



# Laptops in the Classroom: Digital Storytelling

## What is it?

Digital Storytelling is the practice of using computer-based tools to present ideas. Similar to traditional storytelling, most digital stories focus on a specific topic and convey a particular point of view. As the name implies, digital stories usually contain some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and/or music. Digital stories can vary in length, but most of the stories used in education typically last between two and seven minutes and are produced by someone who is not a media professional. The storyteller assembles this rich media to support their ideas and bring emotion to their content.

## Why is it Important?

Digital tools make it possible for students to construct multi-dimensional stories that are conveyed through a combination of hyperlinked, multidimensional words, images, motions, and sounds. Digital assignments are another way to increase student engagement and commitment – particularly with students who do not respond to traditional academic assignments. Properly scaffolded with clear rubrics, digital storytelling assignments are every bit as academically rigorous – and involve just as much “writing” as term paper assignments.

## Pros...

- Tap into a variety of learning styles and connect to students' interest in technology
- Develop students' ability to appropriately evaluate and use online content and electronic tools as a means of professional expression
- It allows learners to construct their own learning, thus engaging students in inquiry and active learning processes

## Cons...

- Piecing together a story using multimedia can be time consuming
- Students need considerable storage space and support
- Faculty and students need to be aware of intellectual property issues

## How to Use them...

A great way for students to present work for a big project or throughout a course, digital stories make use of simple tools.

**VoiceThread:** Great for group projects, students upload a Power Point presentation or set of images and then record audio or text narration, even use the pen to highlight something important. Others in the class can also add comments. <http://voicethread.com/>

**Audio:** Audacity and Garageband are easy to use software for recording and editing audio. <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

**Images:** Adobe Photoshop is software designed for capturing, creating, editing, and manipulating images. Flickr is a web-based tool to share and annotate images. <http://www.flickr.com/>

**Video:** Most video editors provide support for a variety of movie formats - iMovie for Macs and MovieMaker2 for PCs are video editors. <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2329226,00.asp>

In addition, You Tube and Google Video are video sharing websites where users can upload, view and share video clips; however, be aware of copyright laws.

## For Further Reading...

Educational uses of digital storytelling with examples in many curriculum areas from the **University of Houston:** <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/>

**“Web 2.0 Storytelling: Emergence of a New Genre”** is an article featured in Educause Review that discusses how new web tools facilitate student projects with ease. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0865.pdf>

**Introducing Digital Ethnography Class:** This video by Mike Wesch at Kansas State is designed to introduce an anthropology class. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYcS\\_VpoWJk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYcS_VpoWJk)

**UMBC Faculty** explore digital storytelling in their classes: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QynwIVQs0K0>