



# WRITING AN AVATAR EDUBITE: BEST PRACTICES

## A NOTE ON EDUBITES

EduBITES are engaging online courses which present topics and themes to learners in short and easily comprehensible pieces called Microbites. We use diverse audiovisual formats too bring your course to life. At the center of your eduBITE is the script. Scripting is an essential part of creating the best experience for your learners. Regardless of your expertise in the topic or your professional experience as a speaker, a script is required to ensure that your content is structured and ready for eduBITES production.

Your script is the blueprint that enables the entire eduBITES team to leverage their expertise in service of your content. Below you will find our recommendations for creating an eduBITE script that will engage your learners, while meeting the requirements of our platform.

## EDUBITES STYLE GUIDE

- Remember this is a script for performance. Avoid language that is overly complex or academic.
- Use an informal and conversational tone and colloquial language.
- The script will be direct address meaning you should speak directly to the individual learner.
- When addressing the learner use 'you' and not 'ladies and gentlemen'. In German: 'Du' not 'Sie'. We prefer the word 'learners' to 'students'.
- Keep it light hearted by adding humor, irony, sarcasm, sweetness, jokes.
- Keep it engaging by adding real-life examples.

# EDUBITES STRUCTURE

1 edubite = 2-3 hours of video/ audio content, divided into 'microbites'

1 Microbite = 5-15 minutes of video/ audio content.

## FRAMING THE EBUBITE CONTENT

For each edubite, please prepare an introductory and summary microbite to adequately frame the main content:

### Introduction Microbite (5-8 minutes)

- Introduce yourself:
  - Professional background e.g., degree and work experience.
  - Relationship to the topic, your passion for it, your content focus in it, and your experience in it.
  - Or, describe your companies' activities/expertise if representing an organization or working with avatars.
- Provide a detailed overview of the structure and content of the entire eduBITE.
- Explain what learners will learn in this eduBITE.

### Summary Microbite (5-8 minutes)

- For the final microbite, summarize the whole edubite by reviewing the learning goals, key takeaways and how one can apply this learning to their practice.
- Conclude the microbite on a personal note, wishing the learners all the best on their learning journey.

## HOW TO WRITE A MICROBITE

Please follow our guide below to ensure a consistent and uniformed approach to writing a microbite:

**Length:** 750 words (5 min) - 2,250 words (15 min)

## **Main Microbites: (5-15 minutes each)**

### **Intro each Microbite**

- Intro e.g. "Welcome to this Microbite on XXX-XXX-XXX"
- Introduce the main learning objectives of the microbite
- Share the main content areas and benefits of the learning

### **During each Microbite:**

- It is paramount to explain how this knowledge can be transferred to the learner's professional context.
- Use clear and relatable examples and case studies. To help the learner to easily connect and relate, when possible, try to include examples of well-known companies or familiar cases.
- Consider the mental load of the learner by avoiding long-winded academic and theoretical passages.
- After each theoretical point / concept alleviate the learners mental load with a lighter practical example, or anecdote.
- Use case studies as a narrative / common thread. Consider whether it makes sense for your topic to give the material a setting as in a case study (e.g., a Berlin start-up, a Sri Lankan family-owned manufacturing company, etc.)
- Avoid referencing a previous or subsequent microbite. An individual microbite from your edubite may be reused in other edubites. Therefore, each microbite must be able to stand alone, and also make sense outside this eduBITE and the sequence of its microBITES. Recurring themes and topics which should be referenced more generally.

- Engage the learners, by directly addressing them, asking questions and using an inner dialogue e.g. "Now you could think / ask yourself"
- Be mindful to use inclusive language and diverse cultural examples.

**At the end of each microbite:**

- Summarize the key takeaways of the microbite.
- Reemphasize how learners can apply these takeaways to their professional contexts.
- Write a conclusion sentence. I.e. "Thanks for your attention."

**EXAMPLE TEXT FORMATTED FOR AVATAR BELOW**

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## **WRITING FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS**

Each production type has additional requirements, please refer to the information below that pertains to your specific production:

- **Studio Production/Remote Productions:** As the video formats are not flexible, it is important to work with fully-formulated, word-perfect scripts that we will load into a teleprompter
  - **Avatar:** Text for synthesized speech needs to meet our specifications and formatting requirements. See below.
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# BEST PRACTICES WHEN WRITING FOR THE AVATAR

## Avatar Style Guide:

The avatar allows content to be easily updated and translated into any language. We recommend when preparing avatar only content to limit the amount of personal referenced, anecdotes or stories. In this case it is preferable to keep things primarily focused on the topics at hand and less on the presenter's story, personality or connection to the content. To make the most of the technology and get the best result please follow the formatting guidelines below when preparing your scripts.

## LANGUAGE

- **Use correct spelling and grammar**
- **Write in only one language.** For example, when writing for an English-speaking avatar, do not use German words.

## TEXT DEVICES

**Parenthesises ():** Please do not use parenthesises, as the avatar cannot read text, such as (this).

**Acronyms:** Spell acronyms like they would sound. For example:

- AI → a-eye
- AWS → a-"double you"-s
- NYC → N Y C

**Numbers:** Spell numbers as words. For example:

- 10 89 -> Ten eighty-nine
- 2 5 8 6 -> Two five eight six
- 148 -> One hundred and forty eight

## Bullet Points:

- In your text editor (e.g Microsoft word) please use the proper bullet function:



- Always add a period at the end of the sentence or word, for example:
  - Potatoes.
  - Peas and Carrots.
- If stating “the following 3 points” then number those items that follow: Point one. First profound point. Point two. Second profound point. Point three. Third profound point.

## PACING (PUNCTUATION)

Text that is heavily punctuated with periods and commas will result in a more evenly paced speech. When editing the text, think about breathing and timing. Sometimes a pause occurs in a spoken sentence due to a natural pause for breath. Meaning it is necessary to overuse punctuation in places to achieve a natural result in the output audio

- **Use short paragraphs:** Break long scripts into smaller paragraphs to help the technology to adjust the pacing of the video and fix minor pronunciation issues.
- **Use Periods:** This will add a longer break and downwards inflection.
- **Use Commas:** This will add shorter breaks than a period.
- **Use forced pauses:** If you want to introduce a forced pause you can do so by adding a ‘tag’ into the script, for instance ‘Welcome to this microbite on the most amazing topic in the world <break time="3s" /> worm farming!!’
  - For a 1 second break add: <break time="1s" />
  - For a 0.5 second break add: <break time="0.5s" />
- **Avoid Dashes:** Avoid using short dash (–) or longer em dash (—) to separate extra information or to mark a break in a sentence, as the avatar will interpret dashes ambiguously. When punctuating, it is best to use commas, colons, periods.

## STYLING

- **Use "Quotes":** This will add emphasis to a specific word or part of the sentence. For example: I want to add emphasis to this "word", or "this part of the sentence".
- **Use contractions:** For more natural sounding speech contractions can be used. For example, one can use 'can't' instead of 'cannot'. Other examples below:

CONTRACTION	UNCONTRACTED	EXAMPLES
-n't	not	isn't (is not), won't (will not)
're	are	you're (you are), they're (they are)
'd	had, would	she'd (she had, would), I'd (I had, would)
'll	will	we'll (we will), you'll (you will)
's	is	he's (he is), it's (it is)
I'm	I am	
let's	let us	

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## MICROBITE TEXT EXAMPLE:

- Formatted for AVATAR USE
- Translated to English using translation software

- 2188 words circa 15 minutes

# Diversity & Team Development

by Johann Wachs

Hello, I am Miriam, your A I Guide. Welcome to this really exciting microbite in which we look at two highly interesting aspects of teams. Their diversity and their development.

Regarding diversity, we first learn about a simple tool, the Problem Space, a rectangle. So-called clone teams, in which everyone is the same and therefore everyone thinks the same way, fill only a small corner of this space.

Rebel teams, in which everyone thinks differently, largely fill this Problem Space and thus understand the problem better. And therefore, develop better solutions. Example: the C I A is a cloning team. That's why it didn't expose Osama Bin Laden before nine eleven.

Tuckman's five-phase model helps us to understand the development process of teams. He shows the successive phases through which teams have to develop in order to achieve their full performance - from getting to know each other, to confrontation, to regular relationships and trusting cooperation. And above all, through which emotional processes they can move from one phase to the next. Not all of them make it!

This microbite has two key takeaways about diversity and team development.

Takeaway one. The higher the intellectual diversity of a team, the more fully it can penetrate a problem, and the better its solution to the problem will be.

Takeaway two. Teams develop through five phases, delightfully called Forming. Storming. Norming. Performing. Adjourning.



What will you learn?

When you assemble teams in the future, you know what to look for: the diversity of thought you consciously assemble maximizes your team's performance.

And once you've seen through the five phases of team development, you can navigate and coach your teams through this process. Then you'll know what the issues are and where to guide.

As a leader, I assemble a team to solve a specific task in the best possible way. To do this, I need to appoint different roles with different skills, expertise and experience. In communication agencies, for example, these are account managers, strategists, creatives, market researchers, data specialists, U X designers, web designers and many more. So, I have quite a few different roles in my team. But what if they all think alike because they are the same gender, have the same sexual orientation, the same religion, come from the same cultural area, the same social class, the same generation, are politically homogeneous and all play golf together? Can they then effectively solve a problem posed to them if the frame of reference of the problem is different from their social reality? To stay in advertising, do you think that until the nineteen seventies it was almost impossible for a college graduate to work at a New York advertising agency. And then to land a job if he was Jewish? That might work, as I said, as long as American ad agencies were full of Wasps - that is, white Anglo Saxon Protestants - advertising to the white American middle class, as was basically the case until the nineties.

But characteristically, in the nineties, the big agencies set up so-called multicultural departments to siphon off the increased buying power of Hispanics, blacks and Asians. And those teams, of course, were very diversely staffed with people from those populations.

Again, to illustrate this problem of diversity of teams, I have a very simple visual tool. It's called the 'Problem Space' and it comes from this super cool book by Matthew Syed called 'Rebel Ideas' which I really highly recommend to you, it's really super fun to read and you learn to think in a new way.

The Problem Space describes the problem in its spatial extension. Let's say a rectangle. My team's task now is to penetrate this problem so completely in terms of content that we can develop the best possible solution from this one hundred percent understanding.

So, now I have what Matthew Syed calls a 'team of clones' - that is, all people who come from the same gender, religion, class, school, as described above, and play golf together. How much of the problem space will such a team be able to penetrate? And as a result, how good will their solution be?

Only one corner! Maybe fifteen percent of the problem space. This can't go well!

Now, as a manager, I take a very diverse team from the employees of our company in order to unleash as many diverse and divergent perspectives as possible on the problem. So, I would bring women into the team. I take L G B T plus people. I'm taking at least once religious and non-religious people; they see the world differently too. I'm taking Gen X ers, Millennials, and also Gen Z er in. I'm taking Aristos and workers, academics and practitioners. And professionals from different disciplines. What does my problem space look like then?

Ah, much better. This is what Matthew Syed calls a 'Team of Rebels' - not a 'Team of Clones'. So, we see: a diverse team penetrates the problem space to a much higher degree than a clone team, and as a result will certainly develop a better, more effective, sustainable solution to it.

The only thing I have to be careful of as a leader is that I don't align my team's diversity with political correctness and turn every team into a Les Humphries Singers clone or a Village People surrogate. Because if, to put it in extreme terms, they are all members of a young, urban, liberal, well-educated, well-off minority, then I have conformity of thought again, despite apparent diversity.

I just really need to unleash different mindsets and worldviews on the problem, not different looking types first and foremost.

Matthew Syed has an incredibly powerful example of the inability of homogeneous teams to navigate problem space and develop solutions to complex and novel problems: and that is

the C I A's inability to anticipate and thwart the September eleven attacks. Think about it for yourself. The leads were all there. Bin Laden was known. He had carried out several serious terrorist attacks before - even one on that very World Trade Center! Mohammed Ata got his pilot's license in Florida. Why did no one here recognize the problem?? The

reason: the C I A is a Team of Clones - they are all White, male, predominantly heterosexual, Protestant Gen X ers from elite East Coast schools. That means total conformity of thought.

These men, who grew up with Rambo and Terminator as role models for violence-embracing masculinity, simply could not imagine that a beturbaned, full-bearded man in a caftan could strike a blow against the sole leading power in the world. And boy were they wrong!

So now, when I've set up my team really well with this knowledge of the benefits of diversity, I have all its parts in place - but they still have to work together effectively in the best possible way to produce the desired result. And that doesn't happen by itself, nor does it happen from the start! On the contrary, it is my task as a manager to understand this process of team development so that I can steer it and intervene in a guiding way. Thank goodness that science has also researched this area and provided it with a model that can be called 'Tuckman's Five Phases of Team Development, and they really roll off the tongue: Forming. Storming. Norming. Performing. Adjourning. Let's get on board - fasten your seatbelts!

At the beginning in the forming phase the relations of the team members to each other are characterized by mutual dependence. Group members initially rely on safe, familiar patterns of behavior - they look to the group leader for guidance and direction in this initial phase.

They first want to be accepted in and by the group so that they can feel safe in it. In the beginning, they gather very strong impressions about the similarities and differences between the individual members.

You keep things simple for now and avoid controversy as well as serious topics and feelings. Gaining orientation is important at this early stage. Discussions focus on defining the scope of the task and how to approach it. To move from this stage to the next, each member must give up comfortably dwelling on non-threatening issues and risk the possibility of conflict.

With this foundation achieved, the team can now move into the real work: The next phase, which Tuckman "Storming," is characterized by competition and conflict in personal relationships and the task functions. For as group members try to organize

themselves for the task, conflicts inevitably arise among them. Individuals must adapt their feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs to the group organization. Because of the automatic "fear of failure" or "fear of exposure," the desire for structural clarification and commitment will become stronger. Questions will arise about who is responsible for what exactly, what the rules are, what the reward system is, and what criteria are used to evaluate.

These issues reflect conflicts over leadership, structure, power, and authority. There can be wide swings in member behavior because of such competition. Some members may become completely silent from the conflicts that arise during this phase, while others attempt to dominate. To move to the next phase, group members must stop checking each other out and proving things to each other and move to a collaborative problem-solving mentality. Listening well to one another is now the most important trait that will help the team do this.

If this is successful, true cohesion emerges in the interpersonal relationships in the subsequent norming phase. Group members can now actively acknowledge the contributions of all members, build and maintain the community of the team, and solve group problems. They are willing to change their preconceived ideas or opinions based on facts presented by other members, and they actively ask each other questions. Leadership is truly shared, and cliques dissolve. As members begin to know and understand each other better personally, these increasingly trusting relationships strengthen group cohesion.

If the group gets this far, team members develop a real sense of belonging, supported in part by relief over the resolution of interpersonal conflicts. The main task of this third stage is sharing among group members: they exchange feelings and ideas, solicit and give each other feedback, and explore actions related to the task. The creativity of the team is now very high. Interactions are characterized by openness and sharing of information on both personal and task levels. They have a good feeling of belonging to an effective team. The main disadvantage of the norming phase is that members begin to fear the inevitable dissolution of the group. Thus, they may resist change.

The Performing stage is by all means not reached by all groups. When group members are able to progress to this point, the capacity, range, and depth of their personal relationships expand and true cohesion develops. At this level, people can work independently, in subgroups, or as a team with equal ease. Their roles and authority dynamically adapt to the changing needs of the group and the individual.

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The fourth stage is characterized by cohesiveness in personal relationships and collaborative problem solving on tasks. In this stage, the group is most productive. Individual members have become confident, and the need for group approval has passed. Members are both very task-oriented and very people-oriented. There is unity, morale is high, and loyalty is intense. People support each other in experimenting on problems, achievement is emphasized. The overall goal is productivity through problem solving and work.

Tuckman's final stage, Adjourning, involves termination of task behavior and withdrawal from relationships. Planned closure usually includes recognition for participation and accomplishments, as well as an opportunity for members to say goodbye in person.

The closing of a group may cause some anxiety. In effect, a minor crisis. The most effective interventions at this stage are those that facilitate the completion of the task and the disengagement process.

So, let's recap:

First the more intellectual diversity I give my team, the more fully they can penetrate our problem, and the better our solution to the problem will be.

This Insight will help me set up my teams to be more diverse in the future to maximize our performance.

Second, my job as a team leader is to understand that my team must evolve through the five phases of Forming. Storming. Norming. Performing. Adjourning.

This understanding helps me navigate and coach my team members through this process, because I know what the issues are and where to start guiding.

That brings us to the end of this microbite, thanks for listening.