

Scriptwriting – Where to Begin?

Scriptwriting, like any other form of creative writing requires a plan. Composing a plan which includes vital information about characters, relationships, storyline, setting etc. is essential before you begin to write. Getting an understanding of where you want your play or film to go and how individuals interact with each other will help you to establish the finer detail that you will need to bring out through your script. Your plan should be detailed and structured to ensure that you have focus and direction when you start writing your script.

The biggest difference between writing a straight forward manuscript or novel and writing a script is that the story within a script is told predominantly through speech and action. It is therefore important that you give each of your characters a definite voice. This should be defined by their character; their background, their location, their age etc. Giving each character a distinct voice will help to distinguish between characters within the script. Movement within scenes is also essential. You do not have to itemise every movement, as the actors will interpret this in their own way. However, when writing a script you should envisage how actors will perform the lines you write, and appreciate that they will not remain stationary. In addition, particularly for stage plays you need to consider how and why people will enter and leave a scene. Always remember that each character that you introduce will still be standing on stage unless you instruct them to leave.

The actual layout and structure of a script requires you to follow certain rules and guidelines so that your script will be universally understood. Thankfully there is now scriptwriting software widely available that can help you with the formatting and writing of scripts to ensure that you are writing appropriately and in a recognised format for both screen and stage. Packages that are suitable for Microsoft Windows include:

- Final Draft
- Celtx
- BPC-Screenplay

Top Tips

- The actual writing of the script should be well spaced out so that there is plenty of room for notes to be added by actors, directors, or even yourself as you come up with new ideas as you write.
- Lines of speech should be separated clearly to identify clearly the individual speaking
- Scenes that are set outside should have EXT next to them and in the same way; scenes that are set inside should have INT next to them for clarity. Following this guidance there should then be one or two words describing the location and time, e.g. INT – THEATRE EVENING
- For stage plays, stage directions should be written in italics.

When your script is ready, make sure it stays out of the slush pile by having it [proofread and appraised](#) by the professionals at Words Worth Reading Ltd.