

# Pedagogical Toolbox

## Gameplay tools

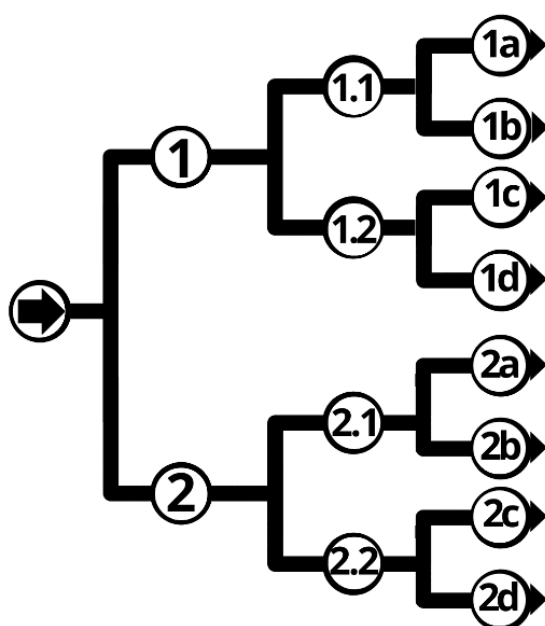
### Paths template - Turn a linear story into a branching narrative

When writing your story, you need to know where it will lead and what specific steps are required for its progression. But in order to create interactions and to provide multiple choices so that players may feel engaged and can progress based on their understanding, skills and decisions, you will need to add other paths in order to create a branching narrative.

#### Description of the branching structure

Whereas simple structures such as the tunnel explore a more linear path, the Branching narrative and its variants make sure that every decision made by the player will affect the rest of the story and its ending, as they are not allowed to turn back. This means that you will need to imagine different scenarios and endings.

The structure would look like this:



Introductory steps (These can be linear)

Game step 1: The player is faced with at least 2 choices

- Choice 1
- Choice 2

Game step 2: The player can take at least 2 new paths depending on their previous choice.

- If choice 1:
  - Choice 1.1
  - Choice 1.2
- If choice 2:
  - Choice 2.1
  - Choice 2.2

Game step 3: The player continues to progress depending on their previous choice.

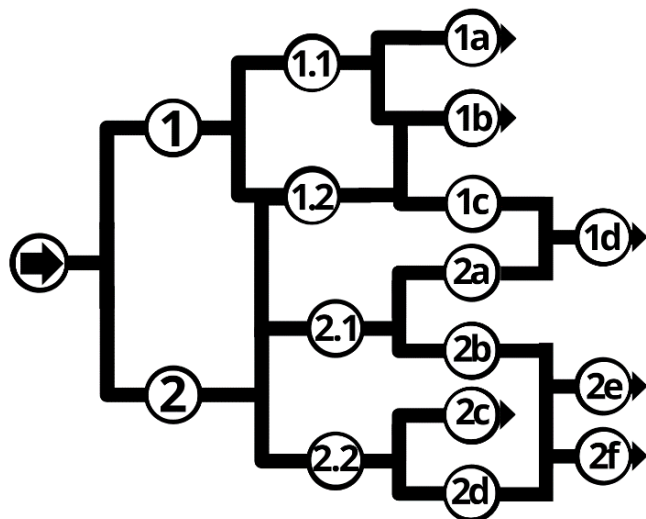
- If choice 1.1:
  - Choice 1a
  - Choice 1b
- If choice 1.2:
  - Choice 1c
  - Choice 1d
- If choice 2.1:
  - Choice 2a
  - Choice 2b
- If choice 2.2:
  - Choice 2c
  - Choice 2d

You can create as many steps as needed, each with a new set of choices and paths solely relying on the previous branch. Each new choice creates 2 paths, each path then creates 2 more, and so on, which means that each subdivision will lead to a different tip of the branch, a different ending of the story.

Thus, if you develop your story through 3 game steps where each provides 2 paths following each of the previous choices, you will need to create 8 endings to your story, which may be a lot of content and may require more debriefing with students who, therefore, won't have experienced the same steps and conclusion to the adventure. This should be taken into consideration when planning your story and determining its goals and its complexity.

## An alternative narrative: the bottleneck structure

Depending on the variety of options you wish to give the players and how much time and effort you wish to put into creating a certain number of different paths based on each choice, you may decide to create similar endings or merge certain paths together, thus using the bottleneck structure, which looks like this:



This narrative branches similarly to the previous, simpler structure but allows you to either reduce the number of different elements and endings or create connections between several paths so that all players will potentially experience similar steps or events and face similar obstacles or tasks, thus facilitating the debriefing process.

For example, as shown above, Choice 2 could lead to Choices 2.1, 2.2 and also 1.2, and multiple paths could lead to the same ending, such as 1d. This could involve the player dismissing or ignoring a hint and taking a longer, more complex route to a similar spot in the story, with wider freedom of choice and possibilities and more interactions and gameplay dynamics.