What is a storyboard?

Storyboards help filmmaking teams visualise a film and how to tell the film’s story through images. In a film, the audience follows a story not just through character’s dialogue, but also through their actions. Even objects and settings help tell a story.

You can make decisions about how things will look by creating a storyboard. Each panel in a storyboard represents a camera shot and therefore what the camera will see and show. You do not have to recreate every frame of a film in a storyboard; that would take forever!

The task

**Step 1:** Read the script and shot list provided, then pick out eight key shots. These shots might be the ones you think are most important or the ones that stand out to you. This might be because you can visualise them easily, or you think what’s being shown in the shot is particularly important to the story.

You’ll use these shots to create a short storyboard. Short just means not every shot in the script will be illustrated.

Aim for variety in the shots you pick, for example, a combination of close-ups, long shots and more. You don’t want your storyboard to be full of shots that are exactly the same.

**Step 2:** Once you’ve picked your shots, download and print the storyboard template below, but before you start illustrating, read the box below about composition.

*Notes on composition*

Composition refers to how things such as setting, characters and objects are shown or placed in the camera frame. When you compose a shot in a storyboard, you are deciding what the camera should show the audience, and where everything will be placed within the shots.

As you plan your storyboard panels, think carefully about the shot type you’re using, what you need to show in that shot, and where you want to position everything and everyone.

Your storyboards don’t have to be works of art. They just need to show the shot type, and what you want in the shot. In fact, they can be simple black and white sketches with stick figure characters.

Look at the examples below. They’re simple, but good enough to get across a sense of what’s happening, the layout of the setting, and the body language of the characters.
Another great way of seeing what storyboards are all about is to search for storyboards online from a film you really like. You could take note of the shot types used and the how the storyboard artist has composited their panels.

Here we have a wide shot, also known as a long shot. We can see the two characters clearly and the setting they're in. You don't have to write the type of shot in your storyboard panel like it is here, but you can if it helps. Also remember that with storyboards it's not the end of the world if your drawing goes outside the panel.
Here’s the same scene but with the camera much closer. This is a medium shot also known as a mid shot. Because the camera is focused on two characters, this might also be referred to as a two-shot.

**Step 3:** Start illustrating your storyboard panels with the above in mind. Before you draw your panels, fill out the notes in the section below each panel. This will include any dialogue that is being spoken in the shot, a short description of the action that is occurring in the panel, and also the shot type you’re using. Having this information in front of you as you sketch your panels make it’s clear what you need to include.

**Step 4:** Once you’ve finished, present your storyboard to someone and talk them through your storyboard. What is happening in each panel? Why did you choose those eight shots? Did you have any problems with composition or shot types? Which is your favourite panel that you’ve drawn, and why?