

The Story Connection

Weekly Story Tip

THE OPENING



You Have Four Seconds to Earn the Rest of the Room

Picture a high diver on an impossibly high platform. They leap, twisting and pirouetting through the air, and enter the water with barely a splash. The whole dive takes four seconds.

That is how long your opening has.

In those first seconds, your audience is asking one question:

Is this worth my time?

Four seconds works out at 8 to 10 words at a normal speaking speed. Every one of them has to create impact.

THIS, NOT THAT

THIS

"I made the worst mistake of my career!"

"Our largest client stood up and threatened to walk out of the room."

"The biggest threat to our business isn't our competition. It's sitting in this room."

NOT THAT

"Today I'd like to talk about..."

"I've talked with many customers who are unhappy about the current service levels."

"To succeed, we need to change how we think and operate."

You can stretch it. Ten seconds is about 24 words, and it still works if your opening has a simple structure and the two halves reinforce each other. Go much beyond that and you are rebuilding attention rather than holding it.

For more, read Chapter 7, *Why the First Four Seconds Matter*.

DIFFICULTY RATING

One dot is a quick win you can use today. Five dots takes practice to master. This one is a two.

THE TOPIC LABEL

Tells you which part of storytelling the tip belongs to, so you can see where it fits.

THE HEADLINE

One idea, stated plainly. If you read nothing else, you still take something away.

THE BODY

Short. Two minutes at most. It reminds you of one technique rather than teaching a lesson, because most readers already have the book.

A VISUAL ELEMENT

Every tip carries one. Sometimes a comparison, sometimes a framework, sometimes a checklist. It is the part you are most likely to remember later in the week.

A CHAPTER OR SECTION REFERENCE

Every tip points to exactly where the idea lives in the book, so you can go deeper whenever you want to.

Write your four second opening and post it. Read what others have written, and tell them which ones made you want to hear more.

Share Your Opening

How helpful was this tip?

1

2

3

4

5

Don't have the book yet? Get your copy

Know someone who'd like this? Suggest the book to a friend or colleague

Love the book? Please leave us a review. Every review helps another person find it.

Spot a mistake, or have feedback? We would love to hear from you

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Using it to teach, train, or sell? Come and talk to us first.

We are friendly, and we like hearing what you are building.

SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO

One thing to do, and it changes week to week. Sometimes a template to download, sometimes office hours, sometimes a place to post your work and read what others wrote.

RATE THE TIP

Two seconds. It tells us which techniques land and which ones need more room.