

Film, Television & New Media 2019 v1.2

Teaching and learning resource: Film script or screenplay

Film script or screenplay

Film script and screenplay are terms which refer to the function of the script used in film, television and new media production. Actors use a film script during production. Directors use a screenplay or shooting script as a tool during filming. In education, a film script is a tool which assists students to articulate both narrative and technical intent prior to production.

Film script layout varies between countries and media format.

Teachers and students should consider that:

- a film script is like a blueprint for a film and should provide a structure for a story in sufficient detail to enable its transformation into a moving-image media product
- a film script should enable the non-sequential filming of scenes
- the length of a film script is related to form, genre and purpose — animation and advertisement film scripts may be shorter
- in education, a film script can be used by a teacher to
 - provide feedback for students to help them solve creative problems
 - authenticate student work
 - alert teachers to unsafe or unethical practice
- in developing a film script, students should consider a target audience, character development, the narrative arc, the visual style, how mood will be created and how representations will be purposely constructed using technical and symbolic codes
- a film script is formatted in a specific order
 - a cover page with TITLE and AUTHOR
 - scene headings indicating scene number, location and time
 - descriptions of location, action and character
 - dialogue which may have actor direction in parentheses
- in education, it is also important to include shot type and transitions between scenes as this serves to demonstrate an understanding of the key concept of languages
- in education, script development notes may help the student demonstrate further understanding of the genre, narrative arc, themes, hero's journey, mise en scène and intended style.

The suggested layout below can be used by Film, Television & New Media students. Use of this layout is not a requirement for the purposes of assessment and confirmation.

Sample film script formatting

Scene Number.
Full stop.
INT interior / EXT exterior.
LOCATION full stop UPPER
CASE
Time DAY / NIGHT in
UPPER CASE.
All in **BOLD**

Description of action and
setting.
Camera angles and shots
may be included in UPPER
CASE.
Character name is in UPPER
CASE

Character name in UPPER
CASE centred.

Dialogue is centred.

Transition in UPPER
CASE justified right.

1. INT. BATHROOM. DAY

FADE UP to a LOW ANGLE LONG SHOT of SMITH in a spotless bathroom staring mindlessly at a television screen on the wall. The camera slowly ZOOMS IN to a CLOSE UP of Smith's face.

NARRATOR

This is the story of a man named Smith. Smith was very much like any other normal person.

CUT TO

2. INT. KITCHEN. DAY

MID SHOT of SMITH pouring cornflakes into a bowl as he watches the morning news.

NOTES: In these scenes, Smith becomes entranced by an all-powerful "screen" which is representative of the media in modern society. Smith's goal is to break free of his enslavement and a twist comes into play when the audience realizes they are being paralleled with Smith himself.

While not practiced in industry, notes can help the student to think deeply about what is going on in the scene. They can also help in the development of a treatment and assist the teacher to understand intent.