

# Visual Storytelling & Storyboarding — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a finished piece of your own. You will pick a short project, break it into beats, thumbnail and draw panels, annotate them with real shot language, cut an animatic, and assemble a handoff package. Work through one section per module, in order, and by the end you will hold a complete, pitch-ready storyboard.

## Reading the Language of Shots

Train your eye on shot size, angle, and the 180-degree rule before you draw anything.

### Exercise: Shot-Size Teardown

Choose a two-minute scene from a film, ad, or video you admire. Pause it at ten different moments and analyze each frozen frame. Write your answers, then look for the pattern in how the filmmaker moves up and down the shot-size ladder.

- For each of the ten frames, name the shot size (EWS, WS, MS, CU, or ECU).
- Where does the scene push closer, and what emotional beat is happening at that moment?
- Which single frame carries the most feeling, and is it the closest shot? Why or why not?
- Rewrite one wide moment as a close-up: what would the audience gain and lose?

### Worksheet: Angle and POV Decision Sheet

Pick one key moment from your own planned project. Decide the camera angle and point of view deliberately, justifying each choice against the feeling you want.

Moment / beat description

Who holds the power in this moment

Chosen camera height (eye level / low / high / Dutch / birds-eye)

Reason for that height in one sentence

Point of view (objective / POV / over-the-shoulder)

Eyeline and screen direction notes

### Checklist: 180-Degree Rule Pre-Flight

- I drew a top-down floor plan with the axis of action marked as a dotted line
- I chose one side of the line for all camera positions in this scene
- Each character keeps a consistent left/right screen position across cuts

- [ ] Eyelines match: a character looking frame-right is answered by one looking frame-left
- [ ] If I cross the line, it is on a motivated move, cutaway, or neutral head-on shot
- [ ] Movement direction (left-to-right or right-to-left) stays consistent for any journey

## From Script to Beats to Shot List

Convert your idea into a structured beat list, beat board, and a complete shot list.

### Exercise: Beat It Out

Take the project you want to storyboard (a 30-to-90-second video, a short scene, or a pitch sequence) and reduce it to its essential beats on a single row of index cards before drawing anything.

- Write your controlling idea in one sentence: what does this story prove?

---

- List your beats in order, no more than will fit on one row of cards.

---

- Identify the inciting incident and the climax among your beats.

---

- For each beat, note in three words the feeling the audience should have.

---

### Worksheet: Beat Board Planning Grid

For each beat, plan the single strongest image that captures it. Fill one row per beat. This becomes the seed for your full panels.

Beat number

---

Beat in one line

---

Key image / what we see

---

Shot size for the anchor frame

---

Staging idea (foreground / midground / background)

---

Number of thumbnail variations to try

---

### Exercise: Speed Thumbnailing Sprint

Set a two-minute timer per thumbnail. For each key beat, draw three to five matchbox-sized frames using simple shapes and stick figures, then choose the strongest. Do not render; chase staging and silhouette only.

- Which thumbnail reads most clearly when you squint at it as a silhouette?

---

- Did your first idea win, or did a later variation beat it? Note what changed.

---

- Mark the chosen thumbnail for each beat and number it back to the beat.

---

- Where did simple shapes fail to communicate, and what would fix it?

---

### Checklist: Shot List Readiness Check

- [ ] Every shot has a unique number in playback order (1A, 1B, 1C...)
- [ ] Each beat has at least a wide for context and a closer shot for emotion
- [ ] Camera move is named for every shot (static, pan, tilt, push, pull, track, handheld)
- [ ] Lens intent is noted in plain language (wide to exaggerate, long to compress)

- Each shot has a duration estimate and the total matches my target runtime
- Coverage exists so an editor could cut the scene with no gaps

## Drawing and Annotating Storyboard Panels

Compose, lay out, draw, and annotate your panels so any crew can read them.

### Exercise: Compose for the Eye

Take three of your chosen thumbnails and redraw each as a full panel in the correct aspect ratio, applying composition rules deliberately. Then run the squint check on each.

- Where did you place the subject on the rule-of-thirds grid, and why there?

---

- What leading line or eyeline points the audience toward the subject?

---

- Did you give correct headroom and lead room? Note any frame that felt off.

---

- Squint test: can you read the shot from the silhouette alone? If not, what did you restage?

---

### Worksheet: Panel Annotation Block

For each finished panel, complete this annotation block so the shot is unambiguous. Write the action in present tense as what we see, not as backstory.

Shot number

---

Shot size and angle (e.g., MCU, low angle)

---

Camera move (static / pan / tilt / push / pull / track / rack focus)

---

Action in one present-tense line

---

Dialogue or voiceover

---

Sound effects

---

Duration in seconds

---

### Checklist: Panel Page Quality Check

- Every panel is drawn in the final aspect ratio (16:9, 9:16, 2.39:1, or 1:1)
- Panels are laid out in reading order and numbered continuously across pages
- Subject motion uses arrows inside the frame; camera moves use edge arrows or nested frames
- Line weight and level of finish are consistent across all panels
- A one-page legend defines every arrow and motion symbol I used
- Each panel has a complete annotation block beside or beneath it

## Animatics, Pitching, and the Production Handoff

Cut a timed animatic, rehearse a pitch, and package the board for a real team.

### Exercise: Cut the Animatic

Export your panels as numbered images and assemble them on a timeline in a free editor, holding each for its shot-list duration. Add scratch audio and watch it end to end at least twice.

- Where does the cut drag, and which holds did you shorten to fix it?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Where does it rush, and which beats needed more time to land?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Did scratch audio reveal a problem the silent panels hid? Describe it.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is the final runtime, and how close is it to your target?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Worksheet: Pitch Script Builder

Draft the narration you will perform when presenting the board. Rehearse it aloud twice and time it before any real pitch.

One-sentence premise and goal of the piece  
\_\_\_\_\_

Opening line spoken before the first panel  
\_\_\_\_\_

Beats to slow down on (emotional moments and climax)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Beats to move quickly through (transitions and connective shots)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Closing line on the payoff or call to action  
\_\_\_\_\_

Two questions I expect and my prepared answers  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Worksheet: Feedback-to-Action Log

After your pitch, capture every reaction and convert vague notes into specific, actionable changes before you revise.

Reviewer  
\_\_\_\_\_

Raw reaction (their exact words)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Clarifying question I asked  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Specific actionable note I extracted  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Decision (change / keep / discuss) and reason  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Affected shot numbers  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

## Checklist: Production Handoff Package Check

- [ ] Numbered, annotated panels are complete and in order
- [ ] The shot list table mirrors the panel numbers exactly
- [ ] A one-page symbol legend is included
- [ ] The animatic file is attached as the timing reference
- [ ] A short style and reference note states aspect ratio, look, and inspiration
- [ ] Every file follows the naming convention project\_storyboard\_vNN\_YYYY-MM-DD
- [ ] Exactly one version is marked current and the team has been told which

## Your Action Plan

1. Choose a single short project to storyboard: a 30-to-90-second video, a one-scene narrative, or a pitch sequence.
2. Write the controlling idea in one sentence and break the story into beats on one row of index cards.
3. Build a beat board with one strong image per beat, exploring three to five thumbnails for each key moment.
4. Expand the chosen beats into a full shot list with size, angle, move, lens intent, and duration for every shot.
5. Set your aspect ratio, lay out panel pages, and draw all panels fast using simple shapes and the squint check.
6. Annotate every panel with arrows and a complete shot block, and add a one-page symbol legend.
7. Export panels and assemble a timed animatic with scratch audio, then iterate the holds until the pacing works.
8. Write and rehearse a three-minute pitch, then present the board and log feedback as actionable notes.
9. Revise based on notes, re-cut the affected animatic segments, and re-export a clearly versioned board.
10. Assemble the handoff package (panels, shot list, legend, animatic, style note) and mark one current version.









