

Screenwriting – Part II

You are getting back your first attempt at screenplay writing. You will choose to do one of the following (and see general notes on page two):

OPTION 1) Edit the script you are getting back

- a) **read all notes** on the script; adhere to formatting instructions & consider the other suggestions
- b) look at the notes you took on writing short films (probably on your paper with initial story ideas) and/or look at the articles you read (on class website 9/15 & 9/18)
- c) get out your copies of the ***Mean Girls/Inglorious Basterds/the-one-you-printed excerpts*** for reference
- d) if your script doesn't have tension, drama, comedy, sincerity, or the like – make it so it does: these are the things that audiences care about
- d) make changes to make your script **even better**
- e) you can add to or take away from your screenplay, but it should remain no less than 3 pages and no more than 5
- f) note that you are writing a script that you/your classmates could potentially film*
-- **impress them** – what do you like in a movie? How can you bring that to a short film on a zero budget☺ - be thoughtful/creative

OPTION 2) Start a new script

- a) **read all the notes** on the script you got back, even though you are not expanding it
-- adhere to formatting instructions and think about the other suggestions made
- b) get out your copies of the **screenplay excerpts** for reference
- c) **come up with a new idea**
ideas:
 - a fight almost ensures at the lunch table – over what?
 - you are stuck in the school/library/gym at night – why/what happens?
 - you are having an interesting/humorous conversation with a grandparent you haven't seen in years
 - you miss the bus home from downtown Seattle – a good or bad thing?
 - etc...
- d) **write a 3-5 page script** in Celtx
- e) note that you are writing a script that you/your classmates could potentially film*
-- **impress them** – what do you like in a movie? How can you bring that to a short film on a zero budget☺ - be thoughtful/creative

The edited/new screenplays will be done in Celtx and are due at the **start of class on Monday, October 2. A hard copy is required.** Additionally, you will ALL bring back the original script you got back today.

- making notes, jotting down ideas on this first draft will not be accepted as the completed assignment; you need to edit, re-write, and work your screenplay and produce a new copy

** if you would like to continue writing a screenplay that isn't one that could be made into a student film, you can as long as you are okay with not lobbying it to be made into a film by your peers; it would be a good exercise in screenwriting*

Some general notes and reminders regarding your first screenwriting attempt:

1) Screenwriting is different than most writing you're used to: **you don't have the luxury of giving background and explanations.**

-- You cannot write in a script what the audience can't see or hear
you can't write: "He thinks about his girlfriend..." in an ACTION line or "(thinking of wife)" in a PARENTHETICAL because we can't see or hear that

-- SHOW what you mean, don't explain it

2) The **"action" line** should be written formally – meaning in complete sentences. This is where you are setting the scene: the who and the where. While not too lengthy, give all info you can that will help give insight/foreshadowing/general useful information about the characters/situation.

3) Meanwhile, when your characters are speaking, try to write with more **authentic dialog** – write how people actually talk.

-- Many of our sentences are not complete or we have a certain way of talking/certain repeat phrases, we always use contractions...

4) Your **"scene heading"** line (it will be gray when you are writing in the program) is just for **location and time** (and is all caps)

-- should begin with INT (for interior) or EXT. (for exterior) then location - time of day.

-- example: INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY – NIGHT

5) Break-up dialog with "action" lines...

-- action lines are not necessarily for just action – they can describe the location/room, what your characters are physically doing, etc.

-- this makes for better reading and with lets you give characteristics to your characters, it helps you tell your story even more through what is in the room, what the characters are physically like, the habits they may have, etc.

6) Unless it is very essential, **do NOT include camera angle or shot types**. So you may want to include an occasional "action" line indicating an ECU (extreme close-up), but do not continually dictate where the camera is/should be – that's the director's job.

7) Names: give all of your character's names; try to avoid things like *Man # 1*, *Robber # 1*, etc.

-- it makes it harder for the reader to follow the different people... additionally, don't give them too similar names (ie: Bob, Rob, etc.)

-- you don't want to waste the reader's time thinking about who's who, you want them to just keep reading your story

8) You must **edit your script** for grammar and punctuation.

-- action lines AND dialog

-- misspellings, missing caps & periods distract from your ideas: you don't want that

9) And to repeat #1 above – **only include in your script what the audience can see or hear** – avoid all else. Indeed, it’s a whole different kind of storytelling. Don’t include phrases like “We see...” etc. **Show, don’t tell.**

End note: You are the screenwriter and you shape the narrative structure and create every character, action, line of dialogue and the setting... **with the fewest lines possible.** It’s difficult, but the more you do it, the better you will get – the more you will be able to visualize and put into words what you want (ie: keep working!).