

Communicating our findings

Crafting our own data stories

What we know so far

What a **data story** is

A narrative that leverages data and visualisations to **convey meaningful and insightful messages**.

The **key aspects of data stories**

By presenting data within a narrative framework, we make a **stronger case** for recommendations and **gain buy-in** from decision-makers. Stories can **change perspectives, inspire action, and influence** stakeholders.

How to have **EPIC conversations**

Create deeper connections with others, **align on a shared purpose** with them, **inspire action**, and **encourage significant change**.



Now, we need to practise the art of storytelling.

What you need to do

For this exercise, your task is to **select any topic and/or dataset** that you will **transform into a compelling data story**. Your goal is to create a narrative that **effectively communicates your insights** to your peers. See the [FAQs](#) for additional information.

01. Select a topic and/or dataset that interests you.

You can use anything from social media trends on a specific topic to something you've learned about access to basic water services. You can use the [inspiration slide](#) if you need some ideas.

03. Put together a data story with impact.

Use what you've learned on data stories and the EPIC framework to create a ~10-minute-long data story. Decide who your target audience is and ensure your data story is relevant to them. Use the [feedback guide](#) to ensure you have all the pieces to your story.

02. Research the topic you selected.

You can analyse your dataset in any tool, or simply use the statistics and visualisations on the topic you've found. Remember to reference the sources you use.

04. Get and give feedback, reflect, and improve.

Present your data story to a group of at least three peers. Use the [feedback guide](#) to provide feedback on others' data stories and the [reflection guide](#) to improve on your story.

Some inspiration

Here are a few sample topics to provide inspiration.

Keep in mind that we're not obligated to choose any of these topics, but take note of the story titles as they might spark creativity.



Mobile money mavericks: Revolutionising finance in Africa

Analysing the impact of mobile banking and digital financial services on financial inclusion and economic growth.



Education beyond borders: Bridging the learning gap in rural Africa

Examining challenges and initiatives to improve education access and quality in rural African regions.



From drought to deluge: Africa's climate crises

Investigating the correlation between climate change and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters in Africa.



Junkyard continent: How e-waste threatens Africa's environment

Investigating the environmental and health impact of illegally dumped electronic waste (e-waste) in African countries.



The silent epidemic: Mapping malaria's deadly trail in West Africa

Investigating the prevalence of malaria, its impact on communities, and efforts to combat the disease in West Africa.

Data story checklist

We can use the following checklists to guide us in developing our data stories effectively.

Topic and dataset selection

- ☐ Have I selected a topic and/or dataset that interests me?
- ☐ Is the chosen topic relevant and suitable for the data storytelling exercise?
- ☐ Will I have enough time to get familiar with the topic to be comfortable talking about it to my peers?

Research and data collection

- ☐ Have I conducted thorough research on the chosen topic, including data sources and background information?
- ☐ Have I gathered and properly cited the relevant data for my analysis?
- ☐ Are my data suitable to the topic I've chosen and are the data accurate?

Creating the narrative

- ☐ Do I have an impactful title or catchphrase?
- ☐ Do I have a clear objective for the story? Do I understand why I want to share this specific story?
- ☐ Does my narrative have an introduction, development section, and conclusion?
- ☐ Have I established the context of my story?
- ☐ Have I created a compelling narrative for my data story that follows a logical flow?

Data story checklist

Creating the data story

- ☐ Is my story impactful?
- ☐ Is my story designed to capture the audience's attention, convey key insights, and inspire action or further exploration?
- ☐ Have I included visualisations that effectively support my narrative and key insights?
- ☐ Are the visualisations clear, labelled, and easy for the audience to interpret?
- ☐ Are my visualisations and other visual aids supporting my story, or detracting from it?

Sharing the story

- ☐ Have I rehearsed my delivery to ensure clarity, coherence, and engagement?
- ☐ Have I included some open-ended questions or statements, or a live poll, to engage my audience?
- ☐ Am I open to receiving feedback from peers and incorporating it into my data story?
- ☐ Have I picked a tool that will help me present my story in an effective way and keep my audience engaged?

In this exercise, we need to decide who our audience is and craft the story to their needs.

There are many things we need to consider when developing a data story that has impact.

While it might feel overwhelming, **use this exercise to iterate and learn.**

Giving feedback to your peers

Feedback is not only useful to the person it is given to. It is also a learning experience for the person giving the feedback. Giving feedback also comes with a responsibility.

The rules of **giving meaningful feedback**:

- Be **constructive** and **respectful** in your feedback. Focus on improvement rather than criticising.
- Be **specific** in your feedback. Instead of saying, “It was confusing”, specify what was confusing and why.
- **Balance positive feedback with areas for improvement** to provide a well-rounded assessment.
- Offer **actionable suggestions** for improvement and consider how the presenter can implement them.

In [this document](#)*, we provide you with a rubric to help structure your feedback so that it is constructive and objective.

Remember to **share this feedback document with your peer**, and set up a session to **discuss** what they've done well and could improve on.

*Remember to download the file to your local computer.

Reflection and improvement

Reflection is also a valuable practice that could enhance learning and self-awareness.

Use this same [rubric document](#) to **reflect on how you perceived your own data story and storytelling.**

Also consider the following questions:

- Did completing the checklist translate into excelling at the exercise? If not, **what was missing** or **what should you practise more?**
- Did your reflection on the exercise **match with what your peers provided** as feedback?
- What would you **do differently** the next time you tell this data story or any other story?

Now that you've received feedback and reflected on your ability to tell data stories, you need to **incorporate these insights into your story and story development process.**

Identify the key components missing from the data story and see if you can add it without increasing the complexity.

Take your **revised story back to your peers and discuss** the changes you've made.

Write down the **key things you need to practise and remember** when telling data stories in the future.

FAQs

Must we use the topics provided in this document?

No, you don't have to use any of the topics provided in this document. You can use them as inspiration or speak on anything you're passionate about as long as you use supporting materials and visual aids.

In **what format** should we present our information?

Any format you choose. This exercise is not about how good your visual aids look (we'll get to that later), it's about having materials and visual aids that support the narrative well. Don't get caught up in the format, just tell a really good data story.

How long should our story be and **how much time** should we spend on creating it?

Your story should be no longer than 10 minutes; stories don't need to be long to be impactful. Try to spend at least an hour on planning and developing your story, but if you have more time, use it.

How will we be **assessed**? What should we **submit**?

You won't be assessed and you don't have to submit anything at this point. However, you are encouraged to use this opportunity to practise data storytelling and get feedback from your peers.

What's the point of this exercise if we are not being assessed?

You get to practise one of the most important skills in the fields of data and business. Also, it's a very good starting point for building out the perfect portfolio data project and establishing new collaborations with peers.

FAQs

Are we **allowed to use AI** to create our story?

Yes! AI models such as ChatGPT are great storytellers, but remember, you have to present it to your peers. If it's not your story and you don't seem convinced, they won't be convinced either, and you won't learn anything from this experience. So use AI with care.

Where can we **find the datasets** for our chosen topic?

You won't find data here. You will need to go and find your own dataset if you so choose. Some good places to start looking for free datasets include: [The World Databank](#), [Google Dataset Search](#), and [Kaggle](#).

How should we **reference sources** when conducting research?

You can use any referencing method including direct quotation, paraphrasing, summarising, or citing a whole document. If you have visual aids or datasets, link the sources in your report or presentation so that your peers can have a look at your support materials.

This is the perfect opportunity to try something out of your comfort zone – **challenge yourself** to tell a data story that will **inspire your peers**.