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Storyclock Applied to Learning

A GUIDE TO TURNING LEARNING
EXPERIENCES INTO STORIES

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NEW TO MAESTRO?

We're Maestro, a learning innovation company. We're disrupting traditional learning through bold, creative solutions that inspire meaningful change. In an industry that has long been neglected, we've taken the stance that learning is a positive force for change.

Our team's dedication to their disciplines—strategy, design, media, and engineering—means that we can solve all kinds of problems through learning. Get to know us better by checking out our *Learning Principles* or delving into our *library of learning resources*.

Introduction

At Maestro, we believe that learning should create change. That means creating experiences that learners connect with and keep them engaged. Neuroscience shows that storytelling is one of the best ways to deliver a message that influences behavior. We've always incorporated elements of story into our learning experiences, but now we've discovered a tool that helps make that process simple and intentional: Storyclock.

Created by Seth Worley of Plot Devices, Storyclock is a simple method for visualizing your story like a clock. He created it for screenwriters, which is how it found its way to the creatives on our Media team. It didn't take long for them to realize that this methodology worked great not just for video production but for designing learning experiences too. It's an effective (and super simple) way to create a compelling, well-organized learning story that keeps learners engaged.

In this guide, we'll introduce you to how Storyclock works and take you through the 5-step process for using it to turn learning experiences into a story. We'll explore how to visualize your learning experience, organize your ideas, and infuse elements of story. Let's get to it!

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By the way, we have an on-demand webinar all about the science of story—if you like where this guide is headed, be sure to check out the webinar too!

What is Storyclock?

Let's start with the basics: Storyclock is a simple method for visualizing a story on a clock to help organize your ideas and identify and fill any gaps using symmetry.

Storyclock's creator, Seth Worley, wanted to empower screenwriters to better organize their ideas into a cohesive story. Because turning ideas into a story is hard: good stories have a "rhythm and rhyme" to them that effectively introduces, foreshadows, and pays off plot points in an engaging way. It takes work to get that right, but Storyclock helps simplify the process by giving you a bird's eye view of your story, or in this case, your learning experience. From there, you can better visualize how different elements of your story can play off of one another. Instead of filling gaps on your clock with "fluff" that doesn't move the story forward, you can use symmetry to better connect every moment to major plot points.

Do famous screenwriters use Storyclock? Maybe not, but Seth has proven his methodology by retroactively plotting out classic Hollywood movies using Storyclock. Take a look at the plot of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, mapped onto Storyclock.
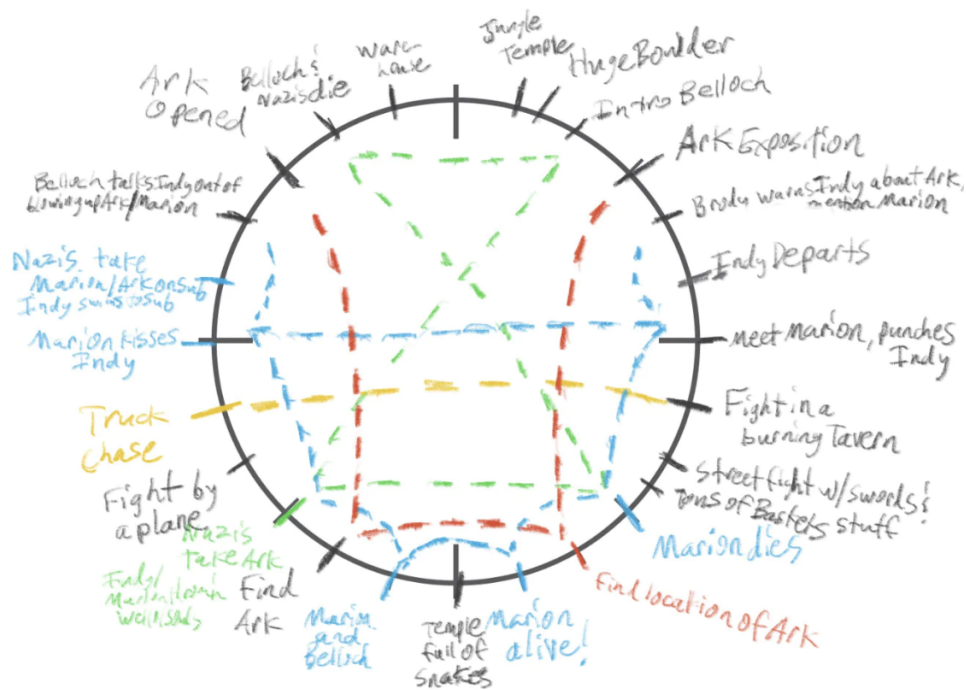

Image courtesy of Plot Devices Co.

The idea here is that great stories naturally contain the same basic ingredients. Once you start using the Storyclock lens, you start to realize that there's symmetry in how key plot points are woven into good stories. Stories with symmetry keep the audience engaged because everything is relevant and consequential. Wouldn't your learners want the same?

Why Storyclock is right for L&D

Linear thinking is in fundamental opposition to good storytelling. But so often, the typical learning design process starts with an outline, which often translates to linear courses. As you get comfortable with Storyclock, you may find that it can replace the outline step altogether.

With Storyclock, you're building an experience that will focus learners' attention and get them emotionally invested in the characters, leading them to internalize the story's lessons. It's a much more efficient route to achieving the desired behavior change—and it's often more enjoyable for learners too. Using Storyclock is a small change that can dramatically impact how learners connect with your learning material.

Wondering the right time to bring Storyclock into the design process? We recommend using Storyclock following content discovery and after you've identified the learning solution, but before handing things off to instructional designers. We also recommend holding a brainstorm (step #2 in our five-step process!) to get your team thinking creatively about the best way to structure your content into a story. Now it's time to dive in— here's the five-step process for applying Storyclock to learning.

LEARNING
SOLUTION
IDENTIFIED   →   STORYCLOCK   →   HAND-OFF TO
                                                  INSTRUCTIONAL
                                                  DESIGNER
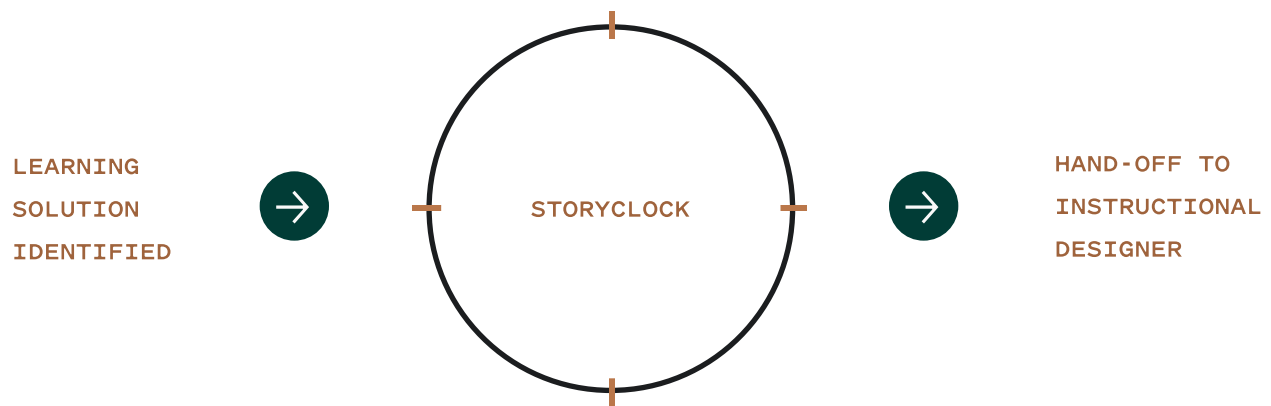
5 steps for using Storyclock in learning

STEP 1   **START THE CLOCK**

The first step is to picture your story—your learning experience—like a clock. Your clock represents the length of your course. This step helps you start thinking in time increments and begin to visualize the balance of content and how different ideas can connect throughout the experience. Let's say you're writing a 30-minute course. The 3 o'clock mark represents seven minutes of course time, the thirty-minute mark represents fifteen minutes in, and so on.

:30

:22   :07

:15
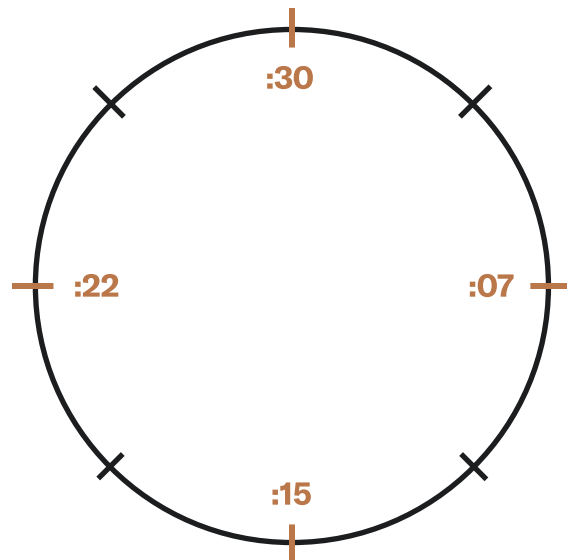
STEP 2   **THE LIGHTBULB MOMENT**

Now that you have your clock, it's time to generate ideas. If you're brainstorming with a team (which we recommend!), be sure to _**brief them on the learning objectives**_. Everyone joining the brainstorm session should have a full understanding of the problem statement, insights from your learning audience, success criteria, and any constraints.
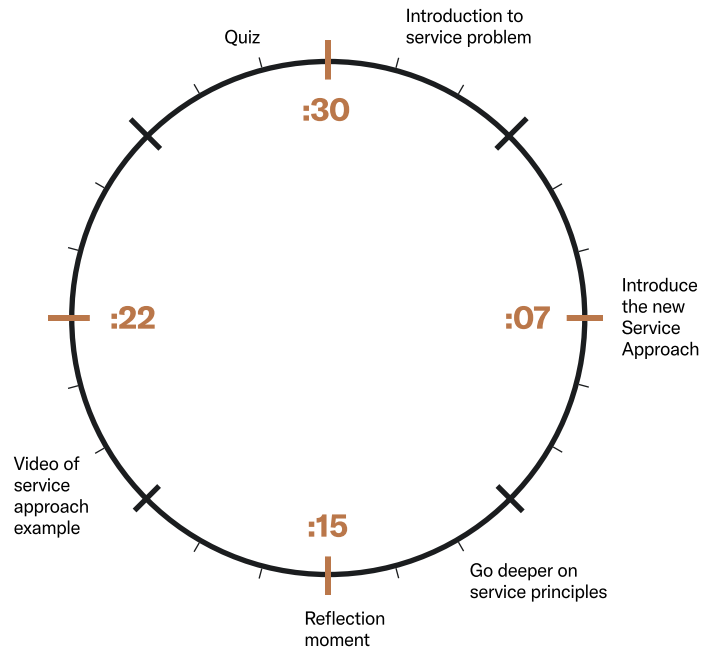
At this point, you likely already have a grasp of the learning solution and the basic content topics you'll need to cover. This is an opportunity to creatively brainstorm ideas for themes, content, interactions, and characters that will help create a compelling story. During this process, quantity is greater than quality. Get as many ideas down as possible—you don't have to use them all!

Theme ideas	Content ideas
Introducing new service approach How mission and vision inform new service approach	Video walk-through of service example Service principles Establish the problem/concerns with current service
Characters	**Interaction ideas**
Key roles to target: • front desk • housekeeping • maintenance Personas: • the know-it-all • the service pro • the one who wants to get better but doesn't know how	Click & reveal pro-tips for each service principle Reflection questions/free response Downloadable tool for reflection response (to use for 1:1 conversations post-training) Branching scenarios

Once you have all of your ideas down, it's time to start prioritizing. What must be included in the learning experience? What order do they need to appear in? Take those main learning moments and plot them on your Storyclock.
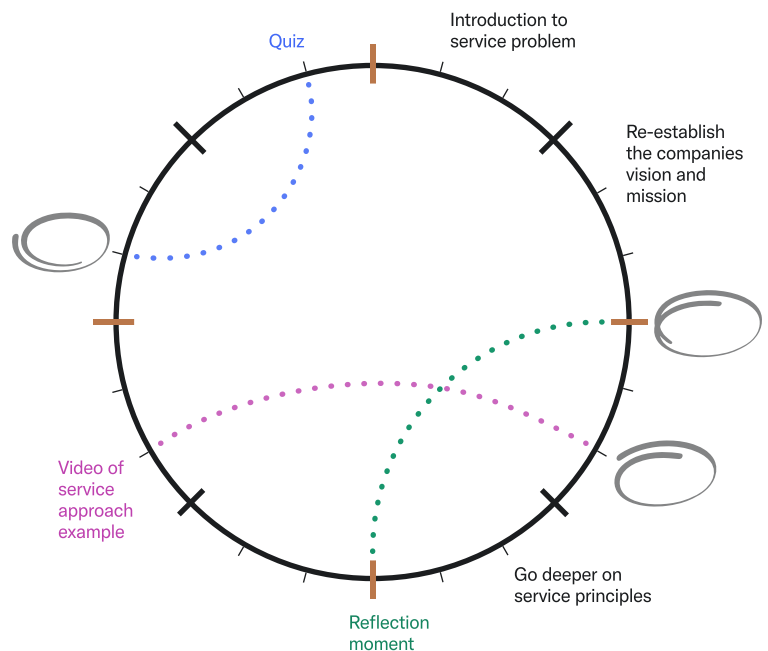
There are likely many great ideas from your brainstorm that won't make it onto the clock, either because they don't align with your learning objectives or don't fit the story. Set those great ideas aside for another time. Trying to fit too much content into one experience can fill it with superfluous content that doesn't serve learners or the story.

Quiz
Introduction to service problem
:30
Introduce the new Service Approach
:07
:22
Video of service approach example
:15
Go deeper on service principles
Reflection moment

Here's where the magic happens. You have your clock and you've begun to plot out your main learning moments. Take a look at the bird's-eye view of your story. Where are there gaps in the learner journey? What ideas can you pull from your brainstorming list to create symmetry in your story?

For example, what's happening on the opposite side of the clock? Is there anything you can set up or pay off? This might be introducing characters early on, creating a conflict, or polling learners and saving the results for later in the course. Repeat this process as you take the main ideas from your freeform session and drop them in where you feel they fit best.
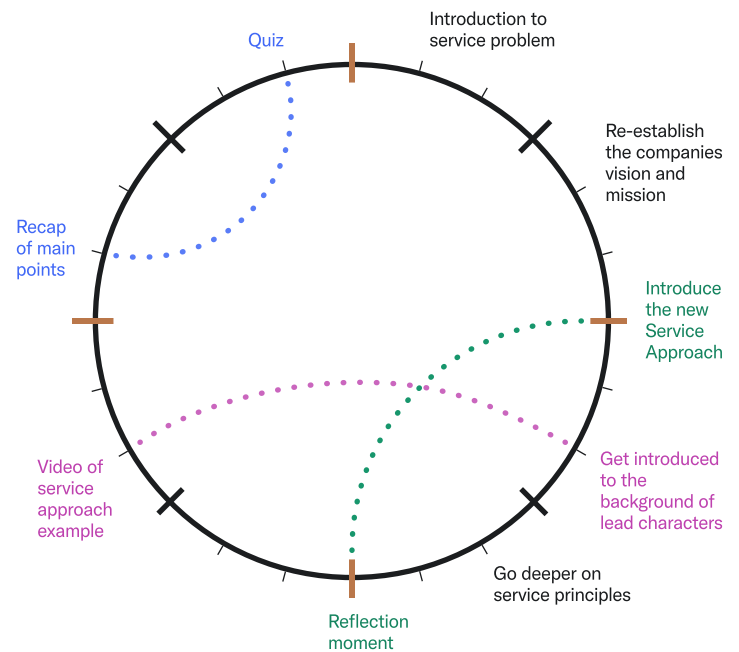

Quiz
Introduction to service problem
Re-establish the companies vision and mission
Video of service approach example
Go deeper on service principles
Reflection moment

By now, your Storyclock is likely taking the shape of a cohesive story. If you have gaps left on your clock, consider how you might fill them with meaningful, relevant content from your ideas list. How could they be integrated to set up or pay off your main learning moments? Do your interactions tie into the main plot of the course? Is a consistent cast of characters integrated throughout the experience? Pairing different learning elements together helps create a connected learning story.

Once your Storyclock is filled in, it's time to start building your outline (but as you get comfortable with Storyclock, you might skip this step). Remember where things fell on the clock, and work with your instructional designers to write your content and interactions with those timings in mind.

Quiz

Introduction to service problem

Re-establish the companies vision and mission

Recap of main points

Introduce the new Service Approach

Get introduced to the background of lead characters

Video of service approach example

Go deeper on service principles

Reflection moment

Put it into practice:
What's your learning story?

Now it's your turn! Use the table below to get down as many ideas as possible that will help create a compelling story—you don't have to use them all!

Theme ideas	Content ideas
Characters	**Interaction ideas**

Once you have all of your brainstorming ideas down, it's time to start prioritizing. Use the Storyclock below to start turning your next learning experience into a story.

Prompts to keep in mind:

Look at the other side of the clock. How can you build symmetry by setting up or paying off your content? How can you incorporate elements of plot, theme, and character throughout the course?
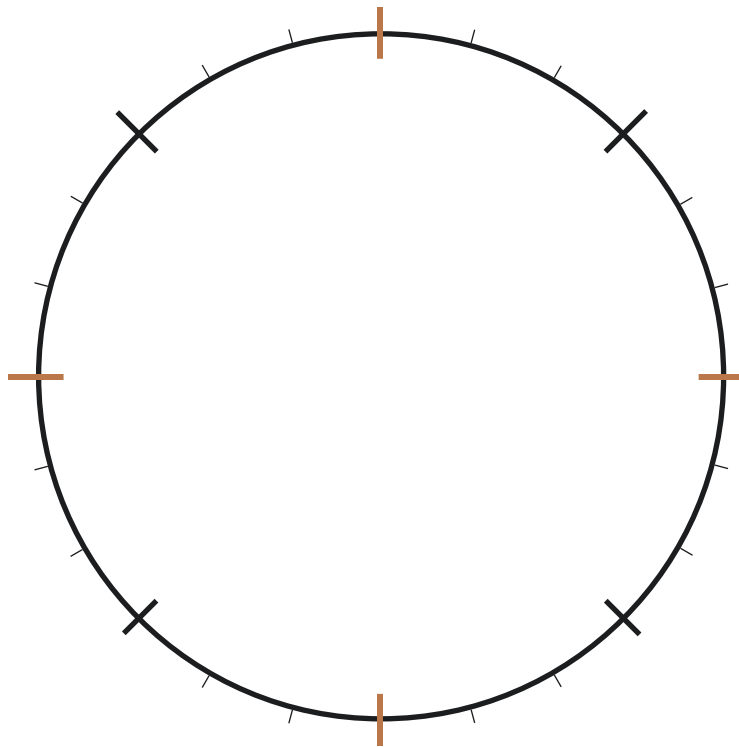
TURN YOUR

learning experiences

INTO

stories

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Interested in partnering up to design your next learning solution? We'd love to talk with you. Reach out to connect with a strategist!

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