

## Stories follow universal rules.

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There's an underlying structure that propels a story and holds people's attention.

Something big is at stake; you've set out on a **quest**. There's a **conflict**: you face trials, torments, a test. There's a **twist**, a surprising turn of events. The story builds up to a **climax**: the "moment of change." Then, **resolution**.

Listen to several stories and you'll get the hang of it.

## The Moth website offers live storytellers some great advice.

### Have some stakes.

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Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? If you can't answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay, best experienced on the page, not the stage.

### Start in the action.

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Have a great first line that sets up the stakes or grabs attention.

### Steer clear of meandering endings.

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They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you...but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!

### Know your story well enough so you can have fun!

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Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

### No essays.

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Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page, but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won't work on stage.

<http://themoth.org>

## SpeakeasyDC's website includes a checklist to help you 'judge' a live story.

### 1. Story crafting

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- Does it have elements of a story (conflict, action, characters, insight, meaning, change)?
- Is the story visual? Can you picture the scenes described?
- Is it suspenseful? Does it have high stakes?

### 2. Performance

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- Is the teller authentic? Does the teller have vulnerable or revealing moments?
- Is the performance entertaining or moving?

### 3. Originality

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- Is the story memorable? Surprising?
- Is the story crafted/structured in an interesting or unusual way?

<http://www.speakeasydc.com>

## **Pixar story artist Emma Coats tweeted 22 'basics' for good storytelling.**

Here are 11 to whet your appetite. (Read them all at <http://bit.ly/jlVWrG>)

- #1: **You admire a character for trying more than for their successes.**
- #2: **You gotta keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer. They can be v. different.**
- #3: **Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.**
- #5: **Simplify. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but it sets you free.**
- #6: **What is your character good at, comfortable with? Throw the polar opposite at them. Challenge them. How do they deal?**
- #7: **Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. Endings are hard, get yours working up front.**
- #8: **Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.**
- #11: **Putting it on paper lets you start fixing it. If it stays in your head, a perfect idea, you'll never share it with anyone.**
- #14: **Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the heart of it.**
- #17: **No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and move on—it'll come back around to be useful later.**
- #18: **You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is testing, not refining.**
- #22: **What's the essence of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.**

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%40lawnrocket%23storybasics&src=typd>

*“The power of anecdote is so great that it has a momentum in and of itself....no matter how boring the facts are... you feel inherently as if you are on a train that has a destination.”*

Ira Glass

## Find a storytelling venue near you

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### **The Moth**

**The Moth** (*‘True Stories Told Live’*) holds storytelling events in 17+ cities nationwide. Catch a live StorySLAM near you! You can also listen to **The Moth Radio Hour** on Public Radio, watch Moth stories on YouTube, and download Moth podcasts on iTunes.

<http://themoth.org/>

### **Story Collider**

**Story Collider** (*‘Stories About Science’*) holds live storytelling events in Brooklyn, Boston, London...and Maine! You can find their podcast on iTunes, or their website.

<http://storycollider.org/>

### **Porchlight Storytelling**

**Porchlight**, a storytelling series in San Francisco, invites 6 people to tell 10-minute true stories. The monthly open-mic Porchlight **Open Door** gives you a chance to practice storytelling skills. You can find the Porchlight podcast on iTunes, or their website.

<http://www.porchlightsf.com/>

### **2nd Story**

**2nd Story** hosts live events in and around Chicago. They offer training too. Besides links to podcasts, you can read six different storytellers’ scripts on the 2nd Story website.

<http://2ndstory.com/>

### **SpeakEasyDC**

Another long-running series, **SpeakEasy Storytelling** in Washington DC has an open call, inviting you to pitch a story (if you’re picked, you rehearse with a SpeakEasyDC coach.)

<http://www.speakeasydc.com/>

## Flex your museum storytelling muscles

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### **Drinking About Museums (DAM)**

**DAM** is a global, grassroots effort to help museum folk find their peers and engage in the kind of storytelling that makes conferences like AAM so enjoyable. Want to find one? Search Twitter for the #drinkingaboutmuseums tag. Can’t find one? Start your own!

<http://exhibitdev.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/on-drinking-about-museums/>

<http://drinkingaboutmuseumboston.wordpress.com/about/>

### **Museums Showoff**

**Museums Showoff** is an open mic night that originated in the UK. They host events featuring curators, conservators, librarians, collectors, Museum Studies students, archaeologists, social historians, educators, multimedia developers, explainers, visitors, theorists and everyone else associated with museums and library special collections.

<http://museumshowoff.wordpress.com>