

the storytelling with data process

Consider using the following questions and prompts for your next storytelling with data project.

Lesson 1: understand the context

Who is your audience? What does your audience care about and what motivates them? What do you want to communicate to your audience? **Articulate your big idea.** For reference: the big idea has three components, it 1) articulates your point of view, 2) conveys what's at stake, and 3) is a complete sentence. **Create a storyboard** of the components you'll cover with your audience to help them understand the situation and convince them to act. Consider what order would work best; arrange sticky notes to create the desired narrative flow. You now have a plan of attack to follow. Get client or stakeholder input at this point if possible.

Lesson 2: choose an appropriate visual

What do you want to communicate? Consider this and how you can show your data in a way that will be easy for your audience to understand. This often means iterating and looking at your data a number of different ways to determine the graph that will help you create that magical “ah ha” moment. **Draw it!** Consider what tools and other resources you have at your disposal to realize your drawing and then **create it in your tool.** Ask for feedback from others to determine whether your visual is serving its intended purpose or give you pointers on where to iterate.

Lesson 3: eliminate clutter

Is there anything that isn't adding value? **Identify unnecessary elements and remove them.** Reduce visual clutter by leveraging white space, aligning elements, and avoiding diagonal components. Use visual contrast sparingly and strategically: don't let your message get lost in the clutter!

Lesson 4: draw attention where you want it

Where do you want your audience to focus? Consider how you can draw your audience's attention to where you want them to look through position, size, and color. Use color sparingly and strategically, considering tone, brand, and colorblindness. **Employ the “where are your eyes drawn?” test** to determine whether you're using preattentive attributes effectively.

Lesson 5: tell a story

Consider the storyboard you created as part of lesson 1. Sketch out the components of your story according to **Freytag's pyramid.** Where and how will data fit into the story? How can tension and conflict help you capture and retain your audience's attention? What **repeatable sound bite** could you use to help your message stick with your audience? Use action titles on your slides and test for horizontal and vertical logic. Make a story that makes sense, sending your audience off ready to act!