**

Stories fail when they exist only because they are:

- Personal
- Memorable
- Emotional
- Well-told
- Humorous

Those qualities may make a story *interesting*, but they do not automatically make it useful.

Before you develop a story further, pause and clarify what work this story is meant to do.

## A story in a presentation typically serves one primary function.

Note: A story may *support* more than one of these — but it should clearly *lead* with one.

### Clarify

Helps the audience understand a concept, situation, or decision more concretely.

### Create Connection

Helps the audience see themselves, their challenges, or their context in the message.

### Reframe

Challenges an assumption or invites the audience to see the issue differently.

### Motivate Movement

Helps the audience understand a concept, situation, or decision more concretely.

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#### Important:

*If you cannot clearly articulate what a story is doing, the audience will feel that confusion — even if they can't explain why.*

# Choosing the Right Story

Not every good story belongs in every presentation.

The right story is the one that best supports the audience's needs at this moment—not the one that's easiest to tell or most familiar to you.

Use this page to decide which story earns its place before you begin developing it.

What do I want this story to do for the audience in this presentation?

Which specific story am I considering using?

Why does this story belong here in this presentation?

What does this story help the audience understand, feel, or reconsider?

What story am I choosing *not* to tell — and why?

## Developing the Story

A strong story is rarely about everything that happened.

It focuses on the moments that **serve the audience's understanding**, not on every detail that makes the story complete in your mind.

Use this page to decide what belongs in the story — and what should be left out.

What is the single moment or turning point this story centers on?

What details are essential for the audience to understand this moment?

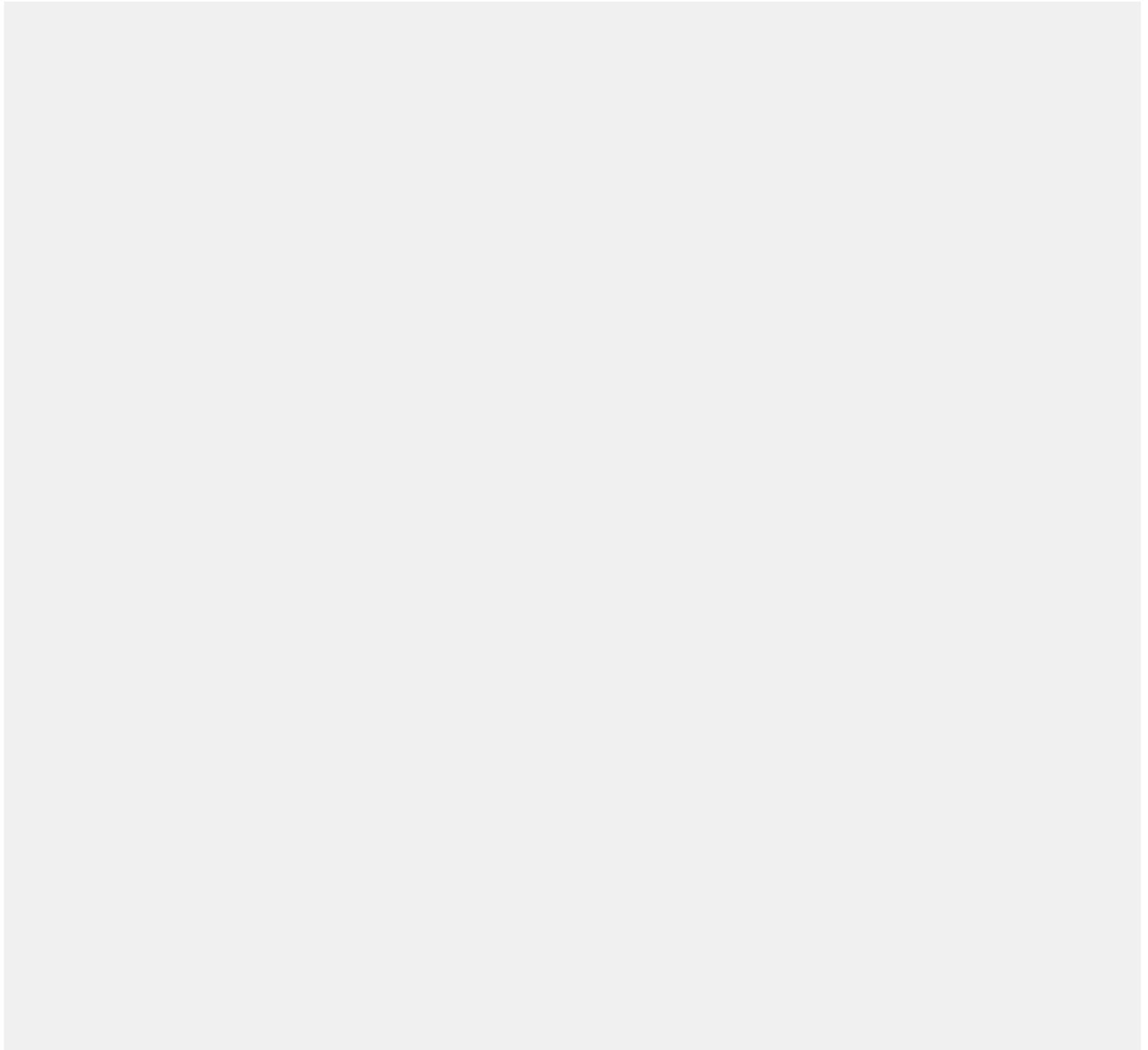
What details are true but unnecessary for this audience?

What idea or realization should stay with the audience after the story ends?

## Write the Story

Write the story exactly as you intend to tell it out loud.

(Do not polish. Do not perform. Capture it honestly.)



## Reflection & Integration

Before you move on, pause and reflect on what this story is now positioned to do.

What feels clearer to me now about why this story belongs in this presentation?

What, if anything, should I now be more disciplined about when telling this story?

How does this story shape what the audience will take away from my message?

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*A story earns its place when it serves the audience more than the storyteller.*