

THE GRUMPY GRAMMARIAN'S GUIDE

TO INSTAGRAM STORYTELLING



AUTUMN TOMPKINS
THE GRUMPY GRAMMARIAN

STORYTELLING IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN ACTIVITY.

It helps you interpret, evaluate, and appreciate your world. Sharing stories brings people together and bonds us together on a deeper level. Science claims that storytelling can synchronize our brain activity. Because we experience the events together as they develop during the story. (That's some zombie-level shit, right there.)

But how do you get readers drooling over your stories and craving more?

Well, let me show you. In this training guide, I'll...

- Share my storytelling secrets with you.
- Give you story-writing prompts.
- And train you to tell better stories.

Instagram is where I like to hangout and share stories. It's where I get a lot of engagement. And a lady like me loves hearts & comments. This training is specifically for Instagram.



But I'm NOT sharing:

- How to take photos.
- What photos to take.
- How to use the filters.
- Or anything to do with hashtags.

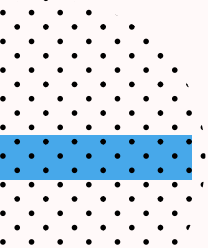

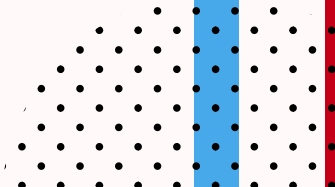

Because I just wing it.

I AM sharing:

- 12 Instagram Story-Writing Prompts based on my storytelling style.
- And helping you refine those stories, so you become better Instagram storytellers.

Here's why:

Personal stories get more engagement than any other Instagram post. They're the equivalent of internet small talk. And I've spent years mastering this skill. I spin mundane activities & routine life situations into storytelling gold like Seinfeld. I make these humdrum stories exciting for my readers by adding...

- Details
 - Emotions
 - Drama
- 
- 
- 
- 



How this Instagram training will work:

- I'll tell a story.
- I'll dissect it.
- I'll give you a prompt.

You'll fill in the blanks and spin storytelling gold.

Ready?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #1

Here's my story:

I've been neglecting some summer activities. So I made a list and decided to tackle one at a time.

Today's goal was to check hummingbird feeder off my list. (I'm only about a month behind peak hummingbird season.)

After I finished my morning routine, I...

- Retrieved the hummingbird feeder from under my kitchen cabinet, being careful not to hit the glass on the cabinet's edges and break it.
- Washed it out with warm soapy water, being careful to rinse it no less than 790 times so the birds don't eat Dawn Dish Soap and die.
- Mixed the sugar solution, being careful to dissolve 1 cup of sugar in 2 cups of hot water and 2 cups of cold water.

I felt my lips curl into a smile (almost like the Grinch but without the mustache) because I knew when I hung the hummingbird feeder out on my back porch, I could check it off my past due summer to-do list.

So I grabbed my coffee in my left hand, put the hummingbird feeder between my knees, and pushed my wheelchair's joystick with my right hand to move toward my back door.

As soon as I opened it, I heard a familiar yet annoying noise that I forgot about — bulldozers rearranging the winter salt pile behind my house.

Now instead of sitting outside and watching hummingbirds flit around the feeder drinking sugar water, I get to listen to heavy equipment screech and grind on a salt pile that's 3x taller than my house.

Thanks for the reminder that winter is coming..

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #1

Here's the dissection:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Finally getting around to filling my hummingbird feeder.

Details — Getting the feeder, washing it out, and making the hummingbird food.

Emotions — Smiling and feeling content with checking something off my to-do list.

Drama — Opening my door, hearing the bulldozers moving salt, and being reminded of winter.

Here's your prompt:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Tell me about a task you checked off your to-do list.

Details — How did you accomplishing this task? Give me at least 3 specific steps you took.

Emotions — How are you feeling about accomplishing this task? Don't tell me, show me. Use body language like I did when I said I smiled.

Drama — Did anything happen that was out of the ordinary or that elicited an emotional response from you? Tell me what it was and how it made you feel.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #2

Here's my story:

Simple tasks are a challenge for me.

For example, changing my shirt is time-consuming and labor-intensive.

When I'm finished, I'm:

Yawning more fiercely than a lion stretching its jaw muscles. (At least my teeth aren't intimidating.)

Glistening like Robert Pattinson in Twilight. (I'm not sweating, I'm sparkling.)

And complaining to myself because I either put it on backwards, put it on inside out, or put my arms & head in the wrong holes. (Like some demented version of Twister.)

So I have a personal care assistant to help me. It's faster and easier for them to change my shirt.

Sunday night, my assistant was changing my shirt so I could get in bed.

As she pulled my shirt over my head, Moose walked into my room and nudged my arm.

I told him, "Thank you for your interest in this job, but I'm seeking other, more qualified candidates. The kind who have thumbs."

He huffed and laid down.

But I'm not sure why.

It's either because he didn't get hired or because he was impatiently waiting for his bedtime snack.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #2

Here's the dissection:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Simple, physical tasks like changing my shirt.

Details — Trying to change my shirt but ending up tired, sweaty, and bitchy.

Drama — My dog entering my room, and me making a joke.

Emotions — My dog huffing in disgust.

Here's your prompt:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Tell me about a simple task you don't like to do or can't do.

Details — What happens when you try to complete the task yourself? Give me at least 3 examples.

Drama — Does anything happen that's out of the ordinary? Do you get interrupted or sidetracked? Are you able to make a joke about it?

Emotions — How does that make you (or other people or your pets) feel?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #3

Here's my story:

Every year, for my niece and nephew's birthdays, I give them handmade cards. (I'm not cheap, promise.)

This year, I set a new auntie standard – the cards match the presents.

For example: My nephew likes Marshall from Paw Patrol. He's a cartoon firefighting dalmatian pup. So I bought him firefighter essentials including an extinguisher backpack that's actually a squirt gun. It holds about a gallon of water and can squirt 30 feet.

Naturally, the card I made was a fire truck. I have a knack for creating these cards:

First, I Google fire truck pictures – and find just the right combination of artistic aesthetic and childhood whimsy.

Second, I analyze the shapes that make up a fire truck – and decipher rectangles, squares & circles.

Third, I eyeball it to scale – and approximate the dimensions so the fire truck looks properly proportioned.

I do this all without measuring. I'd like to thank my geometry teacher for this talent. But I'm sure I learned it from eating pizza. (I can spot the difference between a 14 inch round and 16 inch round from across the room.)

After I've cut the shapes out of poster board, the assembling fun begins:

I paint all the shapes & inadvertently, half of my left hand. (At least it wasn't my shoes.)

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #3

My story continued:

I superglue the shapes to build the fire truck & inadvertently, 6-7 fingertips. (At least it wasn't my shoes.)

I embellish the assembled fire truck & inadvertently, end up with marker on my tattoos. (At least it wasn't my shoes.)

Once I'm finished creating the card, I add my signature ("An AA Original") to the back. And carefully transport the handmade card to the party. (It's the superglue strength test.)

Only then do I realize the fire truck is almost as big as my nephew.

Next time, I'll have to measure him.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #3

Here's the dissection:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Homemade birthday cards for my niece and nephew.

Details — Creating the cards. Everything from finding the right design reference to painting and gluing.

Drama — The card being almost as big as my nephew.

Emotions — At least I saved my shoes.

Here's your prompt:

Mundane activity & routine life situation — Do you do anything special for your loved ones on their birthdays? Or do you go above and beyond for your loved ones on special occasions? Tell me all about it.

Details — Tell me what you do that's special or how you went above and beyond to show your love. Give me at least 3 steps involved in going above and beyond.

Drama — Does your gesture of love turn out as you expected? Tell me why or why not.

Emotions — Do you have any collateral damage to deal with?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #4

Here's my story:

I love sitting on my back porch during the summer. When I porch-sit, I convene with nature:

The sun's rays warm my always-cold body. (My dogs bask in the rays, too. Only moving to lap up water from the kiddie pool. Usually.)

The squirrels and birds frolic around my backyard looking for food. (They're sneaky. They quietly leap tree to tree for treats. Because my dogs might look relaxed, but they're still on high alert.)

The trees' leaves sway back and forth from a slight breeze. (When the breeze gets stronger, the leaves rustle louder. Which activates my dogs' bark mode. And inevitably, causes the squirrels and birds to flee haphazardly in every direction but the right one.)

Suddenly, my porch sitting gets interrupted.

The last time this event disturbed my sunny serenity, I glanced down in an area of my yard I haven't seen in a while. And saw 3 orange tiger lilies.

My mood instantly lightened, and I smiled.

These happy little flowers are the highlight of my summer. But they're elusive – I haven't spotted them in my backyard for almost 7 years. And I know why – Dakota, my dearly departed nephew dog, used to pee on every stem that sprouted. He crossed the rainbow bridge in September 2017.

I'd like to think me spontaneously spotting these flowers is his way of saying hello from doggy heaven.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #4

Here's the dissection:

Mundane activity & routine life situation – Porch sitting.

Details – Absorbing the sun. Observing the squirrels, and birds, and trees. My dog's interrupting me.

Drama – Discovering tiger lilies in my backyard.

Emotions – Haven't seen them since 2012. A "hi" from Dakota.

Here's your prompt:

Mundane activity & routine life situation – How do you relax?

Details – Give me 3 specific things that happen in your surroundings while you relax.

Drama – Have you ever noticed something that caught you off guard while you were trying to relax? Tell me about it.

Emotions – How did it make you feel?.



THROUGH THE LAST 4 PROMPTS, I'VE BEEN TRAINING YOU TO TELL BETTER STORIES.

But what I've secretly been doing is helping you build a strong personal brand.

I'm go-go gadget good at telling stories. As you know, I spin mundane activities & routine life situations into storytelling gold like Seinfeld. I make these humdrum stories exciting for my readers by adding...

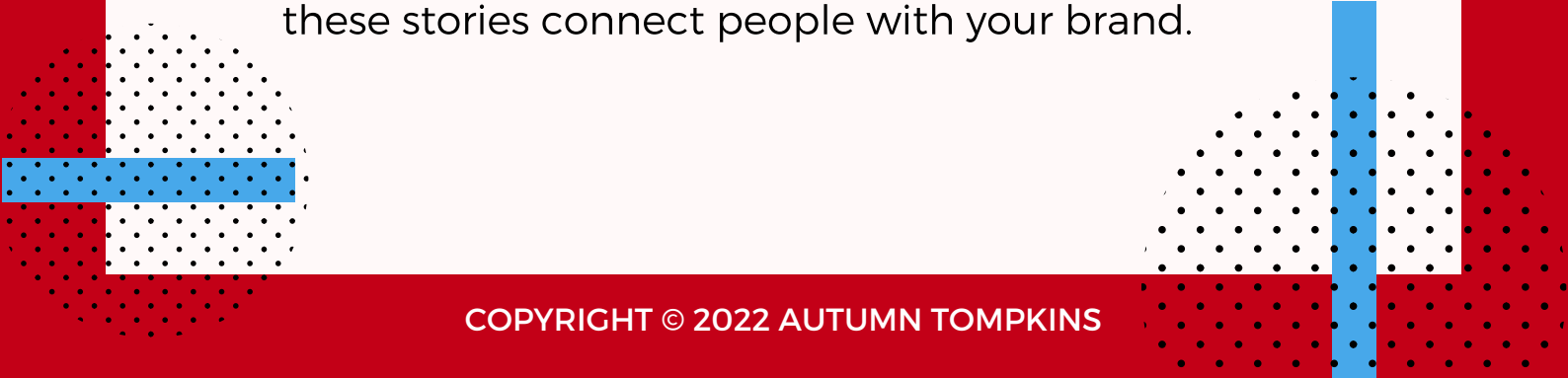
- Details
- Emotions
- Drama

Good storytelling is why I have a strong personal brand, and it's an important part of building your own personal brand.

Here's why:

You're developing a connection factor. (It's like The X Factor, but I promise I'm nicer than Simon Cowell. Well, probably.)

People love stories. The details and specifics in these stories connect people with your brand.





So I'm refocusing these Instagram prompts from personal stories to business stories and helping you connect people with your brand even more. We're going behind the scenes of your business to spin storytelling gold. It's still internet small talk (which I've spent years mastering), but now it's business small talk.

How this Instagram training will work:

- I'll tell a business small talk story.
- I'll dissect it.
- I'll give you a prompt.

You'll fill in the blanks and spin storytelling gold.

Ready?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #5

Here's my story:

Every weekday, I pull up to my computer at noon and start working.

Ginger jumps on my bed, scratches her blanket as she moves in a half-moon shape, and flops down.

Moose stretches in a downward-facing-dog pose, yawns so big that his tongue rolls out of his mouth, and slowly lowers his butt to the floor.

About 10 minutes into my copy edit session, I press my lips together questioning:

Is this business small talk paragraph a complete thought? And I hear Ginger jump from my bed to the floor.

About 5 minutes after that, I tap my chin wondering:

Does this Inspector Gadget metaphor make sense? And I hear Moose make a heavy sigh.

About 10 minutes after that, I scratch my head thinking:

What's the right word to describe behind the scenes? And I feel Ginger's slimy tongue lick my arm.

I shift my eyes from the computer to my dogs. And Moose leaps to a standing position as Ginger spins in a circle. I know it's time for a break from copy editing.

I don't need the Pomodoro Technique. I have dogs. And every 25 minutes, they want their heads pet, treats & playtime.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #5

Here's the dissection:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Trying to copy edit.

Details – Common copy editing errors that I look for.

Emotions – Thinking about common copy editing errors while my dogs become impatient.

Drama – My dogs interrupting me as a substitute for the Pomodoro Technique.

Here's your prompt:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Do you have a productivity hack you use?

Details – Give me 3 specifics about this productivity hack.

Emotions – How does that make you (or other people or your pets) feel?

Drama – Does anything happen that's out of the ordinary? Do you get interrupted or sidetracked? Are you able to make a joke about it?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #6

Here's my story:

I always want to know more about emotion and persuasion. And I find this information in unconventional places — not books or podcasts or courses.

Comedians, musicians, TV shows, and ballets are great resources for learning new storytelling techniques.

Relatability is an important technique. It helps your audience connect to you personally. So to master relatability, I listen to/watch Phyllis Diller.

I love Phyllis on so many laugh-out-loud levels:

She attended a lot of funerals as a child. This gloomy reality influenced her comedy. She once said she didn't need to believe in Heaven or Hell because life was wonderful enough. (I too believe life is wonderful enough. Mostly because of awkward encounters in the grocery store.)

She was sensitive about the sound of words. Her jokes usually ended with explosive consonants for emphasis. (Explosive as in words starting with P B T D K G. Not diarrhea.)

She stuck to material anyone could relate to — life. Everything from shopping trips to her family was part of her comedy routine. (I used the grumpiness in my life to create a strong personal brand.)

Studying Phyllis Diller is how I'm able to spin storytelling gold out of mundane activities & routine life situations.

Every day the world provides you with a free masterclass. All you have to do is look for opportunities to learn.

What have you learned from an unconventional resource?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #6

Here's the dissection:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Studying Phyllis Diller.

Details – Why I love her.

Emotions – What her comedy taught me.

Drama – Learning to tell stories about my life by analyzing her comedy routines.

Here's your prompt:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – How do you learn from unconventional resources?

Details – Tell me 3 reasons why you like this unconventional resource.

Emotions – What has studying an unconventional resource taught you?

Drama – How has this helped your business?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #7

Here's my story:

Yesterday, I had my annual appointment with my cardiologist. (He checks to make sure I still have a ♥)

Good news: It hasn't turned to stone yet. Bad news: I thought I was going to have a heart attack on the drive there.

1 & ½ hours into the trip, I noticed road work signs. The orange blinking lights were unmistakable. (I'm sure they're Pennsylvania's state color.)

"Road work exit 168. Travel time: 41 miles 78 minutes."

About 30 minutes later, I thought to myself "Traffic's moving smoothly. Where's that construction?"

The construction gods' laughed, and I noticed the long line of brake lights appear out of nowhere like Halloween candy on August 1st.

I saw another sign that read "Left lane ends ½ mile."

For the next 3 miles, 10 dealership's worth of cars tried to merge into the right lane. The bottleneckers' ignored the sign until the last minute.

I clenched my jaw, gritted my teeth, and felt hotter than Chris Hemsworth in a speedo.

As I approached exit 168, I saw cars pull out of the right lane and speed down the road.

"Assholes," I murmured. "They're just going to cause a longer delay and make me late to my appointment."

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #7

My story continued:

I wondered how difficult it would be to stop all the cars, pull all the drivers out, line them up in a row, and slap each one across the face. (I'm sure that'd teach them to drive right.)

Then, I saw it:

No traffic cones.

No PennDOT workers.

No construction equipment.

It was all a head game.

The rest of my 3-hour ride was a blur.

But it reminded me about one of my business viewpoints: Don't play head/mind games.

I set clear expectations and boundaries with my clients. If there's ever a problem, I talk with them about it. I don't manipulate them to get what I want. I don't make passive-aggressive comments to them. I don't talk behind their backs or bad-mouth them on social media.

I don't play head/mind games in business.

Unlike Pennsylvania. That place just likes to screw with my emotions.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #7

Here's the dissection:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – My business viewpoint about not playing head/mind games.

Details – Pennsylvania road work.

Emotions – Bad drivers and delays.

Drama – No actual construction. Just Pennsylvania playing head/mind games.

Here's your prompt:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Share one of your business viewpoints.

Details – What influenced you to come up with this business viewpoint?

Emotions – How do you feel about this business viewpoint?

Drama – Has anything out of the ordinary happened that reminded you of your business viewpoint?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #8

Here's my story:

Yesterday, I spent an un-Autumn-like amount of money on clothes.

I think I caught back-to-school shopping fever. And that NEVER happens to me.

I specifically avoid that August tradition because of the mom's & dad's traipsing around a store. Buying a year's worth of school clothes. In 3 hours. With their 2.7 children in tow.

It reminds me of school shopping when I was a kid.

I'd wander around Ames Department Store with my mom, grandma, and 3 siblings. (Flipping through the clothing racks, groaning about not being able to find extra long jeans.)

Halfway through the store, I'd find myself at the jewelry counter. (Daydreaming about spending my school shopping money on rose gold dolphin rings.)

Eventually, I'd catch back up with my family. (Throwing 5 plaid long sleeve shirts, 5 pairs of regular length jeans, and 1 pair of sneakers into the cart.)

And we'd head to the checkout. (Grandma always went in front of us to give the cashier her senior citizen discount card, so we could get a hella deal on our clothes.)

But yesterday while I was shopping and gently reminded of my back-to-school shopping tradition, I realized I spent the same amount of money at each store.

\$92.82

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #8

My story continued:

Then I realized I used my business debit card and almost freaked out. (I can write off clothes as a business expense, right?)

I think my business is trying to tell me it wants its own back-to-school tradition.

But what is the Universe trying to tell me about the number 9282?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #8

Here's the dissection:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Me thinking my business wants its own back-to-school tradition.

Details – My back-to-school shopping tradition.

Emotions – Unintentionally spending the same amount of money at each store.

Drama – Wondering what the Universe trying to tell me about the number 9282.

Here's your prompt:

Behind the scenes business activity or situation – Share one of your business traditions.

Details – What influenced you to come up with this business tradition?

Emotions – How do feel about this business tradition?

Drama – Has anything out of the ordinary happened that reminded you of your business tradition?



THROUGH THE LAST 8 PROMPTS, I'VE BEEN TRAINING YOU TO TELL BETTER STORIES.


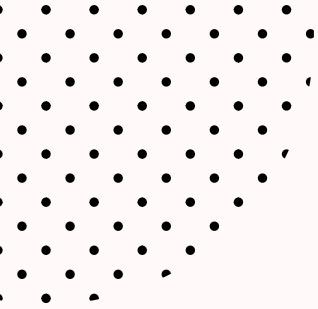
We've gone from telling personal stories to telling business small talk stories.

All so I can help you build a strong personal brand. Because good storytelling is an important part of building your own personal brand.

But now, we're going to dig into your business even further. We're going to tell stories about your business from a different angle. (Feel free to strike a pose and Vogue like Madonna.)

Remember, I'm still going to show you how to spin mundane activities & routine life situations into storytelling gold like Seinfeld by adding...

- Details
- Emotions
- Drama



But now, I'm refocusing these Instagram prompts from business small talk to water cooler talk. It takes behind the scenes to a whole other level. You'll pretend you're the employee, and you'll gossip about the boss and clients. It's still internet small talk (which I've spent years mastering), but you're taking an everyday traditional office occurrence and using it to connect with your readers. You're adding an extra layer of human to your business stories.

How this Instagram training will work:

- I'll tell a water cooler talk story.
- I'll dissect it.
- I'll give you a prompt.

You'll fill in the blanks and spin storytelling gold.

Ready?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #9

Here's my story:

I rarely meet clients in real life.

Mostly because I work with people all over the world.

(From New Orleans to New Amsterdam. From Los Angeles to Little Italy. From...well, just listen to International Love by Pitbull, and you'll get the idea. What up, Mr. Worldwide?)

And traveling on an airplane isn't convenient or easy for a wheelchair user like me. So I talk with clients over the phone.

I plug the cord from my earbuds into my cell phone's port (I haven't cut the cord. I know. It's practically barbaric.).

I tap their phone number on my phone's keyboard (Slowly like a sloth. Otherwise, my brain turns the taps into a random song's rhythm, and I keep tapping because I'm lost in the song.).

And I wait for them to answer (And pace around – which helps me focus – being careful not to tangle the earbud cord in my wheels, breaking it.).

Recently, I was fortunate enough to meet a client in real life. We looked each other up and down like clothing racks at a Macy's sale, and then chatted like old friends.

But about 5 minutes into our conversation, she made a bold statement.

"Autumn, did you know you have two different voices? A phone voice and a face-to-face voice."

I had no idea.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #9

My story continued:

She elaborated.

"On the phone, your tone and inflection are upbeat and overly polite like you're a telemarketer. In person, your tone and inflection are relaxed and almost gruff. I don't feel like you're going to try to sell me a new warranty for my car."

A little bit of my caramel latte dripped out of my mouth, and I almost choked as I tried to slurp it back up like spaghetti.

She was right. I have 2 different voices and so do my siblings. (Must be genetic.)

But I bet my niece and nephew would tell you I have 3 different voices.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #9

Here's the dissection:

Water cooler talk activity or situation — Meeting a client in real life.

Details — How I usually talk with clients.

Drama — My client telling me I have a phone voice and an in-person voice.

Emotions — Realizing she's right and trying not to spit out my latte in shock.

Here's your prompt:

Water cooler talk activity or situation — Has a client ever made a bold statement to you?

Details — Give me 3 specifics about that situation.

Drama — Was that bold statement a shock?

Emotions — How does that make you feel?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #10

Here's my story:

My fancy espresso machine broke in July.

Miles, my precious, would try to brew espresso for my latte. But after several minutes with only half an ounce dripping out, he'd flash his lights at me.

I was heartbroken.

You see, he spoiled me and warped my personality like a gold ring.

All I'd have to do in the morning was fill the porta-filter with espresso & lock it into the brew head, slide the milk reservoir into place, and press the latte button. (Usually forgetting the cup. So I'd dash to the cupboard, grab a mug, and put it under the milk frother just in time to catch my tasty morning treat.)

So when I sent him out for repair, I knew I would have trouble. Because I'd have to create a new schedule. (My boss was SO pissed. And by "my boss," I mean me.)

Instead of rolling out of bed and indulging in a freshly brewed latte (content as Ginger gnawing on her bone), I would have to go to a coffee shop and deal with that nonsense – completely sidelining my workday.

Resistance began immediately.

I was either a nice Hobbit, or I was evil Gollum.

"We's gots to getesies the hot liquidy."

"No, then we's has to people with bad peoples who can't makesies the coffee right."

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #10

My story continued:

"We's can't workesies without the hot liquidy."

"Yes, we's can. We's believesies in ourselves. We's won't be satisfied because bad peoples can't makesies the coffee right anyway."

"Just getesies in the van!"

"Yes. Yes. We's getesies in the van, so we's can sippesies the hot liquidy and edits the copesies."

After arguing with myself, I'd spend 45 minutes going to the coffee shop to get a latte. And when I returned home, I'd spend an extra 30 minutes decompressing.

Decompressing from the ride to and from the coffee shop – because apparently new cars don't come standard with turn signals. Must be extra?

Decompressing from yelling at people for blocking the curb ramp with their cars – because apparently the parking spots are invisible. Must be I have the superhuman ability to see them?

Decompressing from an incorrectly made espresso – because apparently whole milk and 5 caramel swirls translates to skim milk and 2 caramel swirls. Must be they don't realize I'm a connoisseur and can taste the difference?

This new schedule lasted 4 weeks. But Miles 2.0 is back. And now, I edits the copesies without spending extra time and money on my morning treat.

My boss, my wallet, and my taste buds are content.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #10

Here's the dissection:

Water cooler talk activity or situation – My espresso machine broke.

Details – My usual routine vs. my new (but temporary) routine.

Drama – Arguing with myself about getting a latte from a coffee shop.

Emotions – Decompressing from the experience every day.

Here's your prompt: Water cooler talk activity or situation – Has broken equipment ever forced you to rearrange your schedule?

Details – Give me 3 specifics about that situation.

Drama – Was the new schedule difficult to adjust to?

Emotions – How did that make you feel?.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #11

Here's my story:

Some days, I'm a skilled copy editing ninja:

Cutting vague nouns with a katana.

Knocking out jargon with nunchucks.

Stabbing filler words with throwing stars.

Other days, an actual ninja would be better at my craft.

On those days, I'm not productive. So I end up focusing on a menial task like using my fingernails to pick hot glue out of my crafting bowl. (I hope my boss doesn't catch me.)

Balance, am I right?

Picture it...A vintage Corningware cereal bowl circa 1988 (with that unmistakable blue floral pattern) coated in 7 layers of dried on hot glue.

I pour piping hot water from my electric kettle into the bowl and let it soak for about 5 minutes. (Microwaving it might work better. And then I could wax my eyebrows with it. But that's probably not a good idea.)

So I stick my fingers in the semi-scalding water and pick at the hot glue. (And finally, feel my cold hands become warm for the first time since June.)

But then I decide I need to hold the bowl at a different angle to get better leverage for peeling. (Like how I use my pen tip to get better leverage, so I can open my Coca-Cola can.)

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #11

My story continued:

So I dump the now lukewarm water, turn the bowl sideways, and easily peel away the hot glue.

After I finished my task and began my cleanup ritual, a piece of peeled hot glue caught my attention. It was an odd but recognizable shape. I pulled it from the pile of hot glue and saw another odd but recognizable shape.

I found myself intentionally analyzing the hot glue scraps. What could this piece be? What about that piece? What do these 3 pieces together look like?

And BOOM – suddenly, my creativity is back. I shifted my perspective and restored myself to full copy edit ninja.

I'm lucky I like myself. Otherwise, my I might fire myself.

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #11

Here's the dissection:

Water cooler talk activity or situation – Peeling hot glue from a bowl because I'm not feeling productive.

Details – How I peel the hot glue from the bowl.

Drama – Analyzing the hot glue shapes.

Emotions – Restoring my creativity.

Here's your prompt:

Water cooler talk activity or situation – Have you ever felt unproductive? What did you do instead of work?

Details – Give me 3 specifics about that.

Drama – Did something happen that restored your productivity?

Emotions – How did that make you feel?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #12

Here's my story:

I love fan mail.

"Autumn, this week's prompt was fire! Keep 'em coming."

"Hey, Grumpy lady (in my best Shaggy voice). You're killin' it. I'm learning so much from you that my clients think I'm a seasoned professional, not a 2-year copywriter."

"I know we haven't worked together in years, but I wanted to let you know that I still receive compliments on my about page you wrote. Thank you so much!"

Reading emails from my followers puts a smug smile on my face because they took time out of their schedules to say hello. I. Am. That. Important.

But every once in awhile, I receive an email that takes me aback – a clutch-my-pearls email.

Only I don't own pearls, so I clutch my chest instead. (I can feel Ginger rolling her eyes at me.)

These emails are always from someone I don't have a rapport with and always point out grammatical errors on my website or free offerings.

And while I always believe their intention isn't malicious, I'm still surprised – because I forget some people see my moniker and assume I'm a stickler for perfect grammar.

After the initial shock wears off and Ginger's finished mocking me, I put my boss hat on and respond professionally with a thank you & an educational statement. (I know Ginger wouldn't reply in such a nice way.)

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #12

My story continued:

"I can see why you would think this is a grammatical error because it is — it's an intentional error to make my copy sound conversational.

If I was talking with you in person, I would never say, 'Here are the groceries.' I would say, 'Here's the groceries.' (As I fling them in your direction because I'm emotionally exhausted from deciding what I want to eat for the next 7-10 days.)

Even though I am The Grumpy Grammarian, I believe in writing conversationally so it sounds like I'm talking to a friend. Because copywriting converts better when it's written in a conversational way like I'm giving my BFF an update about food habits.

Grammar within copywriting is such a fun and debatable topic these days. What's your viewpoint on the topic?"

The best part of being my own boss is that I can refocus these emails and have meaningful conversations about viewpoints.

If I was just an employee, I wouldn't even reply to these emails.

And that would cost me money. Because after I explain my viewpoint, 87% of the time I turn these grammar police into clients.

A little grumpy education goes a long way.

So let's talk: What's your viewpoint on grammar and copywriting?

INSTAGRAM PROMPT #12

Here's the dissection:

Water cooler talk activity or situation – Putting on my boss hat and responding to nitpicky emails about grammar.

Details – Fan mail that I usually receive.

Emotions – Letting go of the shock these emails cause me.

Drama – Refocusing these emails and having a conversation about viewpoints.

Here's your prompt:

Water cooler talk activity or situation – Have you ever had to put your boss hat on and handle a situation that caught you off guard?

Details – Give me 3 specifics about that.

Emotions – How did that make you feel?

Drama – How did you handle that situation?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN:

- Fill out the prompts.
- Snap pictures.
- And share your stories on Instagram.

Feeling extra share-y? Tag me on Instagram.

@grumpygrammarian

I promise to love & comment on your post.
Because I know it'll be storytelling gold.

Wanna see what internet small talk other people are spinning into storytelling gold and give them some love? Use the hashtag #grumpyprompts

WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME SHOWING OFF YOUR SEXY BLACK DRESS & MATCHING CAR AND LESS TIME WORRYING ABOUT IG STORYTELLING?

Here are 2 ways we can work together...

Want to sample my services? Try My A La Carte Offering.

Not to be confused with a la mode. Because putting ice cream on your keyboard might cause a problem.

Any type of copy (sales pages, blog posts, emails). Any topic. For a flat rate.

Want to learn how to write like your favorite copywriter? Apply for Drool-Worthy Stories.

It's the only copywriting apprenticeship that gives you the tools to become:

- An exceptional copy editor.
- A sophisticated storyteller.
- A powerful persuader.

ABOUT ME

I'm Autumn Tompkins, The Grumpy Grammarian.

I wasn't always grumpy—well, that isn't exactly true (thanks, chronic illnesses). I just never embraced my real personality. That is until I could no longer ignore it.

Copywriting for clients from scratch was painful. I couldn't take it anymore. So I transformed from copywriter to copy editor and embraced a part of my personality I kept hidden.

I put on my big girl panties, wiggled a little bit, and giggled. But not like a schoolgirl. More like Dr. Evil while rubbing my hands together.

Grump. Grump. Grump.

But don't worry...While I'm a rigorous, skilled critic, make no mistake — I am your ALLY.

I PROMISE NOT TO...

- Judge you because of bad grammar.
- Cramp your style.
- Change your copy's message.



ABOUT ME

I'BECAUSE I BELIEVE...

- Your copy should create a connection with your customers, so they buy into you.
- In breaking all the grammar “rules”, so your customers know you have a strong command of expressive language.
- Unconsciously overlooked errors cause you to lose your credibility and affect your bottom line.

You're someone who understands the power of copywriting. And I PROMISE TO treat you with respect & transform your copy, so your words work for you. Not against you.



COPYRIGHT & DISCLAIMER

This is an eBook. No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

The information provided within this eBook is for general informational purposes only. While we try to keep the information up-to-date and correct, there are no representations or warranties, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability or availability with respect to the information, products, services, or related graphics contained in this eBook for any purpose. Any use of this information is at your own risk.

The methods described in this eBook are the author's personal thoughts. They are not intended to be a definitive set of instructions for this project. You may discover there are other methods and materials to accomplish the same end result.

Basically, I own this. Have integrity. Don't rip me off.

Because lawyers.