

Crafting Powerful **60-Second** Stories for Nonprofit Fundraising

Master the art of concise storytelling that
inspires donors and drives fundraising.



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This mini-course is divided into five modules that will guide you through the process of crafting effective 60-second stories for fundraising. You'll learn:

1. **Complete vs. Incomplete Stories** – Understanding the difference and how to craft each for maximum impact.
2. **The Foundations of a 60-Second Story** – The key elements that make up a compelling short story.
3. **Templates for Different Uses** – Practical templates for written appeals, social media, and live presentations.
4. **Where and How to Use 60-Second Stories** – Best practices for integrating stories into fundraising campaigns.
5. **Practice Story Template** – A structured template you can use repeatedly to refine your storytelling skills.

A well-crafted 60-second story can captivate donors, deepen emotional engagement, and drive donations. This mini-course provides a structured approach to crafting compelling stories for written appeals, social media, video content, and live presentations.

Let's jump in.

Module 1: Complete vs. Incomplete Stories

Fundraising stories generally fall into two categories:

1. **Complete Stories:** These tell the story of someone who has already been helped. They demonstrate impact but can sometimes lack urgency.
2. **Incomplete Stories:** These focus on someone who still needs help. The donor is the missing piece that brings the story to a resolution. These stories create more urgency and emotional engagement.

While complete stories work, incomplete stories work better.

Incomplete stories are far more effective at creating urgency and inspiring immediate action. By focusing on a challenge that is still unresolved, you invite donors to become the crucial part of the story's resolution. Below, we'll explore examples of both types of stories so you can see the difference in action.

Example of a Complete Story:

"Last year, 7-year-old Mia was skipping school—not because she didn't want to learn, but because she didn't have enough to eat. Then, thanks to generous donors like you, Mia received daily school lunches. Not only did she start attending class every day, but she also made the honor roll. Today, she is thriving and dreaming of becoming a teacher."

While this story demonstrates impact, it doesn't compel immediate action because the problem has already been solved.

Example of an Incomplete Story:

"Mia is 7 years old and struggling to stay in school—not because she doesn't want to learn, but because hunger makes it impossible to concentrate. Right now, she doesn't know where her next meal will come from. But there is hope. A gift of just \$3 provides a warm meal to help Mia stay in school and focus on her education. Will you donate \$3 today to help Mia?"

This version keeps the story open-ended, making it clear that the donor's gift is the key to resolving Mia's situation.

Key Phrases to Create an Incomplete Story:

- "Right now, [Name] is facing [challenge]."
- "But there's hope—your gift can change everything."
- "With just [donation amount], you can provide [specific impact]."
- "Will you step in today and help [Name] overcome [challenge]?"

Checklist for Crafting an Effective Incomplete Story:

- Does the story highlight an urgent, ongoing need?
- Is the resolution dependent on donor action?
- Does the call to action make a specific request?
- Is the language donor-focused, making them feel essential to the outcome?

By shifting from complete stories to incomplete ones, you can create more urgency and inspire donors to take immediate action.

Even though complete stories can work, for the strongest emotional impact, we recommend structuring your stories as incomplete whenever possible.

Ok, now that you know about complete and incomplete stories, let's get started crafting your 60 second story.

Module 2: The Foundations of a 60-Second Story

The Essential Elements:

A successful 60-second story contains four key components:

1. **Hook** (5-10 seconds) – Grab attention immediately with a question, fact, or emotional moment.
2. **Struggle** (10-15 seconds) – Introduce a character and their challenge in a relatable way.
3. **Moment of Decision** (20-30 seconds) – Show the urgent need for help and what could happen next.
4. **Call to Action** (10-15 seconds) – Make it clear that the donor is the one who can complete the story.

Module 3: Templates for Different Uses

Template for Written Appeals

- **Hook:** Start with a powerful opening line.
- **Struggle:** Introduce a person in need and the problem they face.
- **Moment of Decision:** Show that the story is not yet complete - help is still needed.
- **Call to Action:** Make a direct, simple ask.

Example: “Last year, 7-year-old Mia was skipping school—not because she didn’t want to learn, but because she didn’t have enough to eat. Today, she still struggles to find her next meal. But with your help, that can change. Just \$3 provides a warm, nutritious lunch for Mia and other children like her. Will you give \$3 today to feed a child?”

Template for Social Media Videos

- **Hook:** Use a question or visual prompt.
- **Struggle:** Show the problem visually.
- **Moment of Decision:** Highlight that help is still needed.
- **Call to Action:** End with a direct ask and clear next step.

Example: A video opens with a close-up of an empty lunch tray. The voiceover says: “What happens when a child comes to school hungry? They can’t focus. They fall behind. Right now, a child in your community is facing that reality.” [Cut to a child looking down.] “But YOU can change that.” [Cut to warm meal being served.] “Just \$3 provides a meal that helps a child learn. Please donate today.”

Template for Live Presentations

- **Hook:** Draw the audience in with a compelling statement, unexpected fact, or emotional question that immediately connects them to the cause.
- **Struggle:** Paint a vivid picture of the current hardship, helping the audience empathize with the character’s situation and feel the urgency of the problem.
- **Moment of Decision:** Emphasize that the donor’s help is needed now.
- **Call to Action:** Give a clear, simple way to give.

Example: “Mia is 7 years old. Right now, she’s sitting in class with an empty stomach. She wants to learn, but hunger makes it impossible to concentrate. The only thing standing between Mia and a full meal is someone like you. For just \$3, you can change her day—and maybe even her future. Will you help her by donating \$3?”

Module 4: Where and How to Use 60-Second Stories

Best Places to Use These Stories:

1. **Fundraising Emails** – Use them to open or close your appeal.
2. **Social Media Posts & Ads** – Short, impactful videos get high engagement.
3. **Live Events** – Perfect for donor luncheons, fundraising galas, and presentations.
4. **Donation Pages** – Reinforce urgency and impact next to the donation form.
5. **Phone Calls & Meetings** – Train staff and volunteers to use them in direct conversations.

Tip: For social media, stories under 30 seconds work best for Instagram Reels and TikTok, while full 60-second stories are great for Facebook and LinkedIn.

Module 5: Practice Story Template

This template is designed for practice, allowing you to plug in different elements to create a concise and emotionally compelling incomplete story.

[Name] is **[age]** and struggling with **[specific challenge]**. Right now, **[describe emotional impact—fear, pain, uncertainty, etc.]**. But there is hope. With **[specific donation amount]**, **[specific impact—food, medicine, education, etc.]** can change everything. Will you donate **[specific donation amount]** today to provide **[specific impact]**?

Example: “Liam is 6 years old and facing his first winter without a warm coat. Right now, he’s shivering as he walks to school, his hands tucked inside his sleeves to stay warm. But there is hope. With just \$15, Liam can have a warm coat to get through the winter. Will you donate \$15 today to provide a warm coat for Liam?”

Use this template to practice crafting stories again and again until your storytelling becomes second nature.

Conclusion & Next Steps

- Start using these "incomplete story" templates today.
- Test them in different channels and track donor responses.
- Train your team to use 60-second stories in their outreach.

By mastering 60-second storytelling, you can inspire donors, increase engagement, and raise

more funds—one powerful story at a time.

Want to take your storytelling skills even further? Join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference, where fundraising professionals gather to learn from the best, refine their messaging, and unlock the full potential of storytelling.

Visit <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com> to learn more and secure your spot!

If you found this mini-course helpful, please forward it to a friend who could benefit from learning how to tell 60 second stories.

Get help raising more money. Come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference. For more information, go to:

<https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>