

Source checklist for narrated story and documentary scripts

Free from <https://storyscript.launchmatic.net/source-checklist/>

Before you write

- ☐ Write the one-sentence claim the video makes. Every source you collect should support or test it.
- ☐ List the 5–10 factual claims the script can't work without (dates, numbers, quotes, who did what).
- ☐ Note what you already believe about the topic, so you notice when you only collect sources that agree.
- ☐ Decide your sourcing bar: at least one primary source or two independent reliable secondary sources per key claim.

Finding sources

- ☐ Start from a reference work (encyclopedia, textbook, museum page) to map the topic, then follow its citations.
- ☐ Look for primary sources: original documents, court records, letters, official reports, contemporaneous newspapers, data sets.
- ☐ Prefer secondary sources with named authors, editors, publication dates and their own citations (books, peer-reviewed papers, established outlets).
- ☐ For each key claim, find a second source that doesn't simply copy the first.
- ☐ Search for the strongest counter-argument or a debunking of the story before you commit to it.
- ☐ Check whether a famous quote is actually attributed in a contemporary source, not just on quote sites.

Recording each source

- ☐ Save author, title, publisher, date, URL and the date you accessed it.
- ☐ Archive web pages (e.g. the Wayback Machine "Save Page Now") so the link still works later.
- ☐ Copy the exact passage that supports the claim, with page number or timestamp.
- ☐ Tag each source: primary, secondary, or tertiary; and how reliable you judge it.
- ☐ Link every script line that states a fact to the source(s) behind it.

Checking claims

- ☐ Numbers: check units, the year they apply to, and whether they were rounded or estimated.
- ☐ Dates and names: confirm spellings and dates in at least two sources.
- ☐ Quotes: verify the wording, the speaker and the context; don't trim a quote so it changes meaning.
- ☐ Images and footage: confirm what they actually show, where and when; label reconstructions and AI-generated visuals.
- ☐ Mark anything disputed or uncertain, and say so in the narration ("historians disagree...", "according to...").
- ☐ Separate fact from interpretation: phrase your own conclusions as conclusions.

Before you publish

- ☐ Re-read the script once only for factual claims, ticking each against its source.
- ☐ Put the main sources in the description (title + link), and pin a sources comment if the list is long.
- ☐ Check licences for footage, images and music; credit as required.
- ☐ Disclose sponsorships and any realistic altered or synthetic media as the platform requires.
- ☐ Keep your source file. If a viewer reports an error, fix it and post a correction.

StoryScript (in development) collects sources first and links every script line to them: storyscript.launchmatic.net