

STORYTELLING TIPS FROM THE PROS

JOEL BEN IZZY

While there is a good deal of magic in a well-told story, much of the art comes down to nuts and bolts. Here are some tips to help you craft your story:

1) Have a clear conflict

In its most basic form, a story is about someone who wants something, and either gets it or does not. That character's desire brings out the conflict that moves a story forward. The appearance of the conflict is the beginning, the resolution is its ending.

2) Keep it simple

You can always elaborate by adding details and nuance to a simple story. It is much harder - and less satisfying - to simplify a complicated story. To make a long story short is to ruin it. Find the simplest version of your tale and build on that.

3) Take your time when you tell the story

Beginning storytellers often worry about their audiences getting bored and sometimes try to avoid this by speeding up their telling. Unfortunately, this has just the opposite of the desired effect. Take your time in telling the story, let it breathe, and your audience will appreciate it.

4) Remember the sensory details in your story...

Your words are making a world real, and to do so you need to bring in all elements of that world - sounds, sights, smells, tastes and feelings. These are what root your listener in the world of the story you are telling.

5) ...but don't get lost in extraneous details

...because extraneous details can make a story boring. The problematic details tend to be expository, giving information that is unnecessary at the time. Give your listeners information on a "need to know" basis, providing just enough to understand what happens next.

6) Every story is a mystery

A well told story is one where you can stop at any point and have the reader wonder "...and then what happened?" Each time a piece of the mystery is solved, another one appears, and that's what keeps us listening until we reach the ending. If you find yourself lecturing, step back and find the mystery.

7) Know the ending of your story

Know your ending line. And after you say it, stop.

JOSHUA WALTERS

1. Don't over rehearse. A story isn't a poem or a monologue that needs to be memorized to a T. The greatest stories are told in a new way each time. Don't try to recreate the magic of a past telling, instead create anew.

2. As far as memorization, think bullet points instead of actual script. The delivery should be almost completely improv and depend on your audience. React to their

energy, you are mirroring and leading at the same time.

3. Script the Ending. Even though your story shouldn't be memorized or have notes, the ending is the most important part. Knowing exactly what the last sentence will be helps bring the story full circle and give the audience a sense that listening to you was time well spent.