

# Course Writing Guide

## Course Writing Ingredients

- Writing Standards
- Planning & Outlining
- Card Script-Writing
- Review & Copy-Editing
- Final Script & Visual Notes

Plan: Define objectives, scope and audience.

Research, outline, brainstorm a story-arc.

Script-writing and storyboarding.

Fact-check, illustrate and review.

## Writing Standards


Whether you are writing a DIY course using the Lifeology Builder, or you are writing a course for the Lifeology Library or another official Lifeology project, there are certain writing standards we encourage!

- 6th-grade reading level or better
- Fact-check and cite your sources (ideally link to open access sources!)
- Cover important historical or background important context
- Establish the "why" - why this is important
- Include actionable information, activities, or tips for applying the information
- Use inclusive language

## Planning & Outlining

Writing a Lifeology course is a lot like writing a comic or story-book in format - an engaging flow of information is just as important as simple and clear language. Courses can appeal to adults or kids (or both!) based on how they are written and illustrated.

But all successful courses need a **strong logical or narrative flow of information** to connect all of the course "cards" together into a larger whole. To ensure that your course covers what you want it to but also flows engagingly, plan and outline it!



“It’s especially satisfying to have a visual narrative where a character doesn’t always get things right but is able to learn from mistakes and learn from others.” – Abrian Curington

# Planning Template

## **Course title:**

Try to be direct with the title, for example stating a question that the course will answer. Also try to avoid jargon in the title. You can also edit this later!

## **Goal and Objectives:**

What will this course cover? Add 3-5 primary learning, attitudinal or other outcome objectives for this course - what do you hope the audience walks away with? Keep the list short!

## **Key Facts, Messages, Sources:**

List out any key facts or messages that should be included in this course (e.g. "explanation of how white blood cells work in the body") with links to credible primary sources of information.

## **Audience:**

Who are you writing this course for? Who are they? What does daily life look like for them? Is there any prior knowledge, concerns, questions, misbeliefs or barriers that should be considered in how the information is presented? Why would they care about this topic? Try to get to know your audience first.

## **Potential Story arc(s):**

What is a potential human-centered story you could embed in this course to deliver the information? Do you have characters in mind or a "plot," like an example person learning and experiencing something throughout the course? The story arc could be realistic and based on the lived experiences of your audience, but could also be more "fantastic" with generally relatable non-human characters (especially for younger audiences). The story arc can also be more of an analogy or metaphor by which to make the information more relatable, memorable and understandable, or easier to follow (e.g. relating collaborative science writing to quilting).

## **Potential Character Arc(s) OR Patient Journey:**

If you imagine that a primary character in this course is a stand-in for your audience, what is their journey from start to finish? What (mis)beliefs do they start with that you can empathize with? What struggles do they face that might prompt them to change their minds or perspective? What do they learn or how are their lives changed? Consider creating a positive and empowering journey or "arc" for this character in your course.

## **Tone:**

Helpful to decide on tone of the language or dialogue but also colors, facial expressions, etc., for the characters in the course - are there any special emotional considerations for this topic?

**Names and contact info** of potential scientific or audience reviewers, if applicable:

## **Potential Illustrator:**



# Card Script Writing

Once you've planned and outlined your course, it is time to start writing the "script"!

As you write, try to embed the key messages and information you outlined earlier into the story arc you came up with, unfolding the action through your characters' perspectives as much as possible. You can also interject "explainer" cards along the way, as long as the story pulls the reader through. Here's a demo:

- **Introduction Card:** Welcome! We write out our courses in a collaborative document so that we can see the whole story in one view. Continue to see how!
- [This is an example of the script for one course "card". We write it as card #x in a numbered list. It's short! It's about 180 characters or 2-3 short sentences long.]
- Why is writing a story into your course important? This card could establish WHY! (Because all that work results in a more engaging read!)
- Meet Doryan, the author of this course. He isn't sure how to best write a Lifeology course, but he has heard that it's a good idea to start with a story! So he begins...
- "Paige normally does this... *and* this... *and* this..."
- "*But* this thing is happening that turned her life upside down, and now she has to do things differently!"
- "*Therefore* Paige sets off on a journey to learn how to approach life in a new way, a journey full of surprises and learning."
- Doryan makes sure to write about Paige's journey empathetically. He avoids blame, stereotypes or anything that would make someone like Paige feel bad.
- Now Doryan might delve into some of the science behind what Paige has faced and learned! This science explainer may be short but provides content for his story.
- Some more science... [the key facts Doryan had planned on including]
- Some more science... maybe Doryan continues to weave Paige's story in, too.
- Recap Card: A text-only recap of what we've learned with Paige!
- "Let's get back to Paige, now that we really understand what she has been going through and learning! She's making lots of changes and new friends."
- "Paige finds a new inner power or changes her own mind based on new evidence."
- Another great opportunity for Doryan to weave some science explainer in!
- Now Doryan lets the reader realize that they ARE Paige! They too can find their inner power. Doryan gives them some actionable tips to do just that...
- If you've read this far, it's probably because Doryan did a good job demonstrating the power of story!
- **Summary card:** A summary of what we've learned and ideas for moving forward with this new knowledge!

## References / Sources:



# Final Review

## Review & Copy-Editing

Once you've written the script, it's time to have it reviewed by key collaborators, outside experts or audience reviewers! It's good to have this done before you or an artist collaborator begins to create or find visuals for the course. This is also a great time to get others involved and aware so they help to promote the published course!


All Lifeology Library courses are required to be copy-edited by the Lifeology Content Team and fact-checked by subject-area experts.

## Final Script & Visual Notes

With your final course script ready, you can begin to add visual notes to each card. These notes can include any pictures that come to your mind or descriptions of things that you'd like to see represented in the visual for each card!

These notes can go into a **storyboard** of your course that you can collaborate with an artist on - they will contribute to the visual notes and then begin to add sketches for each card to the storyboard. But a storyboard is useful even if you plan to find existing visuals such as stock photography of your course!

Looking for artist collaborators for your own course? We have a global network of artists and designers in our Lifeology Community ([lifeology.io/lifeology-community/](https://lifeology.io/lifeology-community/)) who are ready to work with you!

2	Bob is a 50-year-old man who works at a large, local warehouse. In his free time, he enjoys hosting people at his house and taking his dog to the park.	Park setting, factory in background, our character	
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