

SCREENPLAY FORMATTING HANDBOOK

Matthew Kalil

SAMPLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	3
WHO READS YOUR SCRIPT?	3
Publishing a script	3
Scripts vs transcript	4
Exercise: read a script.....	4
A screenplay’s audience	4
THE PRODUCTION TEAM	5
Producer	5
Director	5
Director of photography.....	6
First assistant director (AD).....	6
Actors	6
Casting director	6
Production designer (PD)	6
Location scout	7
Props master	7
Sound designer.....	7
Editor.....	7
SCRIPT BREAKDOWN	8
SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE	8
FORMATTING RULES	8
Title page	9
Page numbers.....	10
Scene Numbers	11
Font	11
Margins.....	11
Line Spacing.....	12
Scene headings (sluglines).....	13
EXT. INT.	13
Setting	13
DAY/NIGHT.....	14
Action	15
Character names	15
Dialogue	16
Parenthetical phrases.....	17
Subtitles.....	19
Talking at once	20
Phone conversations	20
Transitions	22
Titles	23
Insert	23
Sound effects.....	24
MOS.....	25
Props	25
Off screen (O.S.)	25

Voice over (V.O.)	25
Montage sequence.....	26
BINDING THE SCRIPT	28
SCRIPT SAMPLE	29
THE CRAFT OF SCREENWRITING	30
Vomit script	30
Cleaning up the script.....	31
Write only what you see or hear.....	31
Make sure it's on the page.....	32
Use the white of the page	32
Enter is a cut.....	33
Shot sizes are implied.....	34
The order that we read is the order that we see	35
Love your words	36
Don't make spelling or typing mistakes	36
No 'ing'ing	37
Active, not passive	37
To "we" or not to "we"?.....	38
Incomplete sentences.....	38
A beat is a pause.....	39
CONSISTENCY.....	39
REFERENCES.....	40

INTRODUCTION

Most people think that just because they have seen many films they can write a screenplay. This is without having read a single script in their lives. Now, just because someone has seen a building does not make him or her an architect. It's not likely (and actually illegal) for someone who hasn't studied architecture to simply draw up a blueprint for a building they have in their heads. Similarly, just because someone has heard many symphonies in their life doesn't mean that they can go out and write the score for an entire orchestra. But for some reason wannabe screenwriters all seem to think that because they have seen a film, they can write a script.

Architects learn how to write up plans during their training. They understand that they are communicating with plumbers, electricians, stone-masons, tillers, plasterers and all the other people involved in the construction industry. They know that a blue line means one thing and a red line means another. The same is true of composers of classical music. They know what each dot and annotation means on sheet music. They study harmony and counterpoint and know what works. They do this so they can clearly communicate to the entire orchestra from the brass to the woodwinds to the percussion.

The final product for the architect is not the blueprint but the building. The final product for the composer is not the sheet music but the music as it is performed. The final product for the screenwriter is not the script but the film. None of these artists make their products themselves. They are all creators of complex documents designed to accurately communicate specific facts and information to a team of people. In order for their vision to be realised fully, the architect, composer and screenwriter need to be as precise and clear in the creation of their document as possible.

In this workbook you will learn the rules and codes of communication that you will need to speak to the members of the film making team. If you do not adhere to these rules and regulations your film that you imagine in your head will either never get made (which is bad) or it will get made in a way that it is totally unrecognisable to you when you finally see it (which could be worse).

WHO READS YOUR SCRIPT?

Publishing a script

No scripts are ever published without them having been movies in the first place. You can't go into your local bookstore and buy a script that hasn't already been turned into a film because, as mentioned above, a script is not a finished product.

Novelists publish books. Journalists publish their work in newspapers. Screenwriters write scripts for a team of industry professionals. If you want to get published, don't be a screenwriter!

Very rarely will someone publish a script before it has been made into a movie. Salman Rushdie, the accomplished author, published a copy of the script of his book
