

THE STORIES & NUMBERS COLLABORATIVE

STORYTELLING TOOLKIT



WHY STORYTELLING IS IMPORTANT

One of the most powerful things you can do as an advocate (whether you're an LGBTQIA+ youth or someone who supports them) is tell your story. This is because the human brain is wired to receive, process, and store information presented in story form in unique and lasting ways.

This means that sharing a personal experience, observation, or reflection can reach those hearing your story in a more lasting way than reading a report or hearing a set of statistics. That doesn't mean that numbers aren't important – they just work better with numbers. And numbers work better with stories.

A lot of people get overwhelmed when thinking about the whole process of storytelling, that's why we've boiled it down to five key steps. Hopefully, this will make the process of storytelling seem a little easier to dive into.

STEP 1 | DECIDE

The very first step in telling a good story is deciding which story you're going to tell. Sometimes it will be easy to choose because there is a particular event that stands out in your mind. Other times, you may need to think hard about what you want to talk about. If you're drawing a blank, ask trusted friends for their opinions and ideas.

When deciding on the topic of your story, make sure to consider what the impact might be of sharing it. Once it becomes public, it will be hard to go back. This might mean that you change the names of the people in your story to protect their privacy. In other cases, you might choose to avoid parts of the story that might be triggering to you or your audience.

This doesn't mean you should make up parts of your story or lie about what the people in your story did. It just means you don't have to go through every detail. Your job is to capture the essential parts of what happened, share how they made you feel, and tell people what they can do to help!

STEP 2 | RESEARCH

One great way you can add detail to your story is to mention research and statistics. This can further support your views and your account of the events in your story.

For example, let's say you're talking about why schools must be inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) students. In your story, you could mention that 2017 CDC study found that transgender students were more than 5 times more likely to feel unsafe traveling to or from school compared to cisgender males (and nearly 4 times more likely to feel unsafe than cisgender females).

By using numbers to illustrate your point, it shows that your experience or the problem you're highlighting isn't isolated to just you or your school. It also sets an excellent example for others on how to incorporate research into their own stories and advocacy. Check out StoriesandNumbers.org/Numbers for more research and numbers to use in your story.

STEP 3 | WRITE

Writing out your story makes it easier to know what you'll say when you get in front of the camera or out on stage. It also helps you provide structure and refines your overall message.

There are so many ways to tell a story that it's hard to say what shape yours will take, but here are some tips to keep in mind while you're writing:

- Figure out what your call-to-action is and then structure your story in a way that will inspire people to take that action.
- Talk about the feelings you had during your experience – this is what makes people pay attention and empathize with you.
- Use numbers and research to prove your experience is not isolated.
- Give just enough information and context to inform your audience without overwhelming them with details.
- Try to avoid jargon and acronyms (or explain them when you use them).

STEP 4 | RECORD

Recording your video can be as easy as pulling out your smartphone or using a computer webcam, but no matter what equipment you use to shoot your video, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Think about where you're going to shoot your video. If possible, go to someplace that has meaning and relates to your story. This might be your school, a library, your friend's house, or your bedroom.
- Make sure there is enough light! Not so much light that you squint, but enough to give viewers a good sense of what you and your surroundings look like.
- Shoot somewhere where there's little or no background noise. It might be neat to record your video outside of your school, but if it's on a busy street, viewers might hear more cars going by than your actual story.
- Edit your video so that it only presents your story. This probably means that you cut off the beginning where you were getting set up, or the end when you went to stop the recording.

STEP 5 | SHARE

When your video is ready, you can upload it to a social network like Instagram or a video sharing platform like YouTube. If you want us to see your video, make sure you include the hashtag #StoriesandNumbers. If you want us to share your video with our networks, make sure you include the hashtag #ShareMyStory.

As people reach out to you about your story, make sure to point them to StoriesandNumbers.org and this storytelling guide, so they know how to get started telling their own stories on camera.

And if something amazing happens as people hear your story, reach out and let us know!

REMEMBER:

**YOUR STORY
MATTERS, AND
THERE'S NO
WRONG WAY
TO TELL IT.**

What we mean is that you don't have to worry about doing this storytelling thing wrong. You don't owe your story to anyone. So if you're not out, if it's not safe for you to tell your story right now, or if you're just not ready,

THAT'S TOTALLY OKAY!

But when you are ready, tell your story, knowing that there's power and magic in it that can change the world.

DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT & FIND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AT

STORIESANDNUMBERS.ORG

THE STORIES & NUMBERS COLLABORATIVE



The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Human Development
and Family Sciences
College of Natural Sciences | School of Human Ecology

EQUALITY