



advanced storytelling techniques: the ten tools of the teller

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every christian educator can improve his or her teaching by developing skills in storytelling and communication. even if you've been teaching or telling stories for years, you'll learn new approaches to shaping and sharing stories. we'll review storytelling skills and resources and then learn how to master the ten most effective storytelling techniques.

you'll learn how to:

- tap into ten effective storytelling techniques.
- develop storytelling skills such as voice, gesture, and pacing.
- discover stories from folklore, personal experience, and literature that will complement your bible lessons.

the five tools no one ever talks about

1. r _____ – trust in the power and promises of the holy spirit (*see 1 corinthians 2:1-5*).
2. w _____
3. i _____ – pretend less; believe more.
 - a. believe in the story.
 - b. become part of the story. great storytellers disappear into a story, take your hand and lead you through it and then reappear for the applause at the end!
4. p _____ – every story you tell should matter to you.
 - a. if you don't care about the story, no one else will. whether you love it or hate it, you need to be emotionally connected to it.
 - b. be real and genuine. let yourself identify with the characters in the story.
5. r _____ – never tell the same story twice.
 - a. attend to the moment. don't worry about how the story is "supposed to go"--notice how it is going. keep only the mistakes you like.
 - b. don't tell the story right, tell the right story. use discernment and good judgment.



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the five “power tools” of the teller

1. p _____ – practice makes p _____.
 - a. tell your story in different circumstances and different ways. words speak louder than thoughts.
 - b. remove distractions. keep only the mistakes you like.

2. c _____ – you are already a s _____.
 - a. we think in stories. we remember in stories.
 - b. through their emotional appeal, stories underwhelm us.

3. o _____ – putting all the pieces together so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
 - a. emotion
 - b. voice and diction
 - c. pace, pausing, and flow

4. p _____ e _____ - communicating well with your body.
 - a. facial expressions
 - b. posture, body position and movement
 - c. gestures

5. i _____ – use your own voice.
 - a. be genuine and be yourself. don't try to imitate or impress anyone. develop a style that is comfortably and uniquely “you.”
 - b. try the story on to make sure it fits you.



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where to get your building materials

L _____ (most importantly, the you-know-what!)

I _____

F _____ (both c _____ and a _____)

E _____

the blueprint

1. understanding story structure

2. secrets:
 - a. postpone the resolution by sustaining the suspense.
 - b. aim for effect rather than a “clearly measurable cognitive outcome.”
 - c. step out of the spotlight when you tell personal stories. always be the mistake maker.

3. look for these patterns in the stories you tell:
 - a. repetition
 - b. ruin to redemption
 - c. reversals
 - d. rags to riches (or riches to rags)



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advanced skills and teller techniques a personal evaluation checklist

skill #1 - make the most of silence and stillness.

- when do my pauses and silences seem awkward? where should i add more silence or stillness?
- does the pace contradict what's going on in the story? in other words, am i speaking quickly and slowly at the right times?
- does the rate, rhythm, speed, and timing of my story help build excitement at the right times in the story? if not, what changes do i need to make?

skill #2 - sustain the suspense by postponing the resolution.

- have i given too much away too early? if so, how can i change what i say or do to sustain the suspense?
- does the story take too long to set up? how can i grab the attention of the listeners by introducing the struggle earlier in the story? is the ending strong and clear?
- if i were listening to this story for the first time would i get bored? if so, why? what needs to change to grab and keep the listeners' attention?

skill #3 - use the stage area to your advantage.

- am i using all of my stage area? if not, does this story provide natural opportunities to use more movement or gestures? how can i use more of my space onstage?
- am i consistent in the way i represent characters and in how i relate to the imaginary world i create onstage? if not, what do i need to change?
- am i standing in the best place onstage for people to see me? is the lighting good? is the attention of the audience directed toward me? if not, what do i need to change to make the most of the lighting and stage placement?

skill #4 - mean more than you what you say.

- do i use strong images in my stories? if not, can i include more image-rich language? what images come to mind when i think of this story? is there a way to naturally weave these images into the way i tell this story?
- how well did i use inflection to communicate meaning? how could i improve and clarify the meaning i wish to portray by subtly changing my inflection?
- what can i learn from jesus about using images in my stories and my teaching? how can i begin to see more parallels between biblical truth and everyday objects?



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skill #5 - translate words into sounds.

- have i done a good job of translating this story from words to sounds?
- does my story sound “canned,” or spontaneous? how can i better express spontaneity in this story?
- does it sound like i’m reading a script, or telling a story? what do i need to change to make the story sound more natural and less rehearsed?

skill #6 - choose your sounds carefully.

- have i used strong nouns and verbs in my story? have i chosen the right words to use? have i prepared my introduction to the story? how will i make it clear when the introduction is over and my story begins?
- is the message of my story clear? have i produced the effect i was aiming for? if not, why not? what do i need to add, change, or delete from my story to produce the effect i’m aiming for? was this story appropriate for my audience?
- if i used foreshadowing, have i related back to that image or idea at the end of the story? if not, how can i bring that idea back into focus?

skill #7 - communicate without talking.

- what impression will my clothes and appearance give to the audience? is that the impression i want to give?
- how will the proximity of the stage and the amount of lighting affect the audience’s expectations of my story? is this what i want? if not, what will i do?
- did i appear confident and prepared? was i nervous or was i relaxed? did i rock back and forth, or stand still and composed? did i have any annoying habits that distract from the story? how can i eliminate those? what will i do, instead, when i’m nervous?

skill #8 - create richer and deeper characters.

- were my characters believable? if i used different voices or posture to portray different characters, were they consistent? if i used dialect, did i slip out of dialect or keep going through the whole story?
- how did i express emotions--through my body, face, or voice? was i physically eloquent?
- did i tell people what the characters were like, or did i show them? how can i improve the way i create and portray my characters?

the checklist is taken from *the creative storytelling guide for children’s ministry* by steven james. © 2002. used by permission.