

# Interactive Bag of Tricks: Multimedia Storytelling Options

<http://www.usatoday.com/test/bag-of-tricks/index.html>

**in-ter-'ac-tive:** adjective

1. capable of influencing each other
2. accepting input from a human

Interactive storytelling involves three distinct areas of experience:

**Content:** includes asking the right questions, editorial judgment, editing information down to a coherent theme, experience with many types of data.

**Design:** includes experience with illustration, graphic design, layout, web page design, visual presentation of data.

**Technical savvy:** includes software experience, familiarity with standards of navigation and site architecture, experience with publishing tools.

- Where the three areas of experience overlap is the 'Sweet Spot' of interactive storytelling.
- Requires extraordinary team work and planning.
- The story and content often suggest the best ways to tell a story interactively — if you know all of the options in your interactive bag of tricks.

## Photo Galleries

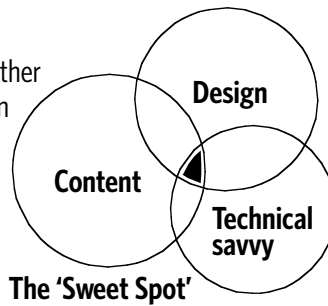
- Sometimes one photo can tell the whole story.
- Photo selection and editing are as crucial to the quality of photo galleries as the shooting.
- The Day in Pictures is consistently one of the most popular features on usatoday.com.

## Audio galleries

- Approaches narrative, documentary-style storytelling, mixing photo gallery with audio clips for selected images.
- Allows for self-directed navigation.
- Photo selection/editing are crucial to the quality of the photo gallery, and so is the audio quality and editing for each image.
- Usually a team effort of a photo editor and an audio producer.

## Sights & Sounds

- Documentary-style, narrative storytelling that requires a different approach to shooting and editing.
- Audio drives the narrative, photos edited to fit audio story.
- Teamwork at the earliest planning stages and during content gathering is essential. Photo editing and audio editing must be coordinated.
- Timing and transitions are essential to a good presentation.
- Ideally a team effort of a photographer and an audio producer, and often includes a designer.



## Timelines

- An effective way to tell stories that develop or change over time, stories that have historical themes, obituaries.
- Navigation techniques come to forefront.

## Maps

- Who, What, WHERE?
- Locator maps add context to the story.
- Interactive maps can show movement, change over time.
- Mapping tools like Google Maps and Yahoo! Maps have opened up their tools to developers, allowing easier integration of data with maps.

## Data-driven graphics

- Producing effective charts requires familiarity with different kinds of data and experience analyzing and visualizing data.
- Requires selective editing, editorial judgment, and some experience finding the underlying story in the data.
- Experience with databases, queries and data scraping is fast becoming an important part of interactive storytelling.

## Q&As, polls, quizzes, games

- Well-crafted interactives engage the reader with self-directed navigation, depth of content, opportunity to participate.
- Creates "stickiness" — opportunities to lengthen the time of reader interaction.
- Interactions can be counted as page views, which translate into potential ad revenue.

## Audio

- The voice of the newsmaker lends authenticity to the story.
- Use ranges from a single bite or a sequence of bites built into a multiwrap.
- Natural sound is the icing on the cake. It transports the reader to the story.
- One of the faster turnaround options for breaking news.

## Video

- Compelling storytelling — when it's done right.
- Scalable — the story can dictate pace and length.
- Can be presented on-page, in a graphic, or in a full-page player.
- Stand-alone packages can be syndicated.

## Complex interactive packages

- Graphics that combine different types of content, sometimes with illustrations or 3D renderings
- Navigation is an essential consideration in guiding readers through the information.