



DEVELOPMENT

3. WRITE YOUR SCRIPT

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Your film script is the tool that shows how your story will be told on the screen through a series of **scenes**.

Scene

A section of film that shows part of a story taking place in real time in one location.

Script format

There is a specific set of conventions used when writing a script. As a general rule, one page of a script should equal one minute of your film. When typing your script, use Courier font in size 12. The description and action needs to be clearly distinguishable from the dialogue. There are a number of good scriptwriting software packages available, which will automatically format a script for you. Alternatively, you can use the guidelines below to ensure you set your script out correctly.

Each scene begins with the scene title, which should be written in capital letters. Include INT if your scene takes place inside and EXT if it takes place outside. Write the name of your setting and the time of day your scene takes place.

The action describes the setting and what happens there. It also describes the characters: their age, what they look like and what they are wearing (only if it is relevant to the story). It describes what the characters are doing: their movements, actions and expressions. These details help the actors to portray the characters as you have imagined them; they also tell the audience a great deal about who the characters are and what they are feeling. Character names are written in capital letters throughout a script.

When a character is going to speak, write their name in capital letters in the centre of a new line. Centre the dialogue underneath.

INT. LOUNGE. LATE AFTERNOON.

DEREK (16) is dressed casually in jeans, t-shirt and mismatched socks. He hasn't washed for a few days. He is lying on a battered sofa in the lounge of a suburban family home.

DEREK tries to read a magazine but throws it aside after a few seconds. He checks his mobile phone: no messages.

DEREK flicks the TV on using a remote.

An alien-abduction film fills the screen, bright colours, shouts and screams explode into the room. DEREK immediately sits up and to watch it: he is transfixed.

DEREK

Wooooow! I wish...!

Suddenly, a loud crash and huge bang! Smoke fills the room.

DEREK

Aaarh! What's happening? LET ME GO!

ROBOT

Engage the laser beam! Capture the human specimen!

A green laser beam cuts through the smoke, DEREK levitates off the sofa...

There are three areas you should pay particular attention to when writing your script: structure, characters and dialogue.

Structure

Your film script needs to convey the mood and atmosphere of your setting, the personality of your characters and how they are feeling. How will you convey each of these things in the film? By using direct dialogue or by describing action?

Characters

Character development is an important part of understanding the characters and how they would speak and act in a given situation. Consider what each character's personality and qualities are and how this can be presented in the script. Will they insult other characters to show a mean spirit? Will they run from danger to show they are a coward? How can you show strong friendships between characters? Use a combination of action and dialogue to tell your character's story.

Dialogue

What are the characters going to say and how are they going to say it? Write the dialogue as you would say it rather than using formal language. This will make it more realistic. Remember to think about your audience and use appropriate language.

Activity: Show, don't tell

Visual storytelling is where you tell your story through action rather than dialogue. For example, instead of having your character shout, "I am so ANGRY!" you could show them slamming a door, frowning and kicking a chair. To move your story on, instead of having your character saying, "I'm going to steal the robot's gun and escape!" you could show him looking from the robot to the gun and then to the door of the spaceship.

1. How has the scriptwriter conveyed Derek's boredom in the example script above?
2. Write some action that could replace the following pieces of dialogue in a script:

"I'm hungry!"

"I've lost the cat!"

"I'm so tired!"

"I'm late for school!"

When you write your script, remember to use a combination of dialogue and action to tell your story.