

How To Storyboard a Video



tearing in half when it needs to fold down

How To Make a Storyboard For Video

Have you ever come up with a great idea for a video, but had trouble explaining your creative vision to the client? Do you worry the production crew won't capture the exact shots and angles you have in mind?

You need a storyboard!

What Is a Storyboard?

A storyboard is a tool for sketching out how a video will unfold, shot by shot. It looks like a comic strip.



Customer journey storyboard by visualpun.ch/flickr

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Each square represents a single shot. It shows who or what is in the scene, what's being said, and any text or graphics that appear on the screen. As you read through a storyboard, you should be able to "see" the video playing in your head.

Why Create a Storyboard?

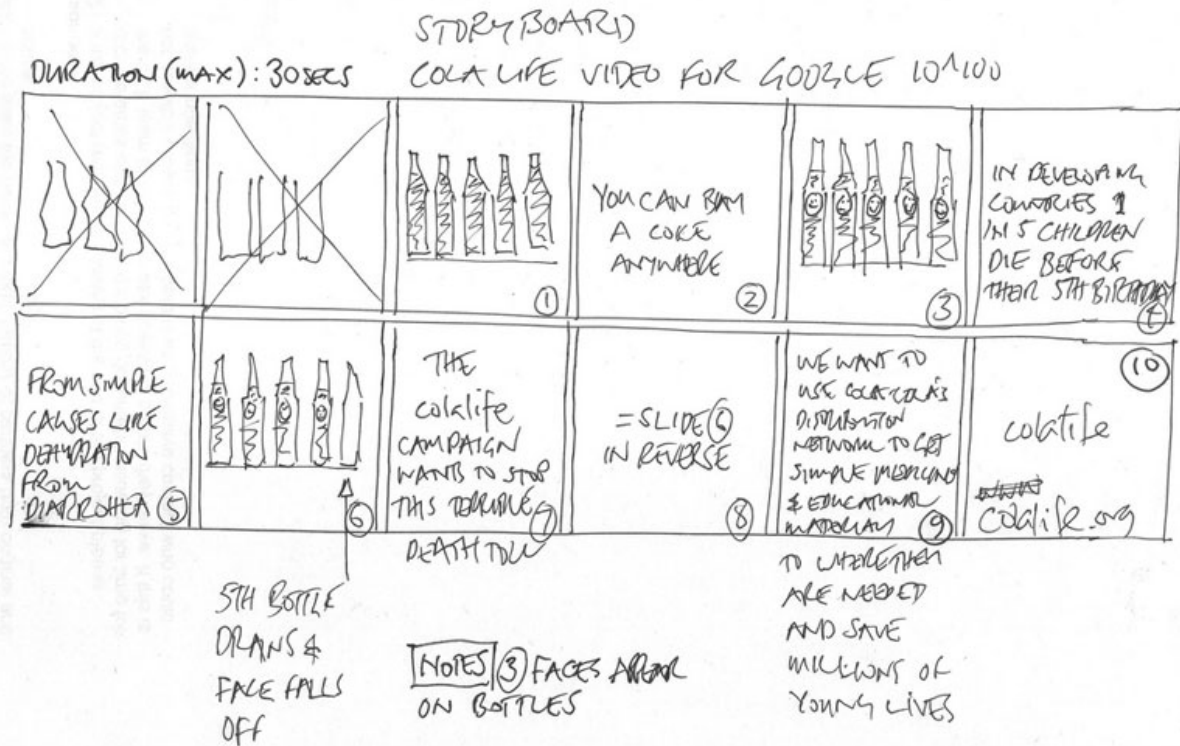
A good storyboard serves two main functions: *planning* and *communication*.

Planning

When you storyboard a video, you're creating a plan for production. It's tempting to just pick up a video camera and start recording, but without a road map you'll waste time, money and energy.

A storyboard forces you to visualize the shots you'll need, the order in which they'll appear, and how the visuals will interact with the script. It's much easier to hash out the details during pre-production than it is on location, when the clock is ticking on an expensive production team (or worse, after everything's been shot!).

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[Storyboard for Google 10^100](#) by Simon Berry/flickr

Communication

Another challenge of team productions like video is *communication*. With a storyboard, you can show a client or production crew exactly what you have in mind. No more wordy explanations or charades!

The storyboard will change as team members offer feedback and the project evolves. It's an essential tool for making sure everyone involved is on the same page.

Shots and Cuts

After cameras and lenses, every video storyteller has two essential tools: *shots* and *cuts*. These two tools are much, much more important than the gear you use.

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A shot is a clip of video. It has a beginning and an end, but beyond that it can be any duration of time (so long as it is unbroken) and contain anything you like. Shots choice is the fundamental *expressive* tool of video storytelling, and there are many different kinds of shots you can make. How you make your shots is the main signal your audience to feel a certain way when they watch your video.

A cut is the end of a shot. Cuts are your essential *narrative* tool. The way a shot ends, and then how the next one starts, is the main way that video tells a story. Good cuts create continuity and cohesiveness, and keep the audience engaged with the story. You decide when to make a cut twice: once when you are recording your original video clip, and again in post-production when you trim down and edit your clips together.

Making good shots and cuts is harder than it sounds! It's especially hard to do them well without a plan.

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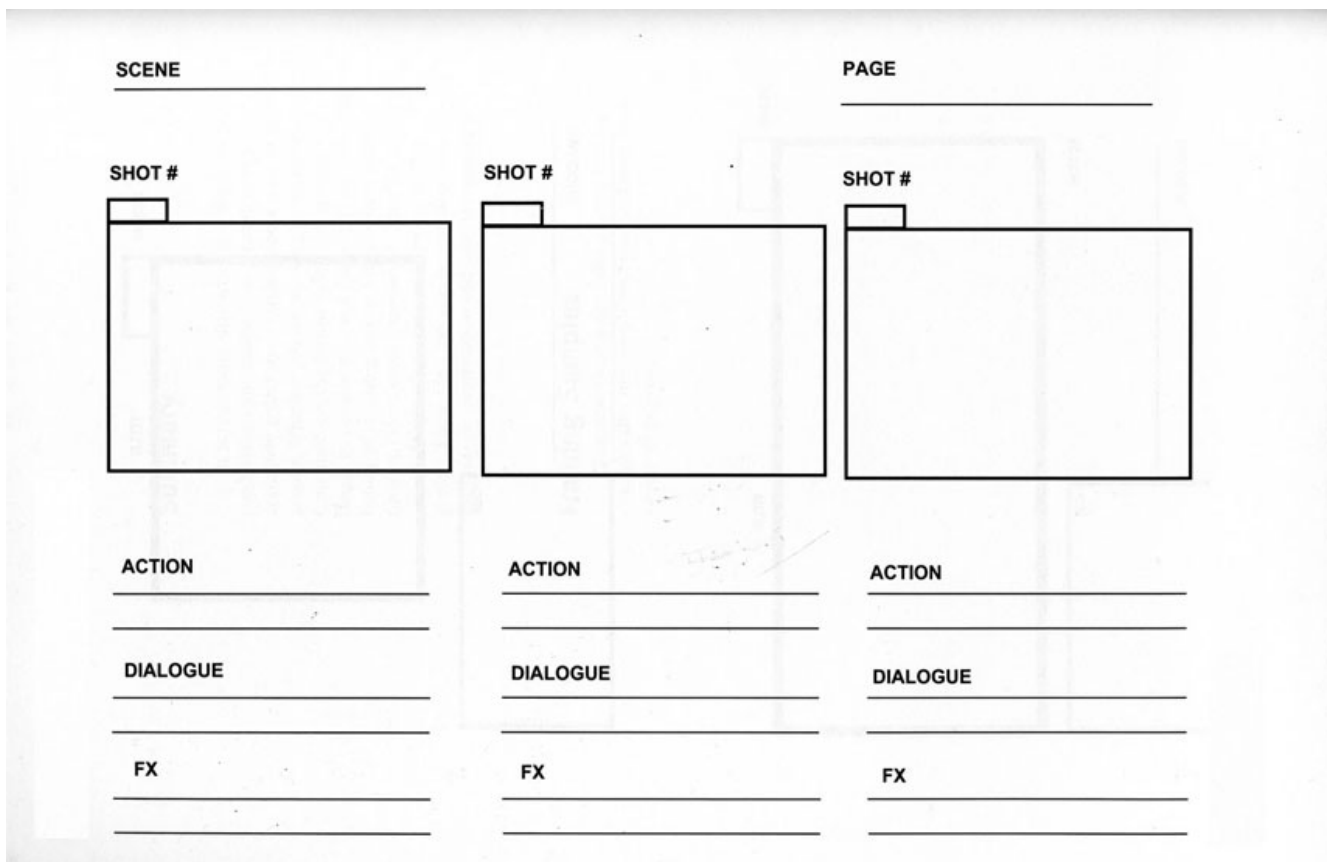
A storyboard doesn't have to be an elaborate work of art. Here's how to make one:

Step 1: Create a Template

Draw a series of rectangles on a piece of paper, as if you were creating a comic strip. Make sure you leave room for notes or lines of script under each rectangle.

You can also download one of the many [free storyboard templates](#) online, like this:

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[Storyboard Template](#) by 70Jack90/Wikimedia Commons

Step 2: Add the Script

Under each rectangle, write the line of script or dialogue that corresponds to that scene.

Step 3: Sketch out the story

Don't worry if you're not an artist - simple stick figures will do the trick. You can indicate movement with an arrow. A bad drawing is better than no drawing!

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[Storyboard](#) by various brennemans/flickr

If you don't want to sketch the shots by hand, you can use photographs or images cut from a magazine. There are even [storyboarding tools online](#) where you can select characters and settings, add speech bubbles and text blocks, and even record audio. Be warned, though – they're tons of fun, and you can waste a lot of time!

Step 4: Add Notes

Finally, add in any notes about each scene. This might include a description of what's happening, camera angles or movement, and any special effects. Don't forget about audio like music or sound effects.

A Few Last Storyboarding Tips

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Finally, don't be too cautious about your storyboards. Take some chances. Draw quickly and sloppily if you feel inspired and need to get your ideas down on paper. You can go back and work on your storyboards. Have fun with your storyboards, they're the perfect tool for letting your imagination work.

Here are a few more storyboarding tips:

- Use rectangles that are the same aspect ratio as video, 16:9.
- Number each rectangle for easy reference in discussions.
- Bone up on the [standard shot types](#) used in video before you start.
- Think in 3D. Make subjects/objects in the background smaller, so they appear further away.
- Cut up and recombine your storyboards to play with sequencing and narrative.
- Use the finished storyboard to create a master shot list. This way nothing will get overlooked during production.

Keep the storyboard simple so it can be understood by anyone who views it, and be sure to share the finished product with everyone involved!