

SCRIPT FORMATTING GUIDE

Cover / Title Page:

- Title & screenwriter(s) names in the middle.
- Contact information is located in the lower right corner.

Page Margins:

- Top: 1.0"
- Bottom: 1.0"
- Left: 1.5"
- Right: 1.0"

Font: Always use 12-point Courier; no bold face or italics. Use underlines instead.

Page Numbering: Place the page number on every page in the upper right corner, except the cover and the first page.

Spacing: Double space between slug line, action line, speaking character, stage directions and dialogue. Single space action lines and lines of dialogue.

The Slug Line: The general or specific locale and time of day. Always in ALL CAPS.

Action Line: Sets the scene with a description of characters, places and action single spaced from margin to margin. New characters are always capitalized. After the characters have been introduced, their names no longer need to be capitalized.

Character Speaking: 3.5" from left margin and always in ALL CAPS.

Dialogue: 2.5" from left margin.

Voice Over: Indicated by placing (VO) immediately to the right of the character name.

Off Camera: To indicate that a character is speaking off screen, place (OC) immediately to the right of the character name. This is sometimes done as (OS) for off screen.

Stage directions (or parenthetically): Written in parenthesis and under the name of the character speaking. They should be placed 3.0" from left margin and include what the character is doing within the scene.

Sound/Music Effects are always capitalized.

Camera Directions: Use sparingly or not at all. Let the director do his or her job.

SCREENPLAY FORMAT
by
Your Name

"SCREENPLAY FORMAT"

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCATION #1 – DAY

This is how to begin your screenplay. Scene headings are typed in capitals and must indicate: interior or exterior, the location, and day or night.

Scene action is double-spaced under the heading in upper and lower case text with double-spacing between paragraphs.

Scene action should only deal with what is happening on the screen and must never stray into superfluous novelistic text related to character thoughts or back-story.

A general rule of thumb is to limit a paragraph of scene action to four or five lines. Consider each paragraph as a significant beat of action within your scene.

INT. LOCATION #2 – NIGHT

Begin a new scene with the heading triple-spaced from the preceding scene. Always follow a scene heading with a line of scene action.

CHARACTER #1

Character cues appear in capitals indented to around the middle of the page, but not centered. The first letter of each cue is always in alignment.

CHARACTER #2

A character is designated by either his/her first or last name, but a role designation may be used instead with personal titles abbreviated. The designated name should remain consistent throughout the script.

(MORE)

INT. LOCATION #2 - DAY

Scene transitions are technical information indicating the method of changing from one scene to another. A general rule of thumb is that every scene will CUT TO: the next if no transition is specified.

Transitions are generally only used in shooting scripts, but if it's absolutely necessary to specify one, it appears against the right-margin like this.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOCATION #1 - NIGHT

Always keep scene headings with the scene action. Don't leave loose headings hanging at the bottom of a page.

It's sometimes a good idea to start a new scene on a new page if there is only a line or two at the bottom of the previous one, but scenes can break over the page easily like this.

LATER

If you need to indicate the passing of time through the same scene then use LATER as a sub-heading. There is no need to continuously repeat the master scene heading.

THE CORNER OF THE ROOM

Similarly, you can break up lengthy and complex scenes by focusing on specific areas of action with a sub-heading. This is useful when scripting large party or group scenes.

EXT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

Sometimes it may be necessary to hear characters when we can't actually see them.

CHARACTER #1 (O.S.)

Off Screen means the character is physically present within the scene, but can only be heard; e.g., they are speaking from an adjoining room.

(MORE)

CHARACTER #2 (V.O.)

Voiceover is used when the character is not present within the scene, but can be heard via a mechanical device such as a telephone or radio. It is also used when a character narrates parts of your story.

INTERCUT - INT. LOCATION #1/LOCATION #2 - DAY

If it's necessary to CUT back and forth between simultaneous actions in two different locations in the same scene, then handle your scene heading like this. Use this method when you want to show a phone conversation.

CHARACTER #1

(into phone)

You can then type your dialogue as normal.

CHARACTER #2

(into phone)

Whilst indicating that both characters are on the phone.

EXT./INT. LOCATION #1 - DAY

If you have a scene where the action is continuously moving between the interior and exterior of the same location, such as the hall and driveway of a house, do your scene heading like this.

But use INTERCUT for cutting back and forth between two separate pieces of action inside and outside.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) SERIES OF SHOTS: is a group of short shots which make up a narrative sequence, useful for advancing the story in a rapid or economical way.

(MORE)

B) The shots are presented in logical arrangement for the action with a beginning, middle and end point to the sequence.

C) MONTAGE: is a series of two or more images that blend into and out of each other in order to create a particular effect.

D) It is used to create an emotional environment, a main title sequence or when representing archive stock footage.

E) Both SERIES OF SHOTS: and MONTAGE: are used to avoid multiple scene headings when scenes are deemed too short (often only one shot in length) to conform to the usual formatting rules.

EXT. LOCATION #2 – NIGHT

On-screen texts, such as letters, e-mails or signs, are formatted in a couple of ways. Brief text, such as a sign, can go in the body of the scene action: "THIS IS A SIGN"

"Something longer, like a letter, is formatted like dialogue enclosed within double-quote marks. It can be in normal upper and lower case text, OR ALL IN CAPITALS depending on the text it is representing."

FADE TO:

INT. LOCATION #2 – NIGHT

It is standard practice to sign-off a film script with THE END centered on the page, preceded by FADE OUT.

FADE OUT: only ever appears at the end of a feature-length screenplay, or an act in a television script. If you want to indicate a FADE OUT: and a FADE IN: within the body of the script, then the correct transitional term is FADE TO: as above.

FADE OUT.

THE END