The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

1. Point (of View)
    - Purpose or reason:
    Stories are told to make a point. What message are you trying to convey? Why are you telling this story? Is there a lesson learned or a moral to the story?

    - Power of personal expression:
    The story reveals the author - the writer's experience, passion and feelings about the topic. This is in contrast to a report that is a detached retelling of facts about a topic or a report/travelogue that is a recounting of what happened.

    - First-person point of view:
    The narrative is a first-person, personal story that reflects firsthand experience and builds on life experiences. It can be done throughout the story or as a frame around the story. What is your connection?

2. A Dramatic Question
    - What guides the story:
    The dramatic question is a structural "setup", corresponding to a logical payoff at the close of the story.

    - Dramatic tension:
    Capture attention with a compelling question, conflict, or central desire posed in the opening and resolved in the closing lines. Hook interest as to how the story will unfold and close.

    - Focus on a defining moment set in one place and time.

    - Resolve tension, sometimes with a surprise ending or unexpected twist.

3. Emotional Content
    - Engage the audience by evoking an emotion from them so they want to listen.

    - Emotional content might deal with great happiness, fear, loss, love, loneliness, courage, acceptance, rejection, hardship, etc.

    - Use vivid details to reveal feelings and unfold the information in the story.

    - The images, music, and narration of the story should be consistent with the emotion of the moment.

    - Use images and music to unveil story information and emotion; these may not be provided by the narration.

    - All of the multimedia elements should support and convey meaning to the story rather than detract from the point of the story.

4. The Gift of Your Voice
    - Make your story come alive:
      Tell your story in your own voice. You are the narrator.
      Tell the story in a slow, conversational voice rather than just reading it. People want to emotionally interact with what you have to tell them.
    - Convey meaning with the sound of your voice:
      The tone provides the drama and sets the mood. The pitch, inflection, and timbre impact how the story is received.

5. The Power of the Soundtrack
    - Music elicits an emotional response. Choose appropriate music to set the mood and to support the meaning of the story.
    - Instrumental music works best.
    - Beware of copyright rules – use original, copyright-free or royalty-free music that you purchase.
    - Sound effects can be distracting if not used carefully and appropriately.

6. Economy
    - Keep the story short and to your point! It should be 2-5 minutes long.
    - Use the fewest words and images to tell the story. Use pictures and drawings that contribute to the story and move the viewer from beginning of the story to the closing.
    - The words and pictures should work together to tell the story. Both contribute meaning. Create a sequential composition of the visual and auditory components. Because images provide their own narrative, fewer words and detailed descriptions are necessary.
    - Consider implicit use of images to illustrate the story vs. explicitly telling the story. Implicit use conveys symbolism and metaphors.

7. Pacing
    - The rhythm of the story helps keep interest in the story and can suggest action and excitement (fast paced) vs. relaxation and melancholy (slow paced) .
    - Varying the pace of the story:
      While usually a short story has a consistent pace, it can pause to provide reflection time or change the pace of the story's elements (narration, music, images).
      The narrative can have pauses, starts and stops or be spoken at a different rate.
      The music can change tempo.
      The images can be set to enter at different rates of speed or have differences in image duration.

Adapted from:
Digital Storytelling Cookbook, Joe Lambert, Center for Digital Storytelling;
Take Six: Elements of a Good Digital Story, Bernajean Porter; and
"Digital Storytelling in the Language Arts Classroom", *Learning & Leading with Technology*, Glen Bull and Sara Kajder.