



## STORY INGREDIENTS

### 1. What happened?

Call this: your memories, anecdotes, material, plot

Tell this: in *scenes*, or *moments*. (Tell us what happened, instead of *about* what happened)

Scene/moment:

- people (who's there?)
- in a place (where are you? as specifically as possible?)
- for a length of time (when was this? for how long?) during which...
- something happens

### 2. What's it *about*?

Call this, if you like: your theme (but don't get hung up on that word!)

Use this: to decide what to include, leave out, and how to organize/order your scenes

In "Frosty the Snowman" what **happens** is that kids find a magical hat and it animates a snowman and they have fun and then he melts.

Depending who's telling it, and to whom they're telling it, and what's going on in their lives, the world, their relationship: it could be **about** loneliness, the fleetingness of existence, the magic of childhood, the power of imagination...

### 2½. What's at *stake*?

Call this: why you care(d)

Do this: by asking yourself "what else do they need to know to *get it*?"

What a story is *about* is deeply connected to what was at *stake* for the teller at the time it happened (and the meaning made of it since then).

## GENERATING/CHOOSING YOUR MATERIAL

- Start with what matters to you — even if you think it's unimportant. What moments stand out to you? What's funny? Significant? What do you have energy to tell?
- Consider points in your life where something changed, broke, shifted. Look for fault lines, conflict (internal or external), forks in the road
- Get a sense of your main character (you):
  - List five words that describe you
  - List jobs you've had/work you've done
  - List places you've lived (in-law apartment, student housing, a car...)
  - List: mistakes you've made, friends from different parts of your life, trips taken, best/worst dates...

Every word on those lists: a potential story.

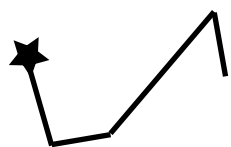
## ON WHAT AND HOW MUCH YOU SHARE

The good news: you can edit your Self, and your material, however you wish. Leave out what's too raw and not ready for the public. You can tell a *true* story, without telling your *whole* story. You can be vulnerable and real without falling apart. You owe it to yourself (primarily) and your listeners to safeguard what's tender for you.

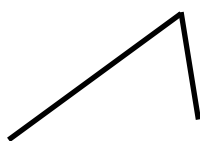
## STRUCTURE

- Leave out what doesn't serve you. It'll break your heart but do it!
- Start in the action (or close to it as possible) and set up the stakes.
- Consider the order of the "reveal"
  - chronological unfolding?
  - near the end, back to the beginning?
  - moving around within narrative?
- Have your ending clearly in mind; avoid meandering endings...

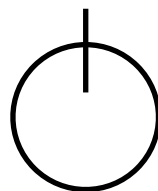
A few trajectories/shapes:



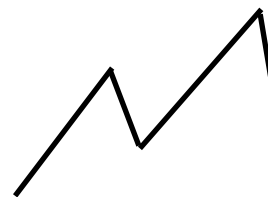
Start big, back up.



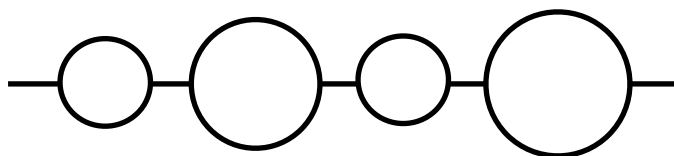
Build gradually, all the way until you get to the end.



End where you began, in time, space, feeling.



Build in an early peak that reveals the stakes, and sweetens the pot for the ending.



String-of-pearls: a series of scenes

## BONUS! STORYTELLING QUICK HITS/PET PEEVES

- Skip the phrase "I remember;" it keeps us with you in the here and now but we want to go to the then and there
- You don't need adverbs! (Trust us.)
- Use dialogue as much as possible, have characters speak for themselves

There are two great ways to get better at storytelling: listen to stories (start with **The Moth**) and tell stories. Research events in your area to see what's going on, then get out there.

Maybe more importantly, you can make a place for other people to tell their stories (in church and beyond). Don't know where to start? We can help! Stay in touch with us through [EarshotStories.com](http://EarshotStories.com) or reach out to at [earshotstories@gmail.com](mailto:earshotstories@gmail.com)