

## Some general reminders...

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!).