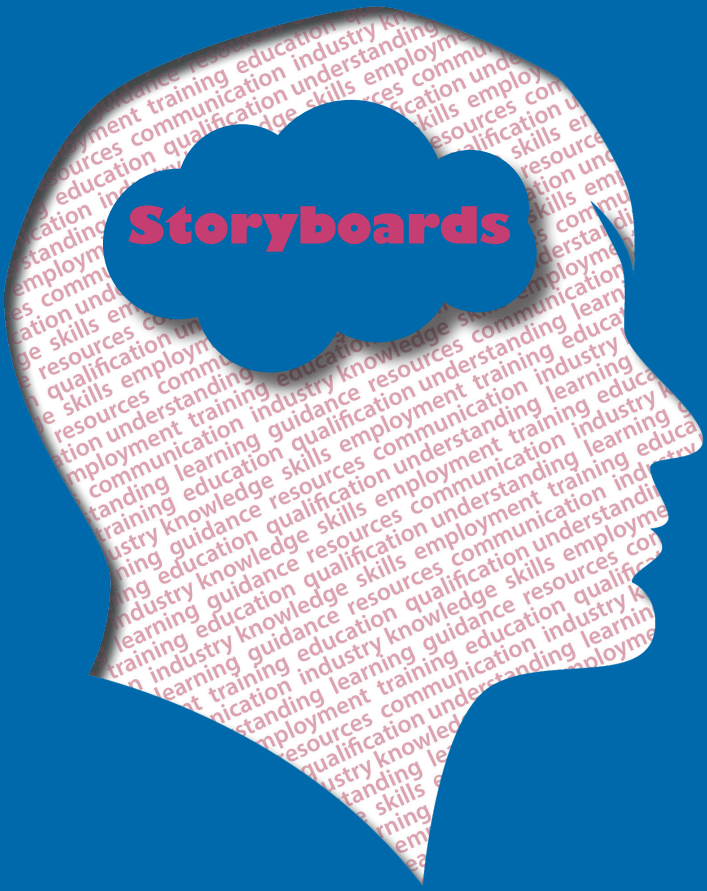

The OCR Guide to **Storyboards**

Version 1

OCR

This guide on storyboards has been produced to help you understand the skills and techniques you will need to develop, practise and use in studying for your chosen qualification. This guide has not been written to accompany a specific qualification but focuses on general skills and techniques to consolidate your learning. Other skills guides are available at www.ocr.org.uk

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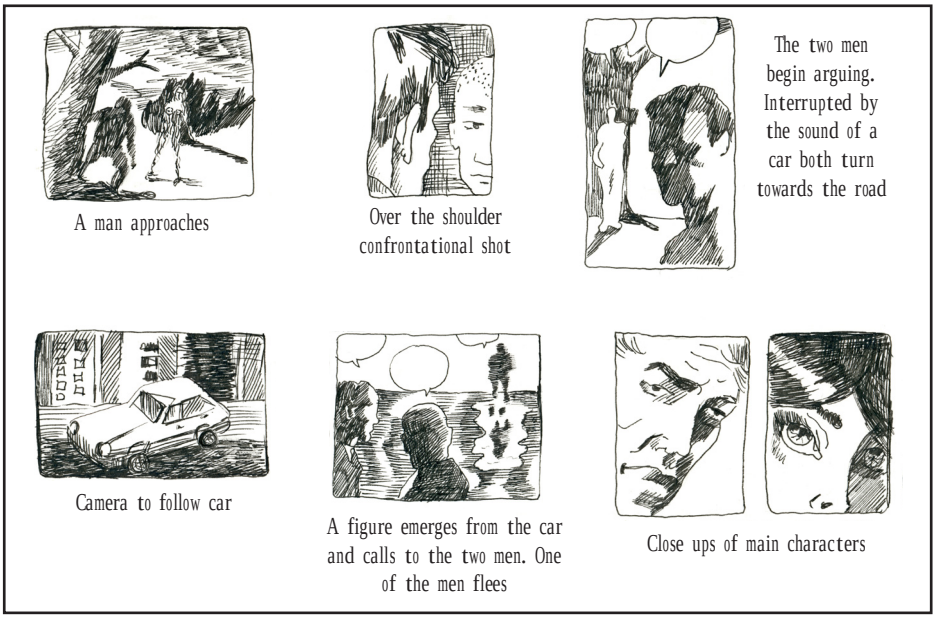
What is a storyboard?

Definition: a storyboard is a series of diagrams that shows a sequence of displays.

This can have a fixed timeline such as that in a video or digital animation. Some storyboards do not have a fixed timeline because the sequence depends on choices made by the user or viewer, for example: interactive media products and computer games. There are two main parts to a storyboard. The first is the sequence of different scenes to tell the story. The second is the information that is provided for each scene.



Purpose:

A storyboard is a planning document. It is created before the final product is developed and used to illustrate a story or show the changes of scene. In many cases this will be based on a timeline but could also be decided by the user's choices of selection or navigation.

Types:

Today storyboards are used with both linear and non-linear media products.

A linear product: is one such as a film, video or animation. There is a fixed timeline with this so that the viewer would see the story develop in the same sequence as the scenes in the storyboard.

A non-linear product: is one such as an interactive media product, digital game or other products with a graphical user interface (GUI).

Where is a storyboard used?

Here are some examples of both linear and non-linear products:

Linear	Non-linear
• Film or movie • Video advertisement • Audio-visual sequences • Multimedia presentations • Animation including stop motion • Comic strip	• Interactive media • Information display • Digital game • Smartphone and tablet apps

Why use a storyboard?

A storyboard is not usually the first stage of planning.

A typical approach would be to generate ideas for a piece of work such as using mood boards and mind maps. In some sectors, a script is the starting point from which a storyboard could be produced. The creative process is a cycle and includes planning, production and the reviewing of work. This means that a review can affect the content of a storyboard developed in the planning stage, so the finished product may be different in some places from the original storyboard. This refinement is normal and to be expected.

The following are some examples of why a storyboard is developed and used:

To document an idea for future use.

A benefit is that changes are easy to make in a storyboard. However, in general it takes much longer to recreate or change a finished render or recorded video scene if something isn't right.

To explain or illustrate the story to the production team.

To use it as a map or list of scenes needed to create the final product ie to make sure all the scenes and elements are created.

To explore alternative ways of showing the same idea (for example whether a close up will emphasise a mood or emotion better than a wide-angle shot).

To help in compiling a list of equipment and assets needed to create the product. A storyboard will show whether specialist equipment such as dollies, specific props or sound effects are required.

To sell an idea to a client.

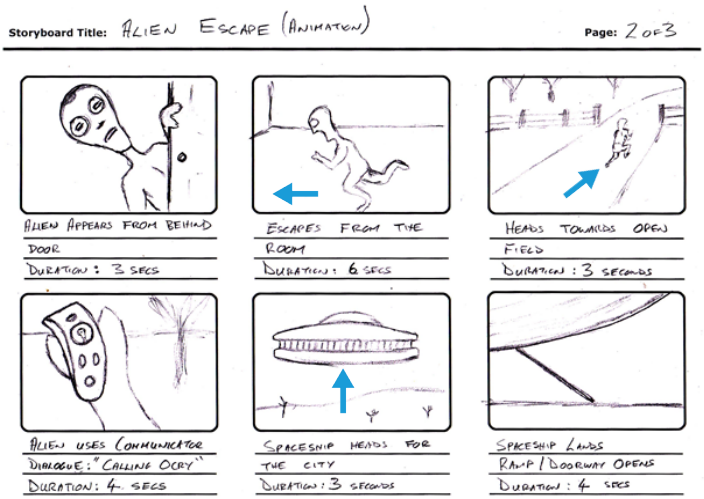
Who uses a storyboard?

The following are some examples of who might use a storyboard:

- Creative designer: eg to illustrate and develop their ideas or as a walkthrough
- Clients: for the creative designer to illustrate their ideas
- Production staff: to know the content, continuity, scene parameters (such as lighting, angles, movement, duration etc) needed for the recording or creation of scenes. Production staff may include camera operators, animators, web designers or game programmers.

Within the film making industry, storyboard artists are used to translate a script or screenplay into a visual form. This helps the Director, department staff and production crew to identify what the story will look like and what will be required for each scene. Storyboards are often in a comic book style with hand drawn images and scenes. Each panel will have dialogue or descriptive text to provide more information on what happens.

An example of a basic storyboard page is shown below:



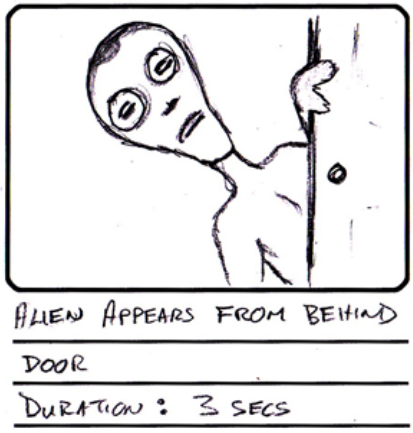
This is a basic storyboard that will be used to create a short animation. It gives an idea of what assets will be needed eg an alien character, spaceship and background scenes. These assets could then be either sourced or created. The duration for each scene can be added up to make sure that the total for the entire animation will be suitable.

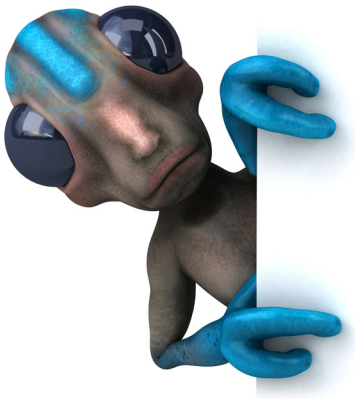
Film making industries use storyboards in their planning and production processes. They employ skilled storyboard artists who interpret the screenplay from a script. At a more basic level, storyboards are a good way to illustrate and document the visual and technical requirements of a production.

The production process

After a storyboard has been finished work can start on the production. This can be creating the content, shooting the video footage, drawing and animating characters or producing a page for a website.

Creating the finished work can be a time consuming process so it is important that the storyboard is detailed, accurate and what is actually wanted!





How to produce a storyboard

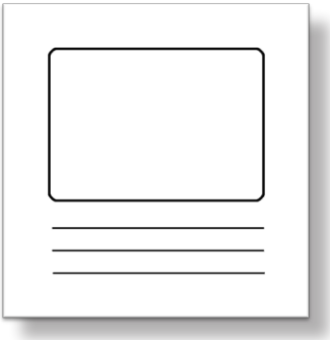
A common way of producing a storyboard is using a template

This can start with a pre-prepared document file such as .doc, .docx, .pdf. Anything between one and six panels/scenes per page is quite typical. Otherwise the layout chosen depends on the type of product to be created. Film storyboards tend to have more detailed content for camera operators for example.

In addition to the visual scene, a series of lines and/or boxes are used.

Example 1 - A basic storyboard panel

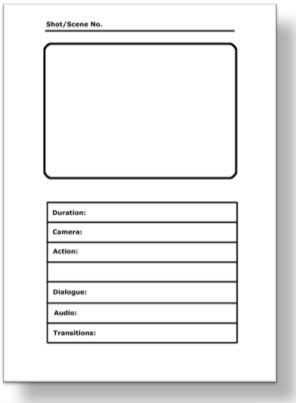
This has a space for the scene content and a series of blank lines underneath. The creator of the storyboard can draw the scene by hand or insert a digital image (if using a software application). Text descriptions of the scene are added. Depending on what the product is and how it will be produced, it may include information such as duration, camera angle, lighting, colours, audio etc.



Example 2 - A more detailed storyboard panel used for video

This example has defined fields:

- Duration: is how long the scene will last
- Camera: this field might contain information about the shot type, angle and any movement. So for example it may state 'close up, over the shoulder and pan right'. This would tell the camera operator to start with a close up shot (say of an actor's face and pan across after a few seconds to a second actor).
- Action: is a description of what will happen in the scene
- Dialogue: Any narrative, voiceover or speech
- Audio: This may identify any background music or sound effects
- Transitions: Can be either 'in' or 'out' eg 'cut to…'



Sometimes arrows are used to show any movement (of an actor, vehicle or other object). This is another way to help describe the scene content and any action. Arrows can also be used to depict camera movement such as panning, zooming, tilt, and so on. They could be drawn in a different colour to distinguish them from other movement, or they may be drawn as 3D arrows.

Descriptive content of a storyboard

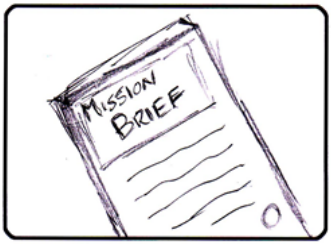
The text fields for each scene or panel may include some (or all) of the following information:

Linear products (eg a film, video or animation)	Non-linear products (eg a computer game)
• Number of scenes • Scene content • Timings • Camera shots eg close up, mid, long • Camera angles eg over the shoulder, low angle, aerial • Camera movement eg pan, tilt, zoom or using a track and dolly • Lighting eg types, direction • Sound eg dialogue, sound effects, ambient sound, music • Locations eg indoor studio or other room, outdoor	• Number of display screens • Screen content (foreground, background navigation, banners, information displays etc) • Initial view (and whether the screen uses scroll bars to view additional content) • Colours, fonts and page or screen layout • User interaction (eg buttons, rollovers) • Sound (if used)

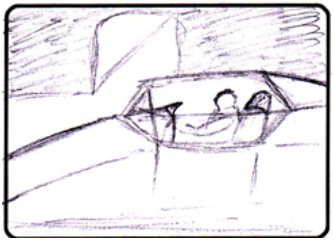
When using a storyboard to plan a non-linear product such as an information display, there is no pre-defined sequence. The user will decide where to navigate to and in what order the content is viewed. However, the designer can still document the pre-production process using a storyboard. As the user navigates to each section, the product will follow its own pre-determined 'story' or sequence of actions or events.

A computer game is another example of a non-linear product but most games still have some sort of story or sequence of events. This might be a challenge or puzzle that has to be solved. Many console games have video clips to introduce the environment for the game player. The game objectives can also be explained in this way. The development of a playable game is a time consuming process so a detailed pre-production storyboard is a great asset.

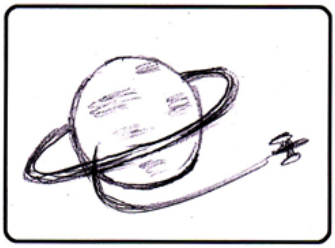
In the following example, the game is introduced using concept art sketches and the descriptions explain the gameplay. If presenting a game proposal to a client, this would be a good way to show your ideas before any commitment is made to invest in the development.



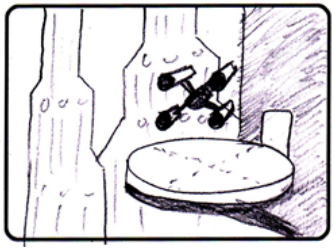
GAME/MISSION OBJECTIVES
- USER SELECTABLE
To denote when 'Mission Brief' is selected, image will Zoom In to screen of the communication device shown and readout will scroll through with text. Then dissolve to panel 2...



VIDEO CLIP
- CLIMB INTO SPACE SHIP



LEAVES THE PLANET SURFACE



GAME PLAY
- TO FIND LANDING PAD

The game creation process would transform the concept art sketches into a realistic game scene and environment.

Note:

Storyboards should not include scenes from the finished product – this would not demonstrate the creation of a storyboard as a planning activity.

Methods of creating storyboards

The first decision is whether to use digital or paper based formats.

Good hand drawing skills are not essential unless you want to develop a career as a storyboard artist. If the storyboard will be used to sell an idea to a client then strong visuals will be needed. Otherwise, if it is just for you then very simple diagrams and sketches can be enough.

If representing people a simple 'stick person' is a quick and easy approach. The important thing here is that the story is clear so that you can remember your ideas at a later time. The scene content and story can always be changed and adapted if you have better ideas or need something a bit different.

The main methods and options are:

- Use of paper based templates (or custom designed)
- Software choices and platform options (eg using a computer or tablet)
- Use of templates in software options (ie different types for different products)
- Requirements for annotations to each scene – again this depends on what type of product it will be.

Another option sometimes used within the industry is to produce an animatic, which is an animated version of a storyboard used in pre-production. This is similar to CGI or stop motion animation and may use still images that are sequenced together in a moving image product. This gives a more realistic visual feel for what the intended final product will look like.

Even with hand drawn artwork many storyboards are assembled in a digital software application. This allows scenes to be added, deleted or moved very easily. Adobe Photoshop is often used but a number of dedicated applications are also available. Examples include Storyboard Lite, Frameforge 3D Studio, Storyboard Artist and Storyboard Quick. Tablet devices can also be used. There are several apps now available that can be used to create basic storyboards, including those that are designed for creating comic strips.

Storyboards

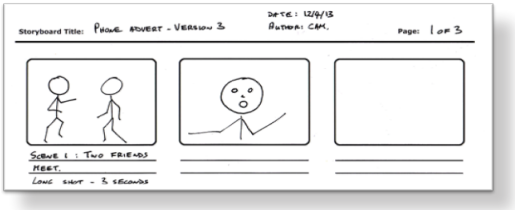
Working with a storyboard

Once a storyboard has been created it should be stored safely and securely. After all, the storylines for blockbuster films are highly guarded secrets and you wouldn't want anybody copying your best ideas. By all means, copyright your work with the © symbol, your name and date. The storyboard will be a reference document when actually creating the final work, whether a video, animation, interactive product or game. If there is a team of people that will work on the production then they will want to extract key points. So a camera operator will be interested to see what sort of camera shots and angles are required. This will help them to plan what equipment and resources they will need as well as what the locations are. They might want to go to the location (especially if outside) for a recce prior to shooting any video.

A developer of interactive media will need to identify what colour schemes, fonts, assets (eg logos, images, text) and resources will be needed. This will help the developer to create a template or master page that will form the basis of the product.

Making changes and version control

After finishing a storyboard, production constraints often mean that some changes have to be made. A decision can be made whether to update the storyboard or not. If only small changes are made it is probably not worth it. However, any major changes could benefit from creating a new version of the storyboard to review if the story still works or if there will be any discontinuity. If changes are made, keep the original version intact if possible. Following a system of naming conventions and version control is good practice.



Conclusion

Storyboards are valuable pre-production documents and an important planning technique. They are an effective way to record your own ideas for future use. Also, they are a concise and effective way to share knowledge about what is required in the production phase, which is especially important when working in a team.

Storyboards should only be used in an appropriate context. Examples of linear and non-linear products have been identified in this guide. In general, this means that there will be multiple visual scenes or screens in the final product. They may or may not be connected by a fixed timeline or sequence depending on what the product is and whether there is any user interactivity.

Choices can be made on how to create the storyboard in a suitable format. Two important factors here are what resources are available and who will be using the storyboard. This determines the range of information and format for distribution.

If the product will be produced by a team, the content of the text information must be relevant to their needs as well as just telling the story.

Useful links and resources

- Storyboard template [.doc] as shown in this guide is available from OCR
http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/137690-unit-r081-storyboard-activity-lesson-element-learner-activity.doc

- Creative iMedia support materials
http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/creative-imedia-level-1-2-award-certificate-j807-j817/

Web searches suggested for:

- Storyboard template (image results suggested for a range of different layouts)
- Storyboard software (see examples below)

Software:

- Storyboard Lite http://storyboard-lite.software.informer.com
- Frameforge 3D Studio www.frameforge3d.com/Products
- Storyboard Artist www.powerproduction.com/storyboard-artist.html
- Storyboard Quick www.powerproduction.com/storyboard-quick-software.html
- Toonboom www.toonboom.com
- Comic Life http://plasq.com/products/comiclife2/win
- Media Stage www.immersiveeducation.eu/index.php/mediastagepg

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