

# THE MOTH

<https://themoth.org/share-your-story/storytelling-tips-tricks>

## Storytelling Tips & Tricks: How to tell a stunning story, from our Senior Producer

### WHAT TO DO

#### Be forewarned

Moth stories are told, not read. We love how the storyteller connects with the audience when there is no PAGE between them! Please know your story “by heart” but not by rote memorization. No notes, paper or cheat sheets allowed on stage.

#### Have some stakes

Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? If you can't answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay and is best experienced on the page, not the stage.

Start in the action.

#### Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention

No: “So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I'd climb the mountain the next morning.”

Yes: “The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure.”

#### Know your story well enough so you can have fun!

Watching you panic to think of the next memorized line is harrowing for the audience. Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

### ...AND WHAT NOT TO DO

#### Steer clear of meandering endings

They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!

#### No standup routines, please

The Moth loves funny people but requires that all funny people tell funny stories.

#### No rants

Take up this anger issue with your therapist, or skip therapy and shape your anger into a story with some sort of resolution. (Stories = therapy!)

#### No essays

Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won't work on stage.

#### About that (fake) accent

If your story doesn't work in your own voice, or that of your people of origin, please consider another story. In our experience, imitating accents from another culture or race rarely works and often offends.