

How to Be a Great Online Storyteller

Part Three

Content Warnings

Content warnings are another way to show respect for your audience. They are especially useful for online storytelling because you may not be able to see every audience member. Your super-scary Halloween show might have been labeled “for adults,” but some parents might bring their children anyway. What do you do? You give a content warning and then do the best you can with your story.

A content warning should be short, simple, and clear. It should not include spoilers if at all possible, nor does it need to be apologetic or dramatic. Here are a few templates for your content warning:

“The story I’m about to share with you includes some [violence, sexual content, etc.]. If that will be uncomfortable for you, please mute me and come back in about [X] minutes.”

“This story includes a scene of domestic violence.”

“As you know, this is an evening of scary stories for adults. Parents, this next story is genuinely frightening and includes a violent death. You might want to step out with your kids for about nine minutes.”

Setting the Stage for Successful Online Telling

You’ve done everything you can to make sure the program will be great. You have a background you like, you know your stories, your lights and sound are great, and you know how to connect with your audience. There is still a risk of technical failure due to internet or power issues.

Rather than worry this will happen, you can set the stage with your audience so both you and they are prepared. It’s simply acknowledging that, even though it’s unlikely, there might be a problem and if there is, it’s no big deal.

Here is an online script you can make your own.

“I’m so glad we’re online together for this storytelling event. As you know, technical issues can happen. If you get bumped from our video conference, come back! We’ll let you back in. If I have technical problems, I’ll fix them as soon as I can. It’s not a big deal if it happens, and we’ll work it out together.”

Online Storytelling Communities

No matter how experienced you are with online storytelling, practice and networking never hurt. There are many online storytelling opportunities. Here are some suggestions of where to find open mics, concerts, classes, and more.

- Artists Standing Strong Together has regular teleconferences with telling and learning opportunities:
<https://www.artistsstandingstrongtogether.net>
- The National Storytelling Network offers conferences, classes, special interest groups, and more and has a community calendar of events:
<https://storynet.org> and <https://storynet.org/calendar/>
- New England Storytelling has a calendar of online events:
<https://www.nestorytelling.org/calendar/>
- The Story Center offers ongoing classes and telling opportunities:
<https://www.mymcpl.org/story-center>