

COMP 3550

2.1 — USER STORIES: STRUCTURE & PURPOSE

Week 2: Planning Artifacts & Project
Architecture

WHY USER STORIES?

- Describe the problem from the user's perspective
- Connect features to real user value
- Short, human-readable, and flexible



THE CLASSIC FORMAT

Format:

As a [role], I want to [goal] so that [reason].”

Break it down:

- Role → Who is the user?
- Goal → What do they want to do?
- Reason → Why does it matter to them?

EXAMPLE (MONSTER BUDDY):

“As a parent, I want to record a custom goodnight message so that my child feels safe and connected at bedtime.”

“As a child, I want to scan my room for friendly monsters so that I can feel brave going to sleep.”



USER STORY ≠ TASK

User Story	Not a User Story
As a parent, I want to record a message so that my child feels safe.	Add a Record button.
As a child, I want to scan for monsters so that I feel brave.	Add the Scan Button to kickstart the scan animation
As a user, I want to earn badges so that I stay motivated.	Implement the “BadgeBoard” API
As a parent, I want a bedtime checklist so that routines are fun.	Add cute emojis to the Bedtime Checklist page

Focus on the user — not the tech!

INVEST CRITERIA FOR GOOD STORIES

Independent

Negotiable

Valuable

Estimatable

Small

Testable

INVEST CRITERIA FOR GOOD STORIES

Independent? ✓ Yes — does not depend on badges, rewards, etc.

Negotiable? ✓ Yes — can discuss “scan” (camera? animation?)

Valuable? ✓ Yes — core emotional comfort feature.

Estimatable? ⚠ Depends on scan complexity (AR vs pretend scan).

Small? ⚠ Could get big if scope creeps (AR vision, voice)

Testable? ✓ Yes — can test child completes scan + feedback

As a child, I want to scan my room for friendly monsters so that I can feel brave going to sleep.

USER STORIES VS. USE CASES

Two different tools – use what fits your team

User Stories	Use Cases
Flexible, informal	Detailed, structured
Focus on <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , and <i>why</i>	Focus on <i>how</i> the system behaves
Written from the user’s point of view	Describes system flows & alternate paths
Great for prioritizing & planning	Great for documenting complex interactions
Example: “As a parent, I want to record a message so my child feels safe.”	Example: “Parent records message → system saves → child plays message.”
Often used in Agile / Scrum	Often used in waterfall / hybrid

PAUSE & REFLECT

Each team member should be writing 1–2 draft user stories based on your team's vision. Aim for clarity and testability. We will be going through them in class