

Student Reporting Unit



**MAKING SENSE OF
CORONAVIRUS
THROUGH
STORYTELLING AND
MEDIA MAKING**

Last updated: June, 2020



With many schools closing and teaching moving online, PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs has created a special unit that covers the basics of local community journalism, storytelling, scripting and video editing. These are tough times for everyone, and your stories will add a uniquely critical perspective to coronavirus coverage.

This resource packet is broken up into different pathways that lead you through the steps necessary to tell stories about the coronavirus' impact on you, your family and community. The different options were created to accommodate different levels of difficulty, time-considerations, interest and available resources. Educators can create their own deadlines and timelines.

Office Hours

We are also offering **daily office hours from through Zoom with the SRL Team** to teachers and students interested in virtually connecting. You can take advantage of this time to ask for help, talk through story ideas, troubleshoot audiovisual needs, brainstorm lesson plans, or just hang out and chat about how you're doing. [PLEASE EMAIL our team to find a mutual time to meet virtually.](#)

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTE: In this time of responsible social distancing, reporting must be done in ways that protect student journalists, sources and society at large.

Face to face conversations outside your immediate circle should be replaced with virtual interviews. For decades news organizations have done “remotes” in separate locations with separate cameras. Think of all the YouTube and social media videos of people talking through screens. *SRL team members [created this guide](#) on how to produce remote interviews with FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or other virtual communication platforms. Additionally, producer Jennie Butler of NowThis and Andrew James Benson of Inquire Films shared some secrets about conducting a successful remote interview with SRL. Watch [The Art of the Remote Interview Webinar here](#), co-hosted by The Video Consortium.*

[Visit SPLC for more on best practices for covering the coronavirus pandemic.](#)

PATH 1: Quick Take

Tell us your story. Your goal is to produce a 1-3 minute video of your life during the pandemic.

PATH 2: Full News Package

Tell someone else's story. One of the most important parts of journalism is doing honor by someone else's story. Take this responsibility seriously, but also have fun!

PATH 3: Confronting Misinformation and Social Commentary

Learn how to identify and assess coronavirus-themed memes and then flip the script by learning how to make your own fact-based memes and other social commentary content during this period of uncertainty.

GLOSSARY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Skills in this unit cover NGSS, State Standards, ISTE, ELA, CTE, Media Literacy:



PATH 1: Quick Take

Tell us your story. Your goal is to produce a 1-3 minute video or written piece of your life during the pandemic.

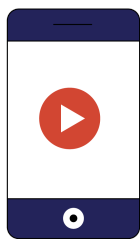
SUBMISSION Update: SRL has updated the submission process for videos produced using this curriculum. We will be utilizing Dropbox instead of Google Drive. New Dropbox links for uploading have been added to all assignments.

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR SITUATION.

- Put pen to paper and write down all the ways in which coronavirus has affected you. Use this to get your thoughts together and think about your friends and family members, too. Are you stuck at home? Scared for yourself or loved ones? Worried about your job? Grieving cancelled events?
- If the virus hasn't impacted you directly, why not? What are you hearing?

STEP 2: STORYBOARD YOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVE

On paper or with your computer/electronic device, use the following prompts and questions to create the **BEGINNING, MIDDLE and END** of your piece:



- Describe who you are (age, grade), where you live, and where you go to school.
- Are there cases of coronavirus in your community? What do you know?
- At what point did coronavirus become a serious concern for you, your family, school? If it hasn't yet, why not?

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- How has this global pandemic impacted you directly? Explain using specific examples - such as - your school cancelled games, dances, classes, etc..

STEP 3: PRODUCE YOUR STORY

- After you have gathered or written all of the information that you want to include, **choose the medium you'd like to use to share your story and follow the hyper-linked directions:**
 - [Written](#) - best for print media
 - [Social](#) - best for mobile phones
 - [Digital](#) - best for more traditional cameras and video production methods
- It's up to you to decide what kind of recording device to use based on what you have experience with and access to. Options include mobile phones, camcorders and more sophisticated cameras like DSLRs.
- Upload videos here: [VIDEO SUBMISSIONS](#)
- Anyone on-camera must fill out the [CV DIGITAL RELEASE FORM](#)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES: As days turn into weeks in self-isolation, we are developing additional assignments for students to produce. Check out the latest prompts that ask students to think, create and inform.

- **"Lost and Found" Video Challenge** - Our daily lives have changed dramatically. SRL wants you to reflect on what you've lost and found. Research has shown that journaling and practicing gratitude can be effective stress management tools.
 - [Teacher version](#)
 - [Student version](#)
- [Mental Health Under Lockdown](#)
- [Submit to PBS American Portrait](#): a national storytelling project that asks people all over the country to submit their stories by responding to thought provoking prompts.

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- **Brief But Spectacular Challenge**: For teachers and students
 - **KQED Above the Noise**: WATCH this special series from Above the Noise on how young people are coping with COVID-19 and engage students in discussions on [KQED Learn](#).



Tell someone else's story. One of the most important parts of journalism is doing honor by someone else's story. Take this responsibility seriously, but also have fun!

Write down all the possible coronavirus stories.

- How is the coronavirus pandemic affecting lives?
- How are people dealing with anxiety, fear and the mental health effects of the pandemic?
- What about students who don't have internet access, or food security?
- What are communities doing to help children access:
 - Safe spaces, heat and shelter
 - Food and meals that were provided in schools
 - Online assignments and general internet connections
 - Books, textbooks and other supplies from school
- How are students really spending their time?
- How does staying home affect family dynamics?
- What about students at risk of dropping out?
- Are jobs in danger?
- What are the economic impacts on jobs and businesses in your community?

A vertical film strip with 12 frames, each containing a black square. The film strip is oriented vertically and has a black border. The frames are arranged in a column, and each frame contains a single black square in the center. The film strip is shown with sprocket holes on the left and right sides.

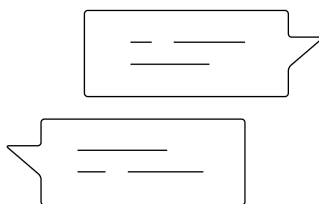
STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR CHARACTERS.

****REMINDER:** Face to face conversations outside your immediate circle should be replaced with virtual interviews. [USE THIS VIRTUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE](#)****** Additionally, producer Jennie Butler of NowThis and Andrew James Benson of Inquire Films shared some secrets about conducting a successful remote interview with SRL. Watch [The Art of the Remote Interview Webinar here](#), co-hosted by The Video Consortium.

Your main character can be a friend, parent, worker, business owner, doctor, teacher, caregiver, etc. Who is willing to tell their story? Do research and fill out the [SRL Pitch Sheet](#). Chat with potential interview subjects to confirm that they are willing and able to participate. Take good notes. If you contact someone and they don't seem like the best fit, ask them to give you suggestions about who else to reach out to.

You can choose to interview just one character or weave together a story with several characters that have different points of view about the same topic

Questions to think about:



- **WHAT'S YOUR BIG IDEA?** If your audience only learns one thing from your story, what would it be?
- **IS THIS A STORY?** Does it have a beginning, middle, and end? An interesting character?
- **CAN YOU PULL THIS OFF?** Think about logistics: weather, time, length, access to people and filming locations. Is your idea realistic?

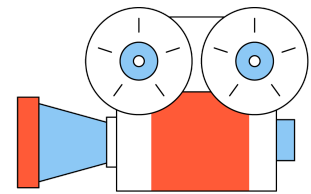
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- **IS IT VISUAL?** Is video the best way to tell this story, or how can you make a topic that's clearly newsworthy into a compelling visual piece?

STEP 3: WRITE YOUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

Avoid yes or no questions. Have an idea of what you want to hear, but let the conversation flow.

STEP 4: TIME TO FILM!

Use the Level Up tutorials for ideas about how to set up your camera, frame your shots, find strong lighting and capture good audio. **B-ROLL, LIGHTING, Principles Of Photography** (Teachers - assign these worksheets help build skills.)



Think about **the concept of b-roll sequencing** and practice shooting good b-roll.

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[How to Conduct Virtual Interviews](#)

[The Art of the Remote Interview Webinar](#)

STEP 5: THINK VISUALLY

Besides your characters talking, what can you film to bring your characters and their story to life? [Write down the shots you want to gather using this organizer.](#)

STEP 6: TRANSCRIBE THE VIDEO YOU RECORD

You can do this by hand or [use a site that creates a word file of your video](#) like [otter.ai](#). Make sure to GO BACK and listen to fix spelling errors and become more familiar with the material you captured.

STEP 7: HIGHLIGHT YOUR BEST SOUNDBITES and cut them out with scissors.

STEP 8: IDENTIFY YOUR STORY'S BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END

What is the best way to start your story? Think about the videos that you watch online: how do they capture your attention?

Remember: The first 7 seconds of your video are critical. Use your best b-roll or most compelling soundbite.

How do you want your story to end? What do you want your audience to feel?

What do you want us to be thinking about after we watch your story?

Arrange your soundbites to tell your story.



STEP 9: WRITE YOUR SCRIPT USING THIS TEMPLATE that includes a beginning, middle and end before you start editing. Take a look at this script lesson for inspiration.

- Consider whether your story needs voiceover (VO). A voiceover is the connective tissue that holds the parts of your story together. You can also use it to include information that was missing from what your characters said. Listen to student reporter Mason Baum's voiceover in this recent piece on the NewsHour.

STEP 10: EDIT YOUR VIDEO.

Use the highlighted soundbites to create a video montage on your timeline. If it's your first time editing, use the Editing Lesson Plan to help you organize your footage, create a project, import, and export your final video.

1. Add b-roll to visually support the audio and cover jump cuts.
2. Pay attention to sound and match levels.
3. Export a rough cut edit, maximum of 4 minutes for review.
 - i. Format: H.264 Preset: Vimeo 1080p Full HD
4. Get feedback from your teacher or ask a friend. Revisit your timeline, make fixes and finalize the piece.

STEP 11: LISTEN TO FEEDBACK AND REVISE YOUR VIDEO AND SCRIPT

1. Edit your final cut with the suggestions
2. Export a final cut. Format: H.264 Preset: Vimeo 1080p Full HD and **SUBMIT YOUR WORK HERE.**

3. Update your script

4. *CELEBRATE! You're done!*



PATH 3: Confronting Misinformation and Social Commentary

Learn how to identify and assess coronavirus-themed memes and then flip the script by learning how to make your own fact-based memes and other social commentary content during this period of uncertainty

STEP 1: FIND A MEME ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

STEP 2: FACT-CHECK THAT MEME


- Check the information shared in the post against information shared by credible sources and see if it measures up
- What credible sources are you using?
- How do you know these are credible sources/ who has the authority to speak on public health information? (this is where we'd have to wade into the waters of POTUS not currently being a credible source...)

STEP 3: FIND INFORMATION -- FROM A CREDIBLE SOURCE -- THAT YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT TO SHARE (WE GIVE SOURCES)

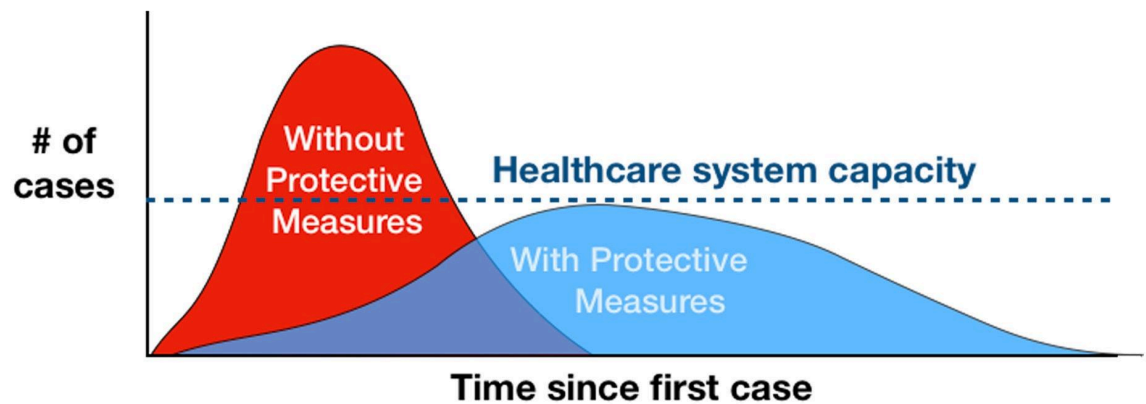
STEP 4: CREATE YOUR OWN MEME SHARING THIS INFORMATION

- ****CITE YOUR SOURCE SOMEWHERE IN THE MEME***

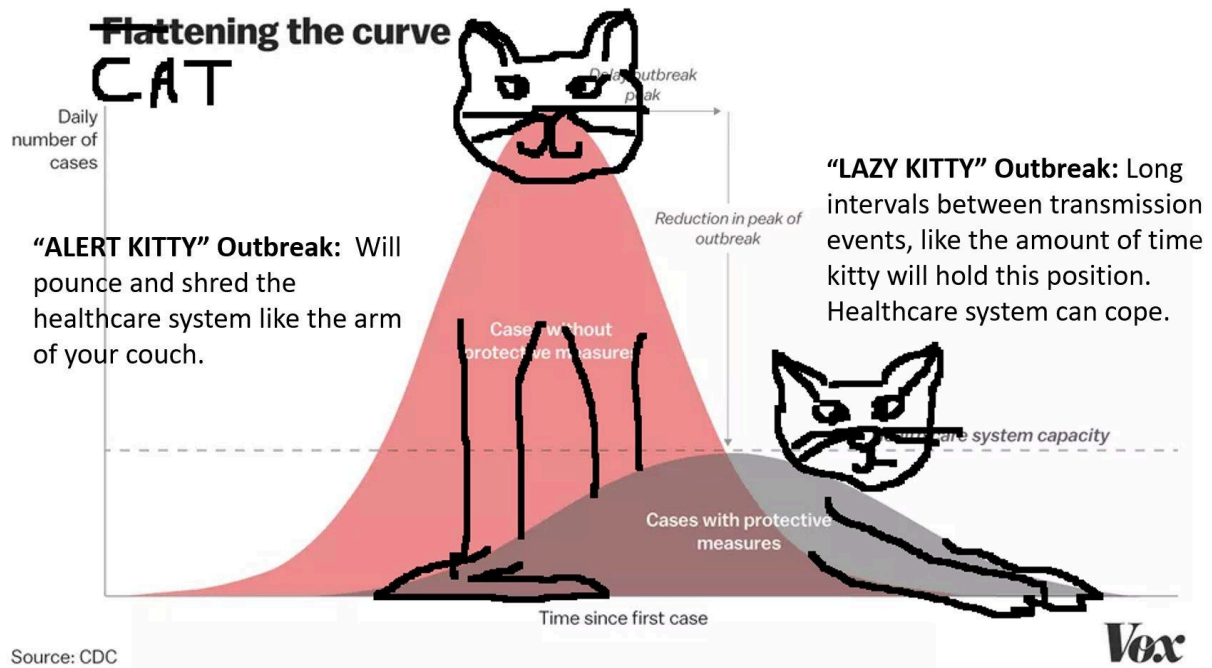
Content ideas - Make it visual/ fun & positive (with respect)

- how to avoid touching face
 - explain covid-19 symptoms
 - explain "social distancing"
- 


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- share stress-relief tips
 - share ways to support/help older people & people at higher risk, due to health conditions
 - ideas for things to do if stuck at home
 - explain “flattening the curve” like example:



Adapted from CDC / The Economist



RESOURCES:

- <https://wakelet.com/wake/f03b1980-f322-4092-Xx-ac6f-0d2f60557c4d>
 - <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/remote-learning-with-office-365-guidance-for-parents-and-guardians-89d514f9-bf5e-4374-a731-a75d38ddd588>
 - <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/responding-to-coronavirus-downloadable-guide-for-schools.html>
 - <https://www.adl.org/blog/the-coronavirus-surfaces-fear-stereotypes-and-scapegoating#>
 - [NAMLE Coronavirus Resources](#)
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Skills in this unit cover NGSS, State Standards, ISTE, ELA, CTE, Media Literacy:

- Write, speak, listen, and use language effectively
- Use cogent reasoning and evidence collection skills
- Conduct short research project to answer a question
- Construct an oral and written argument supported by empirical evidence
- Create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence
- Critical-thinking, problem-solving, analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life.
- News Literacy
- Analyzing data and information
- Communication
 - Communicating clearly
 - Listening
- Video production
 - Framing
 - Lighting
 - Audio capture
 - B-Roll
- Storytelling
 - How to capture your audience's attention
 - Build a story with a beginning, middle and end
 - Writing voice over
- Video Editing

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- File management
 - Sequencing

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