



# I AM...

## Digital Story Guide for Staff and Carers

### How to create an “I Am” Digital Story

An ‘I am’ Digital Story provides a way for a young person to tell others who they are and what they are usually like.

**The ‘I am’ Digital Story provides a real opportunity for the staff in any setting to:**

- learn about a new student in a way that celebrates the young person
- see them in a setting where they are comfortable
- understand more about the strengths and personality of the young person in a dynamic way.

**For a young person, making an ‘I am’ Digital Story can provide an opportunity to:**

- share with other people the things that they are good at and are interested in
- highlight the things they like to do, the spaces they like to be, and the support they need to feel comfortable to be ready to work or learn
- introduce their best selves to people who have not met them before.



We provide a framework for thinking and planning an ‘I am’ Digital Story. This is a tool to help you support a young person who wants to plan and film a Digital Story, and for having conversations about the young person with other people who know them well. (See page 3)

### Find out more online

To view ‘I am’ Digital Story examples visit [acorns-soton.org.uk](http://acorns-soton.org.uk)





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There are 4 steps: Mapping, Describing, Filming and Editing

### Step 1 Mapping

Mapping is the process of identifying the things that the young person enjoys, is good at, and where they may need support. These will form the content of the 'I am' Digital Story.

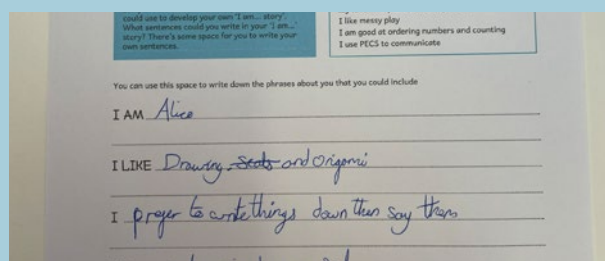
The 'I am...' Digital Stories framework helps with this and **'I am...' Digital Story Guide for young people** has a mindmap for the young person to complete.



### Step 2 Describing

Using the mapping outputs, support the young person to create a first-person narrative that they can use to describe themselves. Keep these really short with only one topic. For example, 'I am Nathan'; 'I like to cook and then eat the food.'

Use the "I..." descriptions to help with this (see page 4).



### Step 3 Filming

Filming can be done over a few days, weeks or months using small wearcams, a video camera, or a tablet until you have a set of video clips that cover the most important parts of the 'I am...' Digital Story that the young person wants to tell.

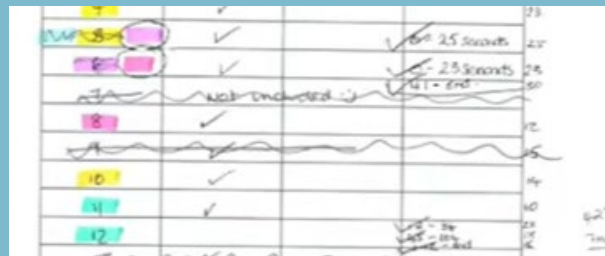
The focus of the videos is on environments and activities that are meaningful for the young person and may include the young person communicating during the filming.



### Step 4 Editing

Ideally, the young person will be involved in the editing process. Discuss with the young person which 'I...' descriptions best show who they are and then select the relevant video clips.

Plan the story sequence with the young person first before you try to edit the footage.



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### Mapping

The 'I am...' Digital Stories Framework is based on the [Froebelian principles of childhood](#) which include the importance of play, the holistic nature of the development of every young person, respecting young people for who they are, and valuing them for their efforts.

Our Framework encourages you and the young person to think about seven key things:

#### Spaces

Where does the young person like to be or explore?

#### People and interactions

How does the young person like to spend their time and who do they interact with?

#### Independence and agency

What does the young person choose to do for themselves?

#### Objects and interests

What is the young person really interested in and like doing?

#### Communication and expression

In what ways does the young person express themselves

#### Support

What support is helpful to the young person?

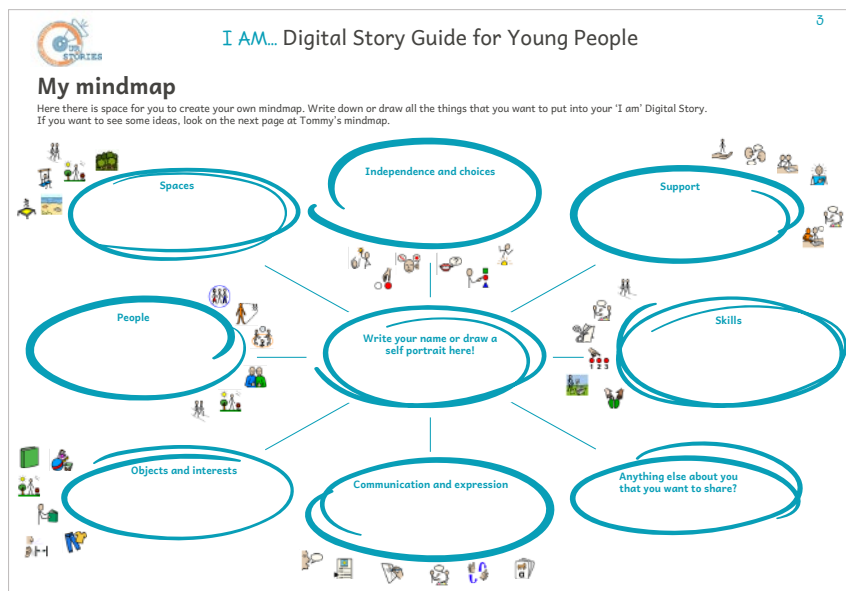
#### Skills and capabilities

What is the young person good at?

The mindmap worksheet on the '**I am...** Digital Story Guide for young people looks like this and has questions to prompt the young person as well as an example to look at:



A great measure of whether the mindmap has captured enough about the young person is to think about whether you could pick out a birthday gift for the child after watching the video - an idea put forward by Paula Kluth in her book 'You're Going to Love This Kid: Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom.'



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### Describing

Using descriptions is designed to add another dimension to the Digital Story and enables the young person to show who they are. The descriptions need to be short phrases which explain what is being shown in the video and written from the young person's perspective. The young person can use them to introduce themselves, explain what they like doing, where they like to go, and who they like to spend time with. Descriptions could be used in a voice-over or in subtitles.

Page 5 of the 'I am...' Digital Story Guide for young people provides some prompts to help the young person and some examples from a young person who has created an 'I am...' Digital Story.

These descriptions can then be used to plan and sequence the story when you get to the editing phase of the process.



### Filming

Filming can be done using different types of equipment, such as wearcams, a video camera, or a tablet. Using more than one camera can enable the young person to be in some of the video as well as being able to show things from their point of view. It is vital that anyone who can be seen or heard in the video has given their permission to be in it.

Wearcams are small body cameras which are attached to the young person so that the viewer sees from the young person's point of view.

The young person needs to be happy to have the camera attached to their clothing. Wearcams can be really useful for hearing the young person's voice (giggling, humming, murmuring, talking) as well as seeing the world from their point of view.



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**Step 2 Describing**

The next step in creating your 'I am...' story is Describing

Opposite is an idea you can use to inform your story – it includes the kind of phrases that you could use to develop your own 'I am...' story. What sentences could you write in your 'I am...' story? There's some space for you to write your own sentences.

I am Nathan  
 I live with my Mum, Dad and brother  
 I like to cook and then eat the food!  
 I like being outside  
 I love swimming and splashing in the water  
 My favourite place is walking in the woods  
 I like messy play  
 I am good at ordering numbers and counting  
 I use PECS to communicate

You can use this space to write down the phrases about you that you could include

I AM .....

I LIKE .....

I .....

MY .....

**Find out more online**

To view 'I am' Digital Story examples visit [acorns-soton.org.uk](http://acorns-soton.org.uk)

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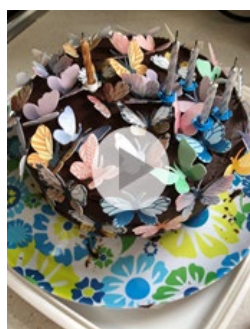
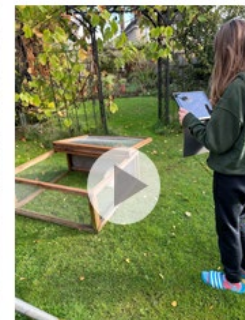
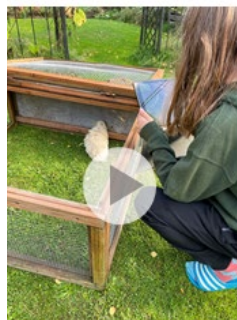
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Video cameras and tablets can be operated by a staff member so that the young person can be seen in the video, but the young person might also like to film some sections themselves. For example, if they want to show a favourite place.



The aim of the filming is to create a rich set of video clips that cover the most important parts of the 'I am...' Digital Story that the young person wants to tell.

Try to keep the clips short - 2 minutes or less - as these will be easier to edit and process later.

Clips can be re-filmed as necessary and old versions deleted. Clips need to be downloaded and saved in a storage system, such as Dropbox, Google Drive or Microsoft One Drive. It is advisable to download and save clips as soon as possible after filming to avoid losing them through equipment failure or accidentally filming over them.

### How to film the 'I am...' Digital Story

Once all the video footage has been captured, the next step is deciding which clips and descriptions to use and how to sequence them. The simplest method is to use the descriptions that the young person created in step 2. The 'I' statements can be edited as you work on completing the story so that the clips and the statements match with each other.

Once the sequence has been established, video editing software can be used to upload and order the clips according to the planned sequence. Staff who have created 'I am...' Digital Stories recommend Microsoft Video Editor as software that is simple to learn. Short tutorials on editing the video clips are available here:

<https://autismtransitions.org/how-to-make-your-own/>

More information on each step in this process is given in the **'How to film the 'I am...' Digital Story written guide.**



To view an animated version of this guide visit [acorns-soton.org.uk](https://acorns-soton.org.uk)

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