

A GUIDE TO
FEATURE FILM WRITING

a screenwriter's workbook
by j .t. velikovsky

www.joeteevee.com

2003

This work is intended as a critical review of theory in the field of feature film screenwriting.
It is not intended for sale. Wherever possible, please buy and read all the texts referenced within.

INTRODUCTION

So, Feature Screenwriting: big field. Twenty years ago, there were two books on the subject. Now there are hundreds. Where to start? Right here is a good beginning...

First of all, I should say that this workbook is just an Overview of the field. It is intended more as an introduction, than a set of 'free tools' for feature film writers... it is certainly not meant to replace the original texts themselves.

- It contains various facts and figures about the Australian and world film industries (all current at the time of writing, Jan 2003), and various 'story templates', but most usefully
- it contains summaries of the most important texts on Writing Feature Scripts.

This booklet also contains an 'Overview' of all the basic career info you need as a feature screenwriter, ranging from: contact info for the Writer's Guild, to getting an Agent, and the Funding Bodies URL's - right through to formatting and binding your feature script. Perhaps most usefully, it also has tables and worksheets, where you can fill out your own film's plot beats and 'character info'... in preparation for writing your masterpiece.

But, for the actual nuts-and-bolts of *all* these writing theories (and let's face it, that's all they are - there are no magic formulae, or else all writers would always write perfect scripts. But if there is one formula, it's this: Learn all the rules, then forget 'em and write from the heart.) - I implore you, please buy and read the actual original texts themselves.
- I don't wish to deny the likes of Linda Aronsen, Syd Field, Linda Seger, Viki King, John Truby, or Robert McKee their dues. - Lord knows, they all sweated blood for them. (And this also goes for John Lonie, Ron Blair and Helen Carmichael too, from my days at AFTRS. Thank you to a wonderful, hugely-talented, amazingly generous bunch of born teachers.)

So. Hopefully this Workbook will be useful for you, whether you're a new, or an experienced screenwriter.

- We need great scripts, and more of them; they make great films, which the world needs most right now... Our film stories are our myths. Our myths are what we live by.

And just remember, screenplays are never finished - they are only ever abandoned!

But hey, you can sure have a blast in the meantime...

;^)

cheerz,

j.t. velikovsky
screenwriter

www.joetevee.com

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ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN WRITERS GUILD

What is the AWG? The AWG is the professional association for all performance writers - that is, writers for film, television, radio, theatre, video and new media.

The AWG was established in 1962, and is recognised throughout the industry in Australia as being the voice of performance writers. And AWGIE awards are coveted, nation-wide.

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Full Membership

Your membership fee is based on your Gross Income as per the following tables:

Gross Income	Annual Membership	Half-Yearly Membership
Under \$25 000	275.00	154
\$25 000 - \$45 000	412.50	225.50
\$45 000 - \$55 000	550.00	291.50
Above \$55 000	687.50	360.25

Associate Membership

Term	Cost
Full Year	137.50
Half Year	82.50

[Script Registration](#)

You've soaked each page of your script with effort and inspiration. Don't let your hard work fall prey to opportunism. AWG registration of a work costs \$27.50 and is valid for 10 years.

With nearly 10 000 scripts given additional protection, it's no surprise script registration is one of the most popular services we offer to writers at all career stages. Each script is assigned a unique number in our electronic registration tracking system, then archived in a document storage vault for ten years. By printing this registration number on the front page of your script, you'll make it clear you've taken all the right steps to make sure your work remains protected. Script registration through the AWG is only open to financial Guild members.

AWG – in South Australia

Branch Manager: Gabrielle Aujard
187 Rundle Street Adelaide SA 5000
Postal Address: PO Box 43 Rundle Mall SA 5000
Tel 08 8232 6852 Hours 1pm – 5pm (Tuesday And Thursday)
email: sa@awg.com.au

Source: <http://www.awg.com.au>

AUSTRALIAN BOX OFFICE HITS

Top ten highest-grossing films of all time in Australia in 2001 (*adjusted for inflation*):

1. The Sound of Music
2. Gone With The Wind
3. Crocodile Dundee
4. E.T.
5. Star Wars
6. Titanic
7. Jaws
8. The Sting
9. Dr Zhivago
10. Grease

TOP TEN AUSTRALIAN FILMS OF ALL TIME IN AUSTRALIA

1. Crocodile Dundee
2. Babe
3. The Man From Snowy River
4. Crocodile Dundee 2
5. Gallipoli
6. Alvin Purple
7. Mad Max 2
8. Strictly Ballroom
9. Picnic At Hanging Rock
10. They're A Weird Mob

Source: Ash, R. (1997), *The Top 10 of Everything, 2001*, Dorling Kindersley, St Leonards, Australia

THE TOP TEN HIGHEST-GROSSING FILMS OF ALL TIME IN AUSTRALIA: (BOX OFFICE GROSS)

1. Titanic
2. Crocodile Dundee
3. Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring
4. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
5. Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace
6. Babe
7. Jurassic Park
8. Star Wars Episode 2: Attack of the Clones¹
9. E.T.
10. Shrek

Source: <http://www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wctopalltime.html>

TOP 50 FILMS in AUSTRALIA

Title	Distributor	Release date	Box office (\$)¹
Titanic	Fox	18 Dec 1997	57,642,943
Crocodile Dundee	Hoyts	30 Apr 1986	47,707,045
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Roadshow	26 Dec 2001	46,671,216
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Warner Bros	29 Nov 2001	42,302,657
Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace	Fox	3 Jun 1999	38,828,310
Babe	UIP/Universal	14 Dec 1995	36,776,544
Jurassic Park	UIP/Universal	2 Sep 1993	33,002,776
Star Wars Episode 2: Attack of the Clones ¹	Fox	16 May 2002	32,716,351
E.T.	UIP/Universal	1 Nov 1982	32,662,000
Shrek	UIP/Universal	21 Jun 2001	32,045,840
Gladiator	UIP/Universal	4 May 2000	31,092,305
Forrest Gump	UIP/Paramount	17 Nov 1994	30,562,133
Star Wars (incl. special edit)	Fox	27 Oct 77	29,649,700
Independence Day	Fox	29 Aug 1996	29,496,567
The Sixth Sense	BVI	7 Oct 1999	29,182,473
Moulin Rouge	Fox	24 May 2001	27,675,530
The Lion King	BVI/Disney	25 Aug 1994	27,082,555
Spiderman ¹	Columbia	6 Jun 2002	26,470,402
Mrs Doubtfire	Fox	16 Dec 1993	26,241,675
Pretty Woman	BVI/Touchstone	3 May 1990	26,156,134
Monsters Inc.	BVI	26 Dec 2001	25,621,308
Crocodile Dundee II	Hoyts	26 May 1988	24,916,805
Saving Private Ryan	UIP/Paramount	19 Nov 1998	24,172,708
Twister	UIP	30 May 1996	23,438,404
The Full Monty	Fox	16 Oct 1997	23,197,810
The Matrix	Roadshow	8 Apr 1999	22,827,645
Men in Black	Columbia	11 Sep 1997	22,789,539
What Women Want	Roadshow	8 Jan 2001	22,533,750
Mission Impossible 2	UIP/Paramount	1 June 2000	22,478,131
Bridget Jones's Diary	UIP/Universal	26 Jul 2001	22,404,421
Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me	Roadshow	17 Jun 1999	22,380,168
Ocean's Eleven	Roadshow	10 Jan 2002	22,251,208
Strictly Ballroom	Ronin	20 Aug 1992	21,760,400
Four Weddings and a Funeral	REP	5 May 1994	21,471,077
Ghost	UIP/Paramount	25 Oct 1990	21,311,049
Meet the Parents	UIP/Universal	26 Dec 2000	21,221,469
Liar, Liar	UIP/Universal	12 Jun 1997	21,117,778
Notting Hill	Polygram/Universal	10 Jun 1999	20,831,399
Sister Act	BVI/Touchstone	19 Nov 1992	20,505,775
Stuart Little	Columbia	6 Apr 2000	20,389,690
Ice Age	Fox	21 Mar 2002	20,370,385
Cast Away	UIP/Universal	18 Jan 2001	20,261,501
Toy Story 2	BVI	2 Dec 1999	20,131,422
The Mask	Roadshow	8 Dec 1994	20,084,763
The Lost World	UIP/Universal	29 May 1997	20,071,203
Miss Congeniality	Roadshow	15 Mar 2001	20,049,198
A Bug's Life	BVI	3 Dec 1998	20,015,072
There's Something about Mary	Fox	3 Sep 1998	20,007,019
Dances with Wolves (incl. special edit)	Hoyts	14 Feb 1991	19,863,653
A Beautiful Mind	UIP/Universal	7 Mar 2002	19,706,136

Source: <http://www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wctopalltime.html>

U.S. BOX OFFICE MEGAHITS

This is a list of the 22 Hollywood movies that have box-office grosses of over \$250 million in the U.S., reported on the www site of the [Box Office Guru](#), as at 2002.

1. TITANIC (\$600 million)
2. STAR WARS (\$461 million)
3. E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL (\$434 million)
4. THE PHANTOM MENACE (\$431 million)
5. SPIDER-MAN (\$404 million)
6. JURASSIC PARK (\$357 million)
7. FORREST GUMP (\$329 million)
8. HARRY POTTER (\$317 million)
9. LORD OF THE RINGS (\$313 million)
10. LION KING (\$312 million)
11. RETURN OF JEDI (\$309 million)
12. INDEPENDENCE DAY (\$306 million)
13. ATTACK OF THE CLONES (\$300 million)
14. THE SIXTH SENSE (\$293 million)
15. EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (\$290 million)
16. HOME ALONE (\$285 million)
17. SHREK (\$265 million)
18. THE GRINCH (\$260 million)
19. JAWS (\$260 million)
20. MONSTERS INC (\$255 million)
21. BATMAN (\$251 million)
22. MEN IN BLACK (\$250 million)

Source: www.boxofficeguru.com/blockbusters.htm

U.S. BOX OFFICE HITS (INFLATION-ADJUSTED)

Rank	\$ million	Title	Year	Studio
1	208.1	Gone With the Wind	(1939)	(MGM)
2	198.6	Star Wars	(1977)	(Fox)
3	170.6	The Sound of Music	(1965)	(Fox)
4	151.6	E.T.	(1982)	(Univ)
5	132.8	The Ten Commandments	(1956)	(Para)
6	126.3	The Jungle Book	(1967)	(BV)
7	124.3	Titanic	(1997)	(Para)
8	123.3	Jaws	(1975)	(Univ)
9	122.7	Doctor Zhivago	(1965)	(MGM)
10	119.6	101 Dalmatians	(1961)	(Disney)
11	118.5	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	(1937)	(Disney)
12	106.5	Ben-Hur	(1959)	(MGM)
13	103.0	Return of the Jedi	(1983)	(Fox)
14	102.6	The Empire Strikes Back	(1980)	(Fox)
15	95.9	The Exorcist	(1973)	(WB)
16	94.8	Raiders of the Lost Ark	(1981)	(Para)
17	90.2	The Sting	(1973)	(Univ)
18	89.1	The Phantom Menace	(1999)	(Fox)
19	88.8	The Lion King	(1994)	(Disney)
20	86.2	Fantasia	(1940)	(RKO/BV)

Source: <http://home.earthlink.net/~mrob/pub/movies/topadj.html>

TOP 100 AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT THE AUST. BOX OFFICE, 1966 TO 11 JULY 2002

The no. 1 Australian film at the Australian box office is Crocodile Dundee (1986), with earnings of \$47,707,045. Crocodile Dundee is also no. 2 on the list of top films from any country, not just Australian films.

Rank	Title	Distributor	Release date	Box office (\$)¹
1	Crocodile Dundee	Hoyts	1986	47,707,045
2	Babe	UIP/Universal	1995	36,776,544
3	Moulin Rouge	Fox	2001	27,675,530
4	Crocodile Dundee II	Hoyts	1988	24,916,805
5	Strictly Ballroom	Ronin	1992	21,760,400
6	The Dish	Roadshow	2000	17,990,148
7	The Man from Snowy River	Hoyts	1982	17,228,160
8	The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert	Roadshow	1994	16,459,245
9	Muriel's Wedding	Roadshow	1994	15,765,571
10	Young Einstein	Warner Bros	1988	13,383,377
11	Lantana	Palace	2001	12,286,683
12	Gallipoli	Roadshow	1981	11,740,000
13	The Wog Boy	Fox	2000	11,449,599
14	The Piano	Miramax	1993	11,240,484
15	Mad Max II	Warner Bros	1981	10,845,391
16	Green Card (Australia/France)	Roadshow	1991	10,585,960
17	The Castle	Roadshow	1997	10,326,428
18	Shine	Ronin	1996	10,167,416
19	Phar Lap	Hoyts	1983	9,258,884
20	The Man Who Sued God	BVI	2001	8,397,077
21	Looking for Alibrandi	Roadshow	2000	8,300,454
22	Babe: Pig in the City	UIP/Universal	1998	7,771,751
23	Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles (Australia/US)	UIP/Universal	2001	7,759,103
24	The Man from Snowy River II	Hoyts	1988	7,415,000
25	Rabbit Proof Fence	Becker/Ocean	2002	7,279,054
26	Lightning Jack	Roadshow	1994	6,439,819
27	Chopper	Palace	2000	5,790,583
28	Two Hands	REP	1999	5,452,726
29	Reckless Kelly	Roadshow	1993	5,444,534
30	Mad Max	Roadshow	1979	5,353,390
31	The Craic	Roadshow	1999	5,265,935
32	Picnic at Hanging Rock³	BEF	1975	5,134,300
33	Breaker Morant	Roadshow	1980	4,735,000
34	Alvin Purple	Roadshow	1973	4,720,000
35	Mad Max, Beyond Thunderdome	Warner Bros	1985	4,272,802
36	Puberty Blues	Roadshow	1981	3,918,000
37	Charlotte Gray (Australia/UK)²	UIP/Universal	2002	3,599,164
38	Antarctica	Imax	1996	3,565,868
39	Malcolm	Hoyts	1986	3,483,139
40	Africa's Elephant Kingdom	Imax	1998	3,475,107
41	The Delinquents	Greater Union	1989	3,370,650
42	Dark City	Roadshow	1998	3,348,994
43	The Sum of Us	UIP	1994	3,327,456
44	Romper Stomper	Roadshow	1992	3,165,034
45	We of the Never Never	Hoyts	1982	3,112,000
46	My Brilliant Career	Greater Union	1979	3,052,000
47	Evil Angels	Warner Bros	1988	3,006,964
48	Paradise Road	Roadshow	1997	2,970,653
49	Cosi	Roadshow	1996	2,896,980

50	Caddie	Roadshow	1976	2,847,000
51	The Hard Word ²	Roadshow	2002	2,829,752
52	Sirens (Australia/UK)	Buena Vista	1994	2,780,639
53	Death in Brunswick	Roadshow	1991	2,725,169
54	Bootmen	Fox	2000	2,718,967
55	Me, Myself, I	BVI	2000	2,698,330
56	The Wiggles	Fox	1997	2,678,486
57	The Heartbreak Kid	Roadshow	1993	2,658,819
58	Storm Boy	Roadshow	1976	2,645,000
59	Dating the Enemy	UIP/Total	1996	2,620,325
60	Hostage: The Christine Maresch Story	Roadshow	1983	2,455,000
61	The Bank	Footprint	2001	2,451,648
62	Dead Calm	Warner Bros	1989	2,444,407
63	Careful He Might Hear You	Hoyts	1983	2,431,126
64	They're a Weird Mob	Greater Union	1966	2,417,000
65	The Year of Living Dangerously	UIP/MGM	1982	2,393,000
66	The Big Steal	Hoyts	1990	2,351,628
67	Proof	Roadshow	1991	2,163,958
68	Napoleon	Columbia	1996	2,051,855
69	Black Robe (Australia/Canada)	Hoyts	1992	2,036,056
70	Far East	Roadshow	1982	1,972,000
71	Blinky Bill	Roadshow	1992	1,903,659
72	Alvin Rides Again	Roadshow	1974	1,880,000
73	Joey	Roadshow	1997	1,855,557
74	Head On	Palace	1998	1,788,613
75	Oscar and Lucinda	Fox	1998	1,768,946
76	Eliza Frazer	Roadshow	1976	1,672,000
77	Flirting	Warner Bros	1991	1,655,044
78	Love and Other Catastrophes	New Vision	1996	1,637,929
79	Lighthorsemen	Hoyts	1987	1,617,288
80	Mr Accident	Roadshow	2000	1,611,350
81	Newsfront	Roadshow	1978	1,576,000
82	Stone	BEF	1974	1,572,000
83	Burke and Wills	Hoyts	1985	1,567,000
84	Starstruck	Hoyts	1982	1,541,000
85	The Silver Brumby	Roadshow	1993	1,532,649
86	The Year My Voice Broke	Hoyts	1987	1,513,000
87	The Magic Riddle	Roadshow	1991	1,510,536
88	Spotswood	Hoyts	1992	1,505,684
89	Travelling North	CEL	1987	1,464,000
90	Barry Mckenzie Holds His Own	Roadshow	1974	1,407,000
91	Holy Smoke	Roadshow	1999	1,378,546
92	Paperback Hero	Polygram	1999	1,369,280
93	Coolangatta Gold	Hoyts	1984	1,365,000
94	Petersen	Roadshow	1974	1,363,000
95	Sunday Too Far Away	Roadshow	1975	1,356,000
96	Sally Marshall Is Not an Alien (Australia/Canada)	UIP	1999	1,291,802
97	The Last Wave	UIP/United	1977	1,258,000
98	Crackers	Sharmill/Beyo	1998	1,255,623
99	Dad and Dave on Our Selection	Roadshow	1995	1,222,051
100	Running on Empty	Roadshow	1982	1,218,000

Source: www.afc.gov.au/

AFI WINNERS for BEST SCREENPLAY

BEST SCREENPLAY (ORIGINAL OR ADAPTED)

1976 The Devil's Playground

1977 Don's Party

1980 Breaker Morant

1981 Gallipoli

1982 Goodbye Paradise

1983-89 – *NOT A CATEGORY*

1990 The Big Steal

1991 Proof

1992 Strictly Ballroom

1993-96 NOT A CATEGORY

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY	BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
1978 Newsfront	1978 The Getting of Wisdom
1979 In Search of Anna	1979 My Brilliant Career
1983 Buddies	1983 Careful, He Might Hear You
1984 My First Wife	1984 Annie's Coming Out
1985 Fran	1985 Bliss
1986 Malcolm	1986 The Fringe Dwellers
1987 The Year My Voice Broke	1987 Travelling North
1988 <i>NO NOMINATIONS or AWARDS</i>	1988 <i>NO NOMINATIONS or AWARDS</i>
1989 Sweetie	1989 Evil Angels
1990-92 <i>NOT A CATEGORY</i>	1990-92 <i>NOT A CATEGORY</i>
1993 The Piano	1993 Blackfellas
1994 Bad Boy Bubby	1994 The Sum of Us
1995 Angel Baby	1995 Hotel Sorrento
1996 Shine	1996 Cosi
1997 The Castle	1997 The Well
1998 The Interview	1998 The Boys
1999 Two Hands	1999 Praise
2000 Russian Doll	2000 Looking for Alibrandi
2001 The Bank	2001 Lantana

Source: <http://www.afi.org.au/>

OSCAR® -WINNING SCREENPLAYS

Here are the 'Best Screenplay' Academy Award-winners, since their inception in 1927.

The first title is for **Winner, Screenplay written directly for the screen**, and the second title is for **Winner, Screenplay based on material previously produced or published**.

2001--Gosford Park, A Beautiful Mind
2000--Almost Famous, Traffic
1999--American Beauty, The Cider House Rules
1998--Shakespeare In Love, Gods and Monsters
1997--Good Will Hunting, LA Confidential
1996--Fargo, Sling Blade
1995--The Usual Suspects, Sense and Sensibility
1994--Pulp Fiction, Forrest Gump
1993--The Piano, Schindler's List
1992--The Crying Game, Howard's End
1991--Thelma & Louise, The Silence of the Lambs
1990--Ghost, Dances With Wolves
1989--Dead Poets Society, Driving Miss Daisy
1988--Rain Man, Dangerous Liaisons
1987--Moonstruck, The Last Emperor
1986--Hannah and Her Sisters, A Room With a View
1985--Witness, Out of Africa
1984--Places in the Heart, Amadeus
1983--Tender Mercies, Terms of Endearment
1982--Gandhi, Missing
1981--Chariots of Fire, On Golden Pond
1980--Melvin and Howard, Ordinary People
1979--Breaking Away, Kramer Vs. Kramer
1978--Coming Home, Midnight Express
1977--Annie Hall, Julia
1976--Network, All the President's Men
1975--Dog Day Afternoon, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
1974--Chinatown, The Godfather Part II
1973--The Sting, The Exorcist
1972--The Candidate, The Godfather
1971--The Hospital, The French Connection
1970--Patton, M*A*S*H
1969--Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Midnight Cowboy

Source: <http://www.oscars.org/>

A FEW OTHER FILM CLASSICS...

Some other classic films worth studying for their scripts, including international films:

Battleship Potemkin	The Bicycle Thieves
The Seventh Seal	The Rules Of The Game
Vertigo	The Searchers
The Red Shoes	Annie Hall
Ben-Hur	Blue Velvet
Bonnie and Clyde	The Passion of Joan Of Arc
Tokyo Story	L'Atalante
The Hidden Fortress	My Life As A Dog
The Killer	Solaris (dir: Tarkovsky)
The Wings Of Desire	Casablanca
Dances With Wolves	La Dolce Vita
The Exorcist	Fanny and Alexander
The Godfather	The Graduate
La Grande Illusion	It's A Wonderful Life
Jules et Jim	King Kong
Lawrence of Arabia	The Sound of Music
A Night At The Opera	City Lights
Peeping Tom	Pickpocket
Raging Bull	Rio Bravo
Shadows	2001: A Space Odyssey
Twelve Angry Men	Wild Strawberries

ONLINE SOURCES FOR FILM SCREENPLAYS

These script databases offer free downloads of produced screenplays for educational purposes.

NB - Note the difference between scripts (original drafts) and transcripts (documents transcribed from the completed film).

Drew's Script-o-rama (<http://script-o-rama.com>)

The first - and still one of the most comprehensive - film script databases.

Script Crawler (<http://scriptcrawler.net>)

The largest online database of scripts from produced movies. Many have several versions of the scripts.

Simply Scripts (<http://simplyscripts.com>)

This great site offers scripts in several formats: movie, television, anime, radio and even some unproduced scripts.

Internet Script Database (<http://iscriptdb.com>)

Another great script resource. Most of these sites interconnect to other databases to increase their inventory.

Screenplay 451 (<http://pumpkinsoft.de/screenplay451>)

This Danish site provides frequent updates of recent releases.

About.com's Script Repository

(http://screenwriting.about.com/library/bl_scripts.htm?PM=ss11_screenwriting)

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST:

The 'Movie Monologue' page. - Excellent for being inspired to write great dialog.

(<http://www.whysanity.net/monos/>)

Scenes & Monologue Resources for Actors (classical & modern, stage & screenplay)

(<http://www.caryn.com/acting/caryn-acting-scenes.html>)

A 'MASTER LINKS' LIST OF ALL SCRIPT SITES:

<http://www.geocities.com/moviescriptsandscreenplays/>

WHAT IS A SCREENPLAY?

CONTENT: Various industry professionals have offered opinions on what a feature screenplay is:

Alan Armer: “A blueprint for a movie.”

Syd Field: “A story told with pictures.”

Paul Schrader: “An invitation to collaborate on a work of art. They contain 3 things - theme, character, structure. That’s all.”

Louis Nowra: “Screenplays are simply a blueprint for a director. It’s not an art - It’s a collaborative process.”

Bob Towne: “A movie is just four or five moments between two people. The rest of it exists to give those moments their impact and resonance.”

William Goldman: “Screenplays are *structure*.”

Viki King: “A feature screenplay is a document you can create in 21 days.”

Linda Seger: “Five things: the story lines, the characters, the underlying idea, the images and the dialog.”

Linda Aronsen: “A screenplay is - a *technical instruction manual* for everyone involved in the process of creating the film.”

FORM: Either way, the form is universally agreed upon:

SCREENPLAY FORM: 105 to 120 A4 pages, in standard Screenplay format, in Courier 12-point font, 1-inch margins all round, and with black card front & back, 3-hole drilled, and bound with 2 `brads` in the top & bottom holes.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS:

From Premise to Screenplay

The usual steps (and documents) involved in writing a feature screenplay:

The Premise	(1-3 sentences) The Premise (sometimes called the Concept) is a simple statement of the main character/s, and their dilemma.
The Synopsis	(3 paragraphs) The synopsis is about 3 paragraphs long, and reflects the beginning, middle and end of the story.
The Outline	(1-3 pages) One or Three pages, describing the setup, development and resolution, and sketching the details of the characters.
Character Notes	(1-3 pages for each major character) Outlines the different characters, and their Backstories.
`Pitch' Document	(10 pages) Contains all of the above documents.
Scene Breakdown	(2-3 pages) A `beat sheet' or list of points, outlining the key event/s of each scene. Can also be done on approx 60 index cards (one for each scene).
The Treatment	(20-40 pages) Twenty to forty pages, a short story virtually, which is simply an expanded version of the Outline, but with more character detail, and various dramatic `moments' and key scenes fleshed out in more detail. Usually each scene is a paragraph. Contains no direct dialog, and is written in the third-person present tense.
Sample dialog	(1 page for each major character) `Test scenes' or monologues, so that each of your characters speaks in their own distinctive voice.
The Screenplay	(120 pages) 105-120 A4 pages, in standard Screenplay format, in Courier 12-point font, and with black card front & back, 3 hole drilled & 2 brads in the top & bottom holes. Has scene headings, stage directions and dialog.

WHERE TO START?

Screenwriters can start anywhere, including:

- an idea, featuring a central character and a situation (a news story, song, dream, etc)
- a preferred genre – romantic comedy, action-adventure, sci-fi, crime thriller
- an image (the main character, or the antagonist, or the film's climax)
- a theme (Mateship, There's No Place Like Home, Family, Honour Among Thieves, Revenge)
- adaptation (novel, short story, biography, real-life event)

THEME

Theme revolves around 'having something to say.'

Screenwriter Paul Schrader (author of *Taxi Driver*) says:

“As a novelist, you have to be sure at least 100 000 people will respond to your work. But for a screenwriter, you have to ask yourself: Will at least 3 million people react to this? Otherwise you should write poetry.”

Themes which are too explicit in a script, or 'preached' at an audience in dialog are referred to as 'on the nose' (i.e. they 'stink').

Infamous studio boss, producer Sam Goldwyn is famed for saying 'If you have a message, send it Western Union'. He clearly believed movies were for entertainment only. However most enduring and popular films do have a clear theme.

The Theme is the MESSAGE of the film. In good scripts, it pervades most scenes.

Some example film themes:

- The futility of war
Gallipoli, Full Metal Jacket, Apocalypse Now
- 'There's no place like home'
The Castle, Wizard of Oz
- Great love defies even death
Moulin Rouge!, Titanic, Romeo & Juliet
- Tell the truth
Breaker Morant, Tootsie, Witness
- Nothing is what it seems
American Beauty, The Matrix, The Usual Suspects
- Loneliness
Proof, Storm Boy, Taxi Driver
- Honour among thieves
Chopper, Reservoir Dogs
- Ruthless ambition leads to its own destruction
The Bank, MacBeth
- Courage to overcome self-doubt leads to self-esteem
Strictly Ballroom, Rocky
- Revenge
Mad Max, Gladiator, Hamlet
- Make Things Happen
Muriel's Wedding, The Dish, Lorenzo's Oil
- "You have to be rich to get away with murder"
Chinatown

Note - Lahos Egri's book The Principles of Dramatic Writing outlines such themes in regard to plays, although Egri refers to them as the play's 'premise'. Hollywood terminology differs in that the premise is more the 'dramatic situation' posed by the film's set-up.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

In his 1926 book *The Art of Thought*, psychologist Graham Wallis identified **four stages of the creative process** which are common to most creative enterprises (including screen, prose, poetry, song writing and painting).

They are:

- 1) PREPARATION - gaining the necessary knowledge (i.e. craft skills and adequate research on the story subject)
- 2) INCUBATION - letting the idea(s) simmer in the subconscious mind...
- 3) ILLUMINATION - the actual inspiration and 'putting forth' of the masterpiece into an available physical reality (i.e. a manuscript)
- 4) VERIFICATION - editing the raw work into a polished, presentable form

These four steps are useful tools for a writer. If the screenplay isn't happening, or you're experiencing writer's block, you may want to check if you're missing one of these steps

Source: http://members.ozemail.com.au/~caveman/Creative/Brain/wallis_intro.htm

THE GREEK LEGACY: 3-ACT STORY STRUCTURE

We have inherited the 3-act structural paradigm of drama from the Greeks.

In 321 B.C., Aristotle laid down the principles of dramatic structure which we still adhere to, in his book *Poetics*.

French New Wave filmmaker Godard said "All stories have a beginning, middle and end, but not necessarily in that order"

As an interesting side note, Shakespeare often used 5 acts in his plays.

Robert McKee in his book 'Story' talks about using 5 story beats, within 3 acts, in modern film stories.

William Goldman often uses 5 acts (Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid, All The President's Men, Misery, The Right Stuff)

THE PREMISE

Premise in feature films generally follows this structure:

A certain type of person has a certain goal, and encounters obstacles that have changed him/her when finally they do (or do not) achieve that goal.

Namely, the structure is composed of:

- 1) The Exposition (or SETUP)
- 2) The Confrontation (or DEVELOPMENT)

and

- 3) The Resolution (or DENOUEMENT)

of the dramatic problem posed by the story...

Or more simply: in Act One you get a person up a tree, in Act Two you throw rocks at them, and in Act Three you get them down again.

The key philosophy behind a film Premise is:

**Someone wants something very badly,
and is having a lot of trouble getting it.**

Write your film's Premise here:

CREATE A GREAT CHARACTER

Some memorable Australian film characters include:

FICTIONAL CHARACTERS:

Michael J “Crocodile” Dundee in *Crocodile Dundee*

Muriel Heslop in *Muriel’s Wedding*

Leon Zat in *Lantana*

Babe – the sheep-pig in *Babe*

Archie Hamilton & Frank Dunn in *Gallipoli*

“Mad” Max Rockatansky in *Mad Max*

Scott & Fran in *Strictly Ballroom*

Jake and Beth in *Once Were Warriors*

Satine in *Moulin Rouge!*

Darryl Kerrigan in *The Castle*

TRUE STORIES:

David Helfgott in *Shine*

Mark “Chopper” Reid in *Chopper*

Harry Harbord “The Breaker” Morant in *Breaker Morant*

Sybylla Melvin in *My Brilliant Career*

SCREENPLAY CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

MY BRILLIANT CAREER by Eleanor Whitcombe

Beyond the open door and windows, SYBYLLA, a skinny girl of sixteen-seventeen years old, with a vital if not pretty face, paces backwards and forwards, holding a stub of pencil and an old exercise book, deep in concentration, oblivious to her surroundings.

WITNESS by William Kelley & Earl W. Wallace

RACHEL LAPP. A young woman of perhaps twenty-seven. Her face is pale and drawn. In happier circumstances, although there haven't been too many of late in Rachel's life, we would see a robust, sensual woman of full figure, spirit and intelligence.

JOHN BOOK comes striding though the others. He is about 40, with a rangy, athletic body.

TAXI DRIVER by Paul Schrader

TRAVIS BICKLE, age 26, lean, hard, the consummate loner.

(NB - see also the First Page of the script, for a detailed character description of Travis.)

TITANIC by James Cameron

JACK DAWSON and FABRIZIO DE ROSSI, both about 20, exchange a glance as the other two players argue in Swedish.

JACK is American, a lanky drifter with his hair a little long for the standards of the times. He is also unshaven, and his clothes are rumpled from sleeping in them. He is an artist, and has adopted the bohemian style of art scene in Paris. He is also very self-possessed and sure-footed for 20, having lived on his own since 15.

The Renault stops and the LIVERIED DRIVER scurries to open the door for a YOUNG WOMAN dressed in a stunning white and purple outfit, with an enormous feathered hat. She is 17 years old and beautiful, regal of bearing, with piercing eyes. It is the girl in the drawing. ROSE. She looks up at the ship, taking it in with cool appraisal.

THELMA & LOUISE by Callie Khouri

LOUISE is a waitress in a coffee shop. She is in her early-thirties, but too old to be doing this. She is very pretty and meticulously groomed, even at the end of her shift.

LETHAL WEAPON by Shane Black

DETECTIVE ROGER MURTAUGH, seated in the bathtub. He groans, throws a towel over himself, and mutters in mock indignation. Roger is tough: An old-fashioned fighter, wears his past like a scar. Piercing eyes; cynical.

He is surrounded by his family; wife and three children, names and ages as follows: TRISH: Roughly thirty-eight. She used to be a stunner. NICK: Ten years old. Precocious. CARRIE: Age seven. Eyes like saucers. Adorable. RIANNE: Heartbreaker stuff, Seventeen. Takes your breath away folks.

THE SIXTH SENSE by M. Night Shyamalan

MALCOLM CROWE sits on the floor at the coffee table, his vest and tie on the sofa behind him. A jacket and an overcoat lay on a briefcase next to him. Malcolm is in his thirties with thick, wavy hair and striking, intelligent eyes that squint from years of intense study. His charming, easy-going smile spreads across his face.

SPIDER-MAN (unproduced - by James Cameron):

We see PETER PARKER, a pleasant faced senior who's among the top in his class. Sincere and serious, he has yet to develop a way with women.

SPIDER-MAN (produced - by David Koepp):

PETER PARKER, a 17 year old boy. High school must not be any fun for Peter, he's one hundred per cent nerd: skinny, zitty, glasses.

A girl stands in the entrance to the alleyway. MARY-JANE WATSON, seventeen, painfully sexy already, with a knowledge and sadness that are way beyond her years.

COSI by Louis Nowra

LEWIS, 21, handsome and shy enough to be a patient, pauses before the sign - and after taking a deep breath enters the hospital grounds.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE:

The character description in a feature screenplay is usually composed of:

NAME, age, physical, nationality, social, psychological.

Plus - any defining physical character traits, including props, for actors `business`.

E.g.: BIOSFEAR by J.T. Velikovsky & Adrian Van de Velde

DALE SCHRADER, late 20's, close to being beautiful, brunette, American. Has an Oxford Ph.D in Psychobiology (animal behaviour). We're looking at a warm, kind, loving woman, of earthy spirit and great intelligence. She fidgets with a hyena tooth that hangs on her gold necklace.

Your Film's Central Character – Character Description:

EXAMPLE SYNOPSIS:

THE WIZARD OF OZ by L. Frank Baum (novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*)
screenplay by Noel Langley and Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf.

SYNOPSIS:

Dorothy Gale, 16, an attractive, spirited and energetic girl with a great love for animals, **who** has a little dog Toto, wants to escape the boredom of her life at home on her farm in Kansas. **However** when a tornado sweeps her away into a strange land called Oz, she encounters strange beings and situations and makes new friends. **Finally**, both in spite of - and because of - her amazing journey, she realizes there is “no place like home”.

In other words, ideally, the STORY has an engaging central character, with an intriguing dilemma, and good conflict.

THIS FILM'S PREMISE:

_____, who
(name, age, physical, psychological).

(defining characteristic)

wants _____.
(character's goal in the story)

However _____
(the central conflict/obstacle and the turning point)

Finally, _____.
(how has the character *changed*?)

THE HOOK – and THE VERBAL PITCH

The Pitch is the 25-words-or-less that `hooks` the listener's interest, and `sells` the screenplay concept to a producer.

THE HOOK – The Opening Scenario of the film that “Hooks” the listener: It makes them say “Tell me more”. Or “And what happens then...?”

For example:

- A poet falls for a beautiful courtesan working at the Moulin Rouge whom a jealous duke covets – Moulin Rouge!
- An American reporter goes to the Australian outback to meet an eccentric crocodile poacher and invites him back to New York City. - Crocodile Dundee
- Two unemployed losers raised on TV decide to rob a bank – Idiot Box
- A man kept locked in his house for 30 years by his overly-possessive mother ventures out into the outside world. - Bad Boy Bubby
- A young girl bets her prized telescope she can prove to the young town bully that her new neighbour is not an alien. - Sally Marshall Is Not an Alien

YOUR FILM'S HOOK HERE:

ONE-PAGE `PITCH' CASE STUDY: OMMADAWN

by J.T. Velikovsky and Adrian Van de Velde

OMMADAWN

OMMADAWN is a science-fiction action-thriller feature film, set in the US, in the present day.

Logline: When a UFO is detected approaching Earth, and NASA scientists commit mass suicide worldwide, maverick FBI cult investigator HAL GRADY must join forces with his mentor (and estranged former lover), cult expert SAMANTHA KOUSAL, to solve the mystery within seven days - before the spacecraft lands and the Ommadawn cult's extra-terrestrial messiah walks on Earth....

OMMADAWN is *The Sum Of All Fears* meets *Contact*. Its themes are Fatherhood and Immortality.

Plot Synopsis: Ommadawn is the story of Hal Grady, a top-gun FBI cult investigator who moves from skepticism to faith - when a bizarre and dangerous pseudo-scientific cult believes their messiah is about to arrive on Earth.

Hal is recently widowed, and is failing as a father to his 6-year old son, DYLAN. Through the story, Hal learns to love again, and discovers the real meaning of Fatherhood.

But when the Ommadawn cult's "Mind Of God" vessel lands, containing a cosmic message from the beginning of Time itself - Hal must confront the cult's evil, wizard-like leader DR DAVID LANG - and save no less than the future of the Universe...

OMMADAWN

FAITH IS A WEAPON...

CONFLICT IS DRAMA

Script analyst Linda Seger outlines 5 different TYPES OF CONFLICT (and the more you have in your screenplay, the better):

PERSONAL - uncertainty or self-doubt, a struggle with conscience

eg: Hamlet, 8 and ½, Crime & Punishment, Strictly Ballroom

RELATIONAL - with a love interest, family or friends, work colleagues

eg: Kramer vs Kramer, Ten Things I Hate About You, Chopper

SOCIETAL - within the character's social environment

eg: The Castle, The Elephant Man, Philadelphia, Fight Club, Gattaca, Crocodile Dundee

SITUATIONAL - the physical environment

eg: Dead Calm, Twister, The Poseidon Adventure, Armageddon, Towering Inferno

COSMIC - versus God or Satan (or some other deity/ies)

eg: Bliss, Last Temptation of Christ, Evil Dead, The Exorcist, Ulysses

Source: Linda Seger (1994) *Making a Good Script Great, 2nd Ed*, Samuel French Trade, Hollywood

CHARACTER

People are what they do, not what they say, and therefore...

Character is ACTION!

The biggest criticism of film characters are that they are not 3-dimensional, or that they are 'cardboard cut-outs' or unbelievable. Some say there are **3 dimensions** to character. They can include:

- 1) PHYSICAL - how they look
- 2) SOCIOLOGICAL - how they live
- 3) PSYCHOLOGICAL - how they behave

PHYSICAL - refers to aspects such as sex, height, weight, age, hair and eye color, voice, race, complexion, nationality, speech, health, any distinguishing features and manner of dress...

SOCIOLOGICAL - includes marital status, geographical origin, family background, education, occupation, interests, social contacts, religion, morality, sports, politics, intellectual capacities and ambitions...

and PSYCHOLOGICAL means their personality (extra- or introverted, a 'thinking' or a 'feeling' type), sexual preference, fantasy life, phobias, hang-ups, star sign, likes and dislikes...

NB - A great web site links page to articles on Character:

<http://www.screenwritersforum.com/character.htm>

ENNEAGRAMS

Enneagram personality typing dates back some 10,000 years. The oral tradition is woven into the Kabbalah, and also used by Sufi mystics. In the 70's Western psychologists refined and developed it further. **Source:** <http://www.9points.com/types.htm>

Point One - The Perfectionist

Worldview: Life is about correcting error and striving for improvement.

Unconscious Drive: Internalized Anger - Resentment

Gift: Discernment

Point Two - The Helper

Worldview: (My) Love makes the world go round.

Unconscious Drive: Pride

Gift: Empathy

Point Three - The Performer

Worldview: Life is about presenting a successful image.

Unconscious Drive: Self-Deceit

Gift: Efficacy and Adaptability

Point Four - The Romantic

Worldview: Something essential is missing from life. I'll be complete if I can just find it.

Unconscious Drive: Envy

Gift: Uniqueness and Emotional Intensity.

Point Five - The Observer

Worldview: Knowledge will keep me safe.

Unconscious Drive: Avarice

Gift: Detachment

Point Six - The Loyal Skeptic

Worldview: The world is a dangerous place. Most people have hidden agendas.

Unconscious Drive: Fear/Doubt

Two flavors of six: Phobic and Counter-phobic

Gift: Loyal commitment and planning

Point Seven - The Epicure

Worldview: Life is an adventure with limitless possibilities.

Unconscious Habit: Gluttony

Gift: Optimism

Point Eight - The Boss

Worldview: Only the strong survive.

Unconscious Drive: Lust (Excess)

Gift: Strength

Point Nine - The Mediator

Worldview: Life is about harmony - going with the flow.

Unconscious Drive: Sloth (Self-forgetting)

Gift: Acceptance

THE 4 HIPPOCRATIC HUMOURS

Hippocrates postulated that an imbalance among the humors (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile) resulted in pain and disease, and that good health was achieved through a balance of the four humors; he suggested that the glands had a controlling effect on this balance. For many centuries this idea was held as the basis of medicine. Galen introduced a new aspect, that of four basic temperaments reflecting the humors:

- the sanguine, **cheerful, buoyant** type; (associated with blood)
- the phlegmatic, **apathetic, sluggish** type; (associated with mucous)
- the choleric, **angry, quick-tempered** type; (associated with bile)
- and the melancholic, **depressed, dejected** type (associated with black bile).

In time any personality aberration or eccentricity was referred to as a humor. In literature, a 'humor character' was one in whom a single passion predominated; this interpretation was especially popular in Elizabethan and other Renaissance literature.

(NB - compare with psychology's MAD, SAD, GLAD, SCARED)

<http://www.bartleby.com/65/hu/humor.html>

PHYSICALITY: SOMATYPES

An **ectomorph** (endurance athlete) possesses a low body fat percentage level, small bone size, a high metabolism, and a small amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the brain/thinking.

A **mesomorph** (power athlete) possesses a low to medium body fat percentage level, medium to large bone size, a medium to high metabolism, and a large amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the muscles/intuition.

An **endomorph** (non-athlete) possesses a high body fat percentage level, large bone size, a slow metabolism, and a small amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the gut/spirituality.

JUNG'S PERSONALITY TYPES

Extraverts	
Type	Description
Extraverted Sensation	Realistic; making few factual errors, good assimilation of details; experiencing each moment fully, enjoying the good things of life such as food, music, sports, the beauty of nature and art etc.; easygoing, tolerant, patient; often good with mechanical equipment as in carpentry, decorating, graphic art, fashion, cooking or any work demanding attention to detail.
Extraverted Intuitive	Spontaneous, innovative, initiating, non-conforming and versatile; identifies the practical possibilities in a situation; quick, focus on entire situation, flexible; enjoys complexity; adaptable and easy acquisition of new skills.
Extraverted Feeling	Warm, friendly, sensitive; value friendships; tactful, trying to meet others needs; adhering to societal values and appropriate behaviour; valuing others opinions; wanting approval; full of zest and enthusiasm; able to express feelings freely; strong awareness of likes and dislikes; harmonious, empathic.
Extraverted Thinking	Organising and labelling facts into logical units; supporting laws, objectives, policies and rules; governed by reason and not emotion; striving for perfection based on universal idea or law; judge behaviour on the ideal model; treat others fairly but impersonally; wanting to find meaning in life and the world; wanting to get things done with the least cost in time and energy and plan ahead.

Introverts	
Type	Description
Introverted Sensation	Awareness of bodily sensations, both physical and emotional; good with routine, non-distractible, persevering; good memory and recall; adhering to own inner sense of reality which may be at odds with others; strong aesthetic appreciation often for abstract forms of art.
Introverted Intuitive	Guided by own inner images, seldom limited for long to a single perspective; inner fantasy life; may have difficulty communicating insights to others; good insight into complex situations; uses metaphors to explore possibilities; creative, quick insight into relationships with others; often has innovative ideas with creative meanings.
Introverted Feeling	Using own internal standard to judge people and things, not submitting to peer pressure or current trends, loyal, devoted, knowing own likes and dislikes, often idealistic, working for a cause or purpose; may not be overtly affectionate, holding tenderness and passionate conviction in reserve; often believe they understand others but experience themselves as misunderstood; strong sense of values and ethics.
Introverted Thinking	Analysing the world based on own inner convictions and abstract categories, not easily swayed by others; enjoying intellectual activities, abstract ideas, subjects like philosophy, maths, crossword puzzles; decisive with ideas; working from principles; unconcerned with practical applications of their work; often work independently and may be shy with people.

Source: <http://indigo.ie/~autoweb/team/jung1.html>

ASTROLOGICAL STAR SIGNS

Aries (March 21-April 19) Symbol: the ram **Element:** fire **Ruler:** Mars
Characteristics: competitive, impulsive, independent, dynamic, quick-tempered, domineering, trusting, honest **Aries celebrities:** Maya Angelou, Warren Beatty, Marlon Brando, Charlie Chaplin, Joan Crawford, Leonardo Da Vinci, Bette Davis, Celine Dion, Thomas Jefferson, Nikita Khrushchev, Eddie Murphy, Vincent Van Gogh

Taurus (April 20-May 20) Symbol: the bull **Element:** earth **Ruler:** Venus
Characteristics: patient, dependable, practical, determined, artistic, loyal, stubborn, self-indulgent **Taurus celebrities:** Bono, James Brown, Buddha, George Clooney, Salvador Dali, Queen Elizabeth II, Duke Ellington, Sigmund Freud, Audrey Hepburn, Karl Marx, Willie Mays, William Shakespeare, Barbra Streisand, Harry S. Truman, Orson Welles

Gemini (May 21-June 20) Symbol: the twins **Element:** air **Ruler:** Mercury
Characteristics: curious, versatile, expressive, persuasive, changeable, clever, restless, talkative **Gemini celebrities:** Bob Dylan, Clint Eastwood, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Tom Jones, John F. Kennedy, Henry Kissinger, Marilyn Monroe, Brooke Shields, Queen Victoria, Richard Wagner, Walt Whitman, William Butler Yeats

Cancer (June 21-July 22) Symbol: the crab **Element:** water **Ruler:** Moon
Characteristics: tenacious, emotional, intuitive, sensitive, sympathetic, traditional, moody, manipulative **Cancer celebrities:** Pamela Anderson, P. T. Barnum, Julius Caesar, James Cagney, Bill Cosby, Tom Cruise, Edgar Degas, Princess Diana, Harrison Ford, Ernest Hemingway, Helen Keller, Nelson Mandela, Henry David Thoreau, Robin Williams

Leo (July 23-August 22) Symbol: the lion **Element:** fire **Ruler:** Sun **Characteristics:** dramatic, dignified, idealistic, ambitious, proud, generous, romantic, overbearing
Leo celebrities: Lucille Ball, Napoleon Bonaparte, Fidel Castro, Bill Clinton, Cecil B. de Mille, Henry Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Mick Jagger, Carl Jung, Madonna, Herman Melville, Mussolini, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Robert Redford, Arnold Schwarzenegger

Virgo (August 23-September 22) Symbol: the virgin **Element:** earth **Ruler:** Mercury
Characteristics: gentle, industrious, dependable, methodical, soft-spoken, humane, sincere, easily worried **Virgo celebrities:** Lauren Bacall, Johann Bach, Ingrid Bergman, Sean Connery, Jimmy Connors, Queen Elizabeth I, Gloria Estefan, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, D. H. Lawrence, Sophia Loren, Keanu Reeves, Leo Tolstoy, H. G. Wells

Libra (September 23-October 22) Symbol: the scales **Element:** air **Ruler:** Venus
Characteristics: cooperative, careful, artistic, persuasive, diplomatic, logical, indecisive, fickle **Libra celebrities:** Julie Andrews, Brigitte Bardot, Michael Douglas, Mahatma Gandhi, Charlton Heston, Jesse Jackson, John Lennon, Heather Locklear, Groucho Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Pele, Eleanor Roosevelt, Will Smith, Bruce Springsteen

Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Symbol: the scorpion **Element:** water **Ruler:** Pluto
Characteristics: passionate, penetrating, private, resourceful, loyal, determined, temperamental, intolerant **Scorpio celebrities:** Marie Antoinette, Prince Charles, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Marie Curie, Jodie Foster, Bill Gates, Katherine Hepburn, John Keats,

Robert F. Kennedy, Vivian Leigh, George Patton, Pablo Picasso, Julia Roberts, Theodore Roosevelt, Winona Ryder, Sam Shepard, Ted Turner

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) Symbol: the archer **Element:** fire **Ruler:** Jupiter **Characteristics:** generous, honest, daring, friendly, confident, enthusiastic, argumentative, blunt **Sagittarius celebrities:** Maria Callas, Andrew Carnegie, Winston Churchill, Dick Clark, Emily Dickinson, Joe DiMaggio, Walt Disney, Jane Fonda, Bette Midler, Richard Pryor, Frank Sinatra, Tina Turner, Mark Twain

Capricorn (December 22-January 19) Symbol: the goat **Element:** earth **Ruler:** Saturn **Characteristics:** cautious, focused, responsible, serious, conventional, reliable, hardworking, unforgiving **Capricorn celebrities:** David Bowie, Paul Cezanne, Benjamin Franklin, Mel Gibson, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Alexander Hamilton, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henri Matisse, Richard Nixon, Edgar Allen Poe, Elvis Presley, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-tung

Aquarius (January 20-February 18) Symbol: the water bearer **Element:** air **Ruler:** Uranus **Characteristics:** independent, tolerant, unpredictable, strong-willed, curious, perceptive, progressive, temperamental **Aquarius celebrities:** Garth Brooks, Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens, Thomas Edison, W. C. Fields, Galileo, James Joyce, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Lindbergh, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ronald Reagan, Vanessa Redgrave, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Oprah Winfrey, Virginia Woolf

Pisces (February 19-March 20) Symbol: the fish **Element:** water **Ruler:** Neptune **Characteristics:** sensitive, compassionate, imaginative, adaptable, intuitive, idealistic, secretive, vulnerable **Pisces celebrities:** Drew Barrymore, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Johnny Cash, Nat King Cole, Cindy Crawford, Albert Einstein, Jane Goodall, Mikhail Gorbachev, Jerry Lewis, Liza Minelli, Sidney Poitier, John Steinbeck, Elizabeth Taylor, George Washington

Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/astrology/profiles.html>

LIST YOUR CHARACTER'S STAR SIGN & PERSONALITY TRAITS:

HERO'S JOURNEY CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

The hero's journey story template was discovered by anthropologist Joseph Campbell after studying thousands of the world's myths. In his book "The Hero With A Thousand Faces" he revealed the basic 'monomyth' that united all cultures via narrative. Chris Vogler refined it in his book "The Writer's Journey" which Hollywood embraced in the 1990's.

The Hero's Journey: the Hero starts in their ordinary world. The Herald appears, and announces the Call to Adventure. The Hero refuses it. A Mentor appears, and gives the Hero the 'supernatural' key, tool or aid they need to embark on the quest. The Hero then reluctantly accepts, and crosses the First Threshold (which is guarded by Threshold Guardians) and enter into the Other world, where they meet with Tests, Allies and Enemies on their way to confronting the Shadow (their nemesis). The Hero also can encounter a Trickster (who may become a sidekick character) along the way, and a Shapeshifter (who first appears as an ally but becomes an enemy - or vice-versa, or another character type altogether). If it is a male Hero, along the way they may meet the Heroine, who may also be the love interest, (or indeed the Jewel/Sword/Elixir)... They approach the Innermost Cave (often the Shadow's headquarters), confront the Shadow, seize the "sword" (reward) and then escape, and the Road Back usually involves a chase. Finally they return to their tribe and restore the elixir, bringing a boon to the community.

HERO	
HEROINE	
HERALD	
MENTOR	
THE SHADOW	
SHAPE-SHIFTER	
TRICKSTER	
THRESHOLD GUARDIANS	
ALLIES	
ENEMIES	

Source: http://www.applewarrior.com/novelpalooza/hero_quest_archetypes.pdf

SYD FIELD'S CHARACTER TEMPLATE

According to screenwriting guru Syd Field, good film characters have:

1. A Dramatic need	
2. Point of view	
3. Change	
4. Attitude	

DRAMATIC NEED - What the character REALLY WANTS in the film:

Do they get it in the end? (Y or N): __

Also, viewed from another perspective:

What they THINK they want:

What they REALLY (ie without knowing it) NEED:

Do they get the 2 things below, by the end of the story?

1) What they think they need?

2) What they really need?

P.O.V. - the way they SEE the world

(eg Vegetarian, Devout Christian/Muslim/Buddhist/Scientologist, Conscientious Objector, Dreamer/ Idealist/Sociopath/Saint etc)

CHANGE - (eg over the course of the story of the film - To go from Loser to Winner (eg *The Hustler*, *Rocky*), from Not Trusting people to Trusting, Introvert to Extrovert, Intolerant to Tolerant, Shy to Confident, Emotionally Withdrawn to Loving, etc)

ATTITUDE - Positive or Negative/ Superior or Inferior, Cynical or Naive, Critical or Supportive, Pessimistic or Optimistic, Happy or Sad, Strong or Weak, Tough or Soft.

Source: Syd Field, *Screenplay*, 1979, Dell Publishing, New York

3-D CHARACTER PROFILE - STRIKING POINTS

What is your main character's name? Nickname? How does it reflect/play against their character?

NAME _____

Reasoning behind the name/nickname: _____

Note down, in one or a few words, anything striking about the character, ie things that differentiate or separates them from other characters in the film... what makes them an INTERESTING CHARACTER?

PHYSICAL (eg has a limp, chain-smoker, tattoos, skinny, bodybuilder, hunchback?)

SOCIOLOGICAL (eg working class, uni Professor, a Mensa member, a Mason, or is homeless, etc).

PSYCHOLOGICAL (eg genius, autistic, schizophrenic, was raised by apes, incredibly bent sense of humour, claustrophobic, etc)

DIALOG CATCHPHRASE (Something they say a lot - eg 'No worries' 'Whoa.', 'Cool', 'Incontheivable!' 'Fugeddaboutit' etc)

CHARACTER ARCS

A character arc refers to the **CHANGE** or **GROWTH** that a character goes through in the course of a screenplay: basically, their emotional development. (*Film is often about characters who change, TV is often about characters who do not - or cannot.*)

The obstacles they encounter in striving to achieve their goal are chosen by the writer to make the character grow. The leading character in the story usually is the person who has the furthest to go; who has to undergo the biggest change.

Most leading characters undergo a positive growth through the course of the story. Their character arc could be, for example, from fear to confidence, from cynical to trusting, from pessimist to optimist, etc.

CENTRAL QUESTION: WHAT DOES MY CHARACTER **WANT**?

INNER (STORY) GOAL: _____

OUTER (PLOT) GOAL: _____.

HOW DO THEY **CHANGE** IN THE STORY? _____

_____.

THE POINTS AT WHICH WE SEE THEM CHANGING: _____

WHAT WILL THEY STAND TO GAIN or LOSE? (ie What are the Stakes?)

(For distinctly Australian stories)

WHAT IS THEIR **PYRRHIC VICTORY**? _____

THE STAKES & MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who identified an 8-tiered system of human needs. Once the lowest level is satisfied or achieved, the human condition is such that it desires the next level, and so on up the hierarchy...

1. Self-realisation: creative & spiritual fulfillment
2. Order: a sense of place in society & the cosmos
3. Understanding
4. A Desire for Knowledge
5. A Sense of Recognition: self esteem
6. Acceptance: a sense of belonging & community
7. Security: employment
8. Survival: food, safety, shelter

Source: <http://www.connect.net/georgen/maslow.htm>

STAKES

These needs can be translated into the **stakes** for a character.

The Stakes are what the character stands to lose. Eg their house, job, car, husband/wife, their self-respect, life savings, life. Perhaps the **ultimate stakes** are the destruction of Earth and its inhabitants. Drama becomes more involving if these stakes are raised as the story progresses.

WHAT ARE THE STAKES IN YOUR FILM?

HOW ARE THEY RAISED as the story progresses?

THE HERO or PROTAGONIST

The hero is often the most likable and easily related-to character. He or she has 'rooting interest', namely is someone to cheer for, e.g. Crocodile Dundee, Babe, Muriel Heslop. Alternately they can be an anti-hero, like Chopper, Mickey & Mallory, or Travis Bickle.

The hero is the one who undergoes the greatest **character growth** or has the biggest **transformational character arc**, and in most Hollywood films, the hero rarely dies. In many Australian ones, he/she does: *Breaker Morant*, *Phar Lap*, *Gallipoli*, *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, etc.

To have rooting interest, a hero must have AUDIENCE EMPATHY. Ways to engender empathy from audience include creating a Hero who has such qualities as:

VULNERABILITY

Underdog status

Loyalty

Morals

Ethics

Altruism

Death of a loved one

- but mostly, COURAGE.

THE ANTAGONIST (or Shadow, or Villain, or 'Bad Guy')

The antagonist is, rather obviously, the character who opposes the Hero.

"The devil gets all the best lines..."

Memorable bad guys:

Australian films: Chopper (Chopper), The Humungus (Mad Max 2), Ned Kelly (Story of the Kelly Gang), Brett Sprague (The Boys), Simon O'Reilly (The Bank), Eddie Fleming (The Interview), Hughie Warriner (Dead Calm).

But Australian films are also renowned for having a group or 'entity' antagonist (such as authority) rather than a sole main *nemesis character*.

Memorable Australian antagonist 'entities': the British (Gallipoli, Breaker Morant), society (Priscilla, The Sum of Us, Sally Marshall Is Not An Alien), the airport (The Castle), the authorities (Rabbit Proof Fence, Sunday Too Far Away), the environment (Burke & Wills, Picnic At Hanging Rock, Crocodile Dundee).

American: Hannibal Lecter, Commodus, Kieser Soze/Verbal Kint, Max Cady, Hans Gruber, Mr Blonde, Darth Vader, The Emperor, Cal Hockley, Freddy Krueger, The T-1000, The Agent (The Matrix), The Witch (Snow White), Cruella De Ville, Saruman, Valdemort.

Note - In most Hollywood action films, the story 'protagonist' is actually the villain; he drives the action, and during the story it is the reluctant hero who REACTS to the villain.

CHARACTER PROFILE WORKSHEETS

CHARACTER NAME:.....

PHYSIOLOGICAL

HEIGHT:

WEIGHT:

AGE:

COMPLEXION:

NATIONALITY/RACE/ETHNICITY:

CASTING TYPE:

SPEECH:

MANNERISMS:

HEALTH:

ADDICTIONS:

HANDICAPS OR IMPAIRMENTS:

DIST. FEATURES, MARKS OR SCARS:

MANNER OF DRESS:

SOCIOLOGICAL

MARITAL STATUS:

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN:

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

EDUCATION:

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND STATUS:

OCCUPATION:

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

PAST OCCUPATIONS:

INTERESTS:

SOCIAL CONTACTS:

PETS:

CAR:

SPORTS/HOBBIES:

PSYCHOLOGICAL

CHARACTER 'HOLE':

SPECIAL GIFTS/TALENTS:

RELIGION:

STAR SIGN:

ARCHETYPE:

ENNEAGRAM TYPE:

HIPPOCRATIC HUMOUR:

MORALITY:

PHOBIA/FEARS:

SECRET:

FANTASY LIFE:

HANGUPS OR PROBLEMS:

VALUES:

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

LIKES OR DISLIKES:

PARADOXES:

OTHER NOTES OF INTEREST:

CHARACTER INTERVIEW

CHARACTER NAME.....

Describe yourself, in 25 words or less.

Who are the most important (or prominent) people in your life - and how do they see you? And how do they treat you?

What single incident(s) in your childhood has most affected you Positively?

And how about - Negatively?

How do you feel about/relate to - your parents?

What's your attitude towards sex? Are you abstinent/healthy/promiscuous, etc?

Thoughts on religion? Is there a God? Are you religious?

State your 'Philosophy of Life', or the "code" you live by, if any.

How would you spend a million dollars today?

Describe your favourite hobby/s.

Describe what you hate the most.

What do you fear the most?

What do you love the most, in Life?

How do other people react to you on meeting you?

List your proudest achievement in Life. - And Why?

What are you most ashamed of, and have never/rarely told?

Describe your favourite fantasy.

Describe what you try hardest to avoid.

Who has had the greatest influence on you? (e.g. real person/ parent/ teacher/ fictional character/novelist, entrepreneur, singer/pop star/actor/artist,etc)

What are your chief taboos? (things you never do, for moral reasons)

What kind of person would you ultimately like to be remembered as?

How far away from this ideal are you?

What, if anything, is worth dying for?

What makes life truly worthwhile?

What's your attitude towards:

Money?

Drugs?

Politics?

The Government?

Homosexuality/bisexuality/transsexualty?

Dogs, and cats?

Reincarnation? Ghosts? UFO's? Aliens? Anything paranormal.

Euthenasia?

Abortion?

Computers & technology (including the WWW)?

Anything else you feel strongly about/want to bring up here?

How do you foresee your future?

Are you popular? Are you self-centred?

What is your favourite movie/s - and why? (minimum of 1, maximum of 3 please)

Your favourite songs, and albums, performers - and why? (max of 3)

Your favourite book and why? (max of 3)

What's your job/occupation - and how do you feel about it? And - How and why did you get into it? Plan to stay in it? Ideally, what's the future hold careerwise?

What do you do in your spare time?

Who is your perfect love/romance partner/s? And why?

Describe in about 25 words, your best friend, (eg What do they do for a living, hobbies, talents) what kind of person are they, and why do you like them?

What's your own best talent, do you think?

And what do others around you see as your "best point"? Do you agree?

And finally - "What do you think Humanity's Purpose on Earth is'? (ie Personal view of The Meaning of Life)

Last question. While you've got the microphone, is there anything else you want to say, off the top of your head?

CREATE 5 MEMORABLE SCENES

As a Writer, you now know intimately your main character's likes and dislikes, loves, hopes and fears.

In creating your story's plot, think of 5 circumstances that would elicit a very strong reaction from your character. (love, hate, fear, anger, amusement)

Thus, create 5 memorable scenes, in line with your story's **THEME**.

Answer in 2 parts:

A) What event/circumstance/situation occurs? And B) How do they react?

1. A) _____

B) _____

2. A) _____

B) _____

3. A) _____

B) _____

4. A) _____

B) _____

5. A) _____

B) _____

A CHARACTER'S BACKSTORY

A character's **BACKSTORY** is their **past life experience**. Everything that has happened to them, up till the point that the film story starts. Before writers start their screenplay, they usually construct a few pages of **BACKSTORY** for their characters, so that these characters are believable and real. This is simply the character's life story, in prose form.

AN EXAMPLE BACKSTORY: "Milestones in a Life" by Richard Kostelanetz

0	Birth	39	Indebtedness
1	Teeth	40	Raise
2	Walk	41	Daughter
3	Talk	42	Perseverance
4	Read	43	Vice-Presidency
5	School	44	Speculations
6	Toys	45	New House
7	Television	46	Cadillac
8	Games	47	Son
9	Swim	48	Country Cottage
10	Hobbies	49	Over-Extensions
11	Books	50	Collapse
12	Baseball	51	Separation
13	Football	52	Psychoanalysis
14	Friends	53	Reconciliation
15	Girls	54	Grandchild
16	Smoking	55	Prosperity
17	Sex	56	Drinking
18	College	57	New House
19	Fraternising	58	Private Schooling
20	Copulation	59	Illness
21	Study	60	Recuperation
22	Commencement	61	Leadership
23	Military	62	Senior Vice-Presidency
24	Marriage	63	Directorships
25	Job	64	Security
26	Daughter	65	Testimonial Dinner
27	Promotion	66	Retirement
28	Son	67	Florida
29	Responsibility	68	Leisure
30	Exhaustion	69	Solitude
31	New Job	70	Television
32	Failure	71	Reading
33	Unemployment	72	Religion
34	Divorce	73	Weakness
35	Indolence	74	Senility
36	Loneliness	75	Bereavement
37	Remarriage	76	Measles
38	Extravagance	77	Death

Source: <http://www.richardkostelanetz.com/inven3.html>

JOHN CARROLL'S "9 CORE THEMES"

Australian sociologist John Carroll has identified nine archetypal stories in Western literature - which are crucial to our culture and our search for meaning in our lives:

1. the virtuous whore
2. the troubled hero
3. salvation by a god
4. soulmate love
5. the mother
6. the value of work
7. fate
8. the origin of evil
9. and self-sacrifice.

Source: *Western Dreaming: The Western World Is Dying For Want Of A Story* by John Carroll, HarperCollins, Sydney Australia 2001.

TOBIAS' 20 PLOTS

In his book "20 Plots" Ronald Tobias proposes twenty basic plots:

1. Quest
2. Adventure
3. Pursuit
4. Rescue
5. Escape
6. Revenge
7. The Riddle
8. Rivalry
9. Underdog
10. Temptation
11. Metamorphosis
12. Transformation
13. Maturation
14. Love
15. Forbidden Love
16. Sacrifice
17. Discovery
18. Wretched Excess
19. Ascension
- 20. Descension.**

Source: Tobias, Ronald B. *20 Master Plots*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1993.

POLTI'S 'THE 36 DRAMATIC SITUATIONS'

Georges Polti's 1868 book The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations outlines just over thirty-five different dramatic situations, and even goes so far as to say this is the definitive list of all the types of dramatic situation that exist. They are:

1. SUPPLICATION (*in which the Suppliant must beg something from Power in authority*) Elements: "A persecutor, a suppliant and a power in authority" e.g. fugitives imploring the powerful for help against their enemies.
2. DELIVERANCE - "an unfortunate, a threatener, a rescuer" e.g. the appearance of a rescuer to the condemned.
3. CRIME Pursued by Vengeance. "an avenger and a criminal" e.g. the avenging of a slain parent or ancestor.
4. VENGEANCE Taken For Kindred Upon Kindred
5. PURSUIT
6. DISASTER
7. FALLING PREY To Cruelty Or Misfortune
8. REVOLT
9. DARING Enterprise
10. ABDUCTION
11. THE ENIGMA
12. OBTAINING
13. ENMITY Of Kinsmen
14. RIVALRY Of Kinsmen
15. MURDEROUS Adultery
16. MADNESS
17. FATAL Imprudence
18. INVOLUNTARY Crimes Of Love
19. SLAYING of a Kinsman Unrecognized
20. SELF-Sacrificing For An Ideal
21. SELF-Sacrifice For Kindred
22. ALL Sacrificed For A Passion
23. NECESSITY Of Sacrificing Love Ones
24. RIVALRY Of Superior And Inferior
25. ADULTERY
26. CRIMES Of Love
27. DISCOVERY Of The Dishonor Of A Loved One
28. OBSTACLES To Love
29. AN ENEMY Loved
30. AMBITION
31. CONFLICT With A God
32. MISTAKEN Jealousy
33. ERRONEOUS Judgment
34. REMORSE
35. RECOVERY Of A Lost One
36. LOSS Of Loved Ones

Source: <http://bricolage.bel-epa.com/etc/drawer/polti.html>

JOHNSTON/BLAKE'S 9 PLOTS

Irish playwright Denis Johnston said all great theatre could be reduced to eight plots, found in fairytales and ancient myths.

The American writer Robert Blake added a ninth.

1. Unrecognised virtue at last recognised.
2. The fatal flaw.
3. The debt that must be paid.
5. The love triangle.
5. The spider and the fly.
6. Boy meets girl, plus obstacles.
7. The treasure taken away (loss, sometimes followed by search).
8. The irrepressible winner.
9. The homeless loner.

Source: <http://www.adelphiasophism.com/goddess/plot/001.html>

GENRE IN FILMS

The golden rule of genre in feature films:

“Deliver the genre” at least once every reel
(i.e. approx every ten minutes.)

Genres are how studios market their films, and how audiences know what type of emotional experience to expect in the cinema. E.g.

- Action-adventure – *Crocodile Dundee, Raiders of The Lost Ark*
 - Romantic Comedy – *Strictly Ballroom, Mrs Doubtfire*
 - Horror – *Razorback, Halloween H20*
 - Film Noir – *The Interview, Seven*
 - Science Fiction – *Incident at Raven’s Gate, Contact*
 - Fantasy - *Dark City, Star Wars*
 - Children’s – *Sally Marshall Is Not An Alien, Babe, The Lion King*
- and there are many other genres, including of course the Western which seems to have died out in recent years.

Some theorists believe the popularity of genres runs in 20-year cycles. Witness the ‘disaster’ movies of the 70’s and 90’s, and the horror films of the 60’s and 80’s.

Each genre has its own inherent set of **meanings**:

- Detective films often assert that Crime Doesn’t Pay.
 - Romantic Comedies usually imply that Love Conquers All.
 - Horror tells us that ‘Breaking taboos brings dire consequences’.
 - Sci-Fi often posits “technology as humanity’s savior”.
 - Westerns often employ the Old Testament morality of “Revenge”.
- Writers choose their genre to help convey their themes.
- Studios choose genres to market their films.
- Audiences choose genres to gain an emotional experience.

FILMS PRODUCED (BY GENRE) IN AUSTRALIA since 1990

GENRE	# OF TITLES
Comedy	175
Romance	75
Thriller	72
Drama	67
Psychological	48
Action	39
Adventure	36
Crime	25
Family	20
Social Realism	19
Children's	14
Mystery	14
Women	14
Horror	13
Historical	12
Biographical	11
Science Fiction	10
Erotic	9
Musical	9
Teen	9
Road Movie	8
Satire	8
War	7
Fantasy	6
Melodrama	5
Political	4
Police	3
Experimental	2
Dance	1
Epic	1
Gangster	1
Gay	1
Prison	1

TOTAL: 739 films in 13 years - or an average of 56 features a year.

Source: The online *AFC FEATURE FINDER*:

<http://www.afc.gov.au/resources/searchd/checklists/featfind.html>

AUSTRALIAN FEATURE FILM GENRES

1990 to 2003

Comedy = 24%

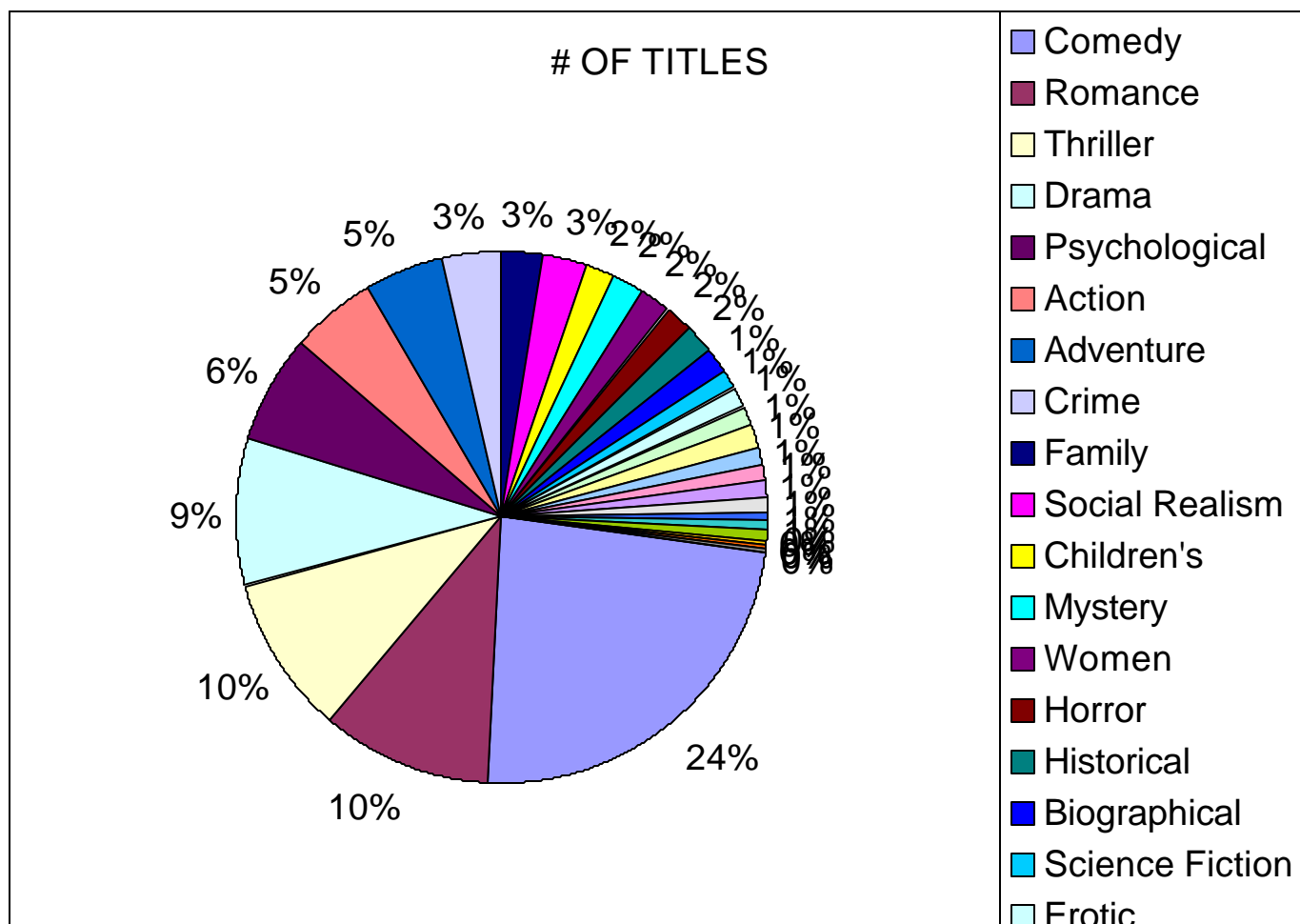
Romance = 10%

Thriller = 10%

Drama = 9%

(etc)

Source: <http://www.afc.gov.au/resources/searchd/checklists/featfind.html>



STRUCTURE

- STRUCTURE GIVES YOU THE FREEDOM TO BE CREATIVE -

It frees you as the writer so you don't have to make decisions about the **form** of the work, thereby allowing you to concentrate on **style** and **content**.

Story structure analysts and their 'Story Tools' include:

- Campbell/Vogler - The Hero's Journey
- Truby - Story
- McKee - Story
- Vorhaus – Story Maps
- Eco - the James Bond stories
- David Siegel – The 9-Act Structure
- Richard Stefanik – the Megahit Movies
- Barry Pearson's - Story Structure

Of course, the more all these 'story maps' are used, the more they become cliched... leading audiences to complain that writers are creating predictable, formulaic pictures.

However, as a screenwriter be aware of these tools, either as a reference point, diagnostic aids, or even as 'negative role models' for creating your own emotionally, intellectually and spiritually satisfying narratives. They are often most useful when editing stories that aren't fully 'working'.

Other story myths screenwriters use as 'templates' include

- Grimm's Fairy tales,
- Greek, Roman & Norse mythology,
- and of course The Bible.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Anthropologist Joseph Campbell studied thousands of world myths and narrowed them down into one nigh-on all-pervading myth, called "the monomyth" or 'The Hero's Journey', in his book The Hero With A Thousand Faces. Story analyst Chris Vogler has further transposed this mythical framework into a story template, in his book The Writer's Journey. The Hero's Journey features a number of archetypal characters, as mentioned before including the Hero, the Shadow, the Mentor, etc. The Hero's Journey story template has 12 steps:

1. The Ordinary World	
2. The Call To Adventure	
3. The Refusal of the Call	
4. The Meeting With the Mentor	
5. Crossing the First Threshold	
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies	
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave	
8. The Supreme Ordeal	
9. The Reward	
10. The Road Back	
11. The Resurrection	
12. The Return with the Elixir	

Possibly the most famous films to use the Hero's Journey story template is the *Star Wars* series, but it can also be identified in such films as the *Harry Potter* movies, *Lord of the Rings* series, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Thelma and Louise* and even *Pulp Fiction*.

'STORY WARS': HARRY POTTER vs STAR WARS Ep IV

Source: <http://www.theforce.net/rouser/essays/harry-potter.shtml>

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

~~Star Wars A New Hope; synopsis~~

Harry Potter

~~Luke Skywalker~~ is an orphan living with his uncle and aunt on the remote wilderness of ~~Tatooine~~.

He is rescued from ~~aliens~~ by wise, bearded ~~Ben Kenobi~~, who turns out to be a Jedi-Knight.

~~Ben~~ reveals to ~~Luke~~ that ~~Luke's~~ father was also a Jedi-Knight, and was the best pilot he had ever seen.

~~Luke~~ is also instructed in how to use the Jedi-light-sabre as he too trains to become a Jedi.

~~Luke~~ has many adventures in the ~~galaxy~~ and makes new friends such as ~~Han Solo~~ and ~~Princess Leia~~.

In the course of these adventures he distinguishes himself as a top X-wing pilot in the battle of the Death Star, making the direct hit that secures the Rebels victory against the forces of evil, ~~Slytheria~~.

~~Luke~~ also sees off the threat of ~~Darth Vader~~, who we know murdered his uncle and aunt.

In the finale, ~~Luke~~ and his new friends receive medals of valour.

All of this will be set to an orchestral score composed by John Williams.

TRUBY'S STORY STRUCTURE

Screenwriting analyst John Truby has developed a 'Classic Story Structure' template which runs somewhat contrary to the Syd Field 3-act structural paradigm.

Problem/Need the situation affecting the hero - and what's missing within the hero	
Desire or what the hero <i>wants</i> in the story	
Opponent the character competing for the same goal as the hero	
Plan how the hero will overcome the opponent and succeed	
Battle the final conflict that decides who gets the goal	
Self-Revelation the fundamental understanding the hero gains about him or herself which fulfills the need	
New Equilibrium the world back to normal with the hero at a higher or lower point	

In Truby's system, these 7 points actually expand out to a total of 22 points, for plotting scenes, and sequences of scenes. Also, by way of comparison, Truby's system has about 6 to 10 'plot turning points' rather than Syd Field's two.

Source: <http://screenwritersguild.org/storystructure.htm>

ROBERT McKEE'S SCREENWRITING METHOD

Screenwriting lecturer Robert McKee teaches a combination of the 3-act Aristotelian model, and 'classical' five-part narrative structure. This involves:

inciting incident	
progressive complications	
crisis	
climax	
resolution	

Source: <http://www.mckeestory.com/outline.html>

THE STORY MAP

Another story tool is the following template, as promoted by screenwriting instructor John Vorhaus in his book The Comic Toolbox:

Who is the hero?	
What does the hero want?	
The door opens	
The hero takes control	
The spanner is thrown in the works	
Things fall apart	
The hero hits rock bottom	
The hero risks all	
The hero wins	

Source: <http://members.aol.com/act4screenplays/tips14.html>

BARRY PEARSON'S STRUCTURE

Yet another structural guide, this time from screen structure teacher Barry Pearson.

This paradigm applies to a 100-page screenplay.

THE SETUP: The first 10 pages – sets up the Hero or Bonding character (villain, or monster, or potential love-interest).

THE BONDING EVENT: between pages 9 and 18 - an event occurs which brings the Hero into contact and interaction with the Bonding Character.

NB - THE OPPOSING/ATTACKING FORCE – note that the Bonding Event is typically the culmination of a sequence of Backstory events set in motion and propelled by the evil or negative force in the story (the Opposing/Attacking Force).

THE LOCKING EVENT: occurs between pages 20 to 35. Introduces a turn of circumstances that alters the relationship between the two major characters, so that they cannot easily disengage from each other.

ESCALATING EVENT: occurs somewhere between pages 40 to 55. There is a development that raises the stakes for the Hero and Bonding Character, the ESCALATING EVENT. This event often raises matters to a life-and-death issue.

SENDING YOUR HERO TO HELL: from pages 60 to 75 - a sequence of developments wherein the Hero tries to accommodate, adjust to, and escape from - the situation of jeopardy in which he or she finds himself or herself.

THE PLAN THAT FAILS - pages 75 to 85 - the Hero plans to defeat the forces opposing him. The Hero puts a plan into motion - and locks horns with the opposing force or forces, in an effort to defeat them.

THE HIDDEN WEAKNESS - the Hero's plan has failed and he or she looks to be utterly, finally defeated. Now there is a sequence in which he or she discovers what appears to be a hidden weakness in the opposing force or forces.

THE PLAN THAT SUCCEEDS - occupies pages 85 to 95 - the Hero having discovered the hidden weakness of the opposing forces, initiates the "plan-that-succeeds" and the Hero battles and defeats the opposition.

THE WIN AND THE PRIZE - pages 95-100 - Following the Hero's victory, there is a final sequence in which the writer dramatizes the Hero's new status and situation, and allows the audience to vicariously savor the Hero's victory, even if it is bittersweet - which it often is.

Source: <http://www.createyourscreenplay.com/structure.htm>

ECO & THE JAMES BOND PLOTS

In his book The Role of the Reader Umberto Eco has analysed Ian Fleming's 'Bond' novels for a basic narrative template:

- 1) M moves, and gives a task to Bond.
- 2) The villain moves, and appears to Bond.
- 3) Bond moves, and gives a 'first check' to the villain - or the villain gives 'first check' to Bond.
- 4) Woman moves, and shows herself to Bond.
- 5) Bond consumes the woman: possesses her, or begins her seduction.
- 6) The villain captures Bond.
- 7) The villain tortures Bond.
- 8) Bond conquers the villain.
- 9) Bond convalescing enjoys the woman, whom he then loses.

This structure obviously also applies to many of the films in the Bond franchise.

Source: <http://www.mind.to/plot/bond.htm>

DAVID SIEGEL'S NINE-ACT STRUCTURE

David Siegel, WWW design legend and author of *Designing Killer Web Sites* has invented his own structural film story paradigm. His 'Nine-Act Structure' runs thus:

Act 0: Someone Toils Late into the Night.	
Act 1: Start with an image.	
Act 2: Something bad happens.	
Act 3: Meet the Hero (and the Opposition).	
Act 4: Commitment.	
Act 5: Go for the wrong goal.	
Act 6: The reversal.	
Act 7: Go for the new goal.	
Act 8: Wrap it up.	

Source: http://www.dsiegel.com/film/Film_home.html

RICHARD MICHAELS – MEGAHIT STRUCTURE

In a 120-page script:

Prelude = 10 pages

Act 1 = 30 pages

Act 2 = 45 pages

Act 3 = 30 pages

Resolution = 5 pages

In the Prelude, the first ten pages of the screenplay, the writer must "hook" the audience by creating empathy for the protagonist, hatred for the antagonist, and establish the primary objective of the story. This is the most important section of the screenplay.

In Act One the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is further developed up to the first plot twist.

In Act Two the conflict is further "complicated" up through the second major plot twist. By this time about 85 minutes of screen time will have passed.

In Act Three the climatic battle between the protagonist and antagonist will occur. The action will be extremely intense and very fast, ending with the victory of the hero over the villain.

The Resolution scene of the story will be the shortest, showing that the protagonist has achieved his primary objective and showing his victory being celebrated by the community.

Source: <http://www.megahitmovies.com/>

ON THEMATIC VISUAL METAPHORS

To give your film resonance, in your screenplay, try and open with an image that is a *visual metaphor* for the whole story – e.g. the lantana bush in *Lantana* (a bush that looks pretty but whose beauty conceals nasty hidden thorns).

Otherwise, include *thematic visual metaphors* when you can - eg the spiral staircase in *Gattaca*, the picket fence in *Jaws*, the shadows of Indy in *Raiders*, the taxi in *Taxi Driver*.

Viki King's INNER MOVIE METHOD

Viki King's *The Inner Movie Method: How To Write a Screenplay In 21 Days* builds on the 'screenplay paradigm' work of story analysts Syd Field and Linda Seger.

1) FIRST MINUTE: (FIRST PAGE!)

In the first minute, you will know everything you need to know about a movie: you will see a place, a time, and a mood. Is it a big picture? With a musical overture and large vistas? The size and scope of the story are revealed right away. In the first minute, we also see the POINT OF VIEW. E.g. in the Dirty Harry movies; "This is a dirty world and someone's gotta clean it up" - If possible, start with a *visual metaphor* for your whole story. Also, put a 'page-turner' at the bottom of the page to get the reader hooked.

We have to know who it's about, too. Start with your main character if you can.

2) Page 3 - Find a line of dialog that expresses the *central theme* (eg Jake Gittes in Chinatown "You have to be rich to get away with murder.")

3) Pages 3 to 10 - What's it about? Whose story is it? What does he/she want? What's stopping him from getting it? Do we like him/her? Or care what happens to him? Why? (show vulnerability, engender audience empathy) Do we care if he/she gets what he wants? Are we wondering what happens next? Make sure all the main characters are introduced in the first 10 pages.

* Page 15 – The 'Inciting Incident' – the event that triggers the story, and propels the hero into action.

4) Page 25 or 30 – The First Turning Point. The story takes a sharp left turn. First Act ends. The Second Act begins...

5) Page 45 - The 'Act 2 metaphor' (a symbolic scene or action that gives a clue to the story's resolution.

6) Page 60 – The 'Point of no return' – our Hero commits totally to his/her goal. After this, a lighter moment; breathing space. Show the hero changing.

7) Page 75 - a New Development – the hero's just about to give up...

8) Page 90 – The Second Turning Point, end of Act 2 - an event that "educates" the hero about how to achieve their goal. They have an epiphany. Act 3 begins...

9) The Climax – 95-110. The hero can see their goal, but faces the final obstacle – the final moment of truth – all or nothing. They find their inner strength, and devotion to something bigger than themselves.

10) The End – i.e. last 3-5 pages – The Resolution. Remember - the goal is to touch the audience deeply, and affect them profoundly.

Source: <http://www.vikiking.com/>

THE SCREENPLAY `BEAT SHEET`

Page	Scene	Event	Story Beat
1	1	Place, Time, Mood. The Visual Metaphor.	
2	2		
4	3	Thematic Dialog Line	
6	4		
8	5		
10	6	What's it about?	
12	7	All characters intro'd?	
14	8	P.15 –Inciting Incident	
16	9		
18	10		
20	11		
22	12		
24	13		
26	14		
28	15		
30	16	1st Turning Pt – Act 2	
32	17		
34	18		
36	19		
38	20		
40	21		
42	22		
44	23	Act 2 Metaphor	
46	24		
48	25		
50	26		
52	27		
54	28		
56	29		
58	30	Midpoint	
60	31		
62	32		
64	33		
66	34		
68	35		
70	36		
72	37		
74	38		
76	39	75 - New Dev't	
78	40		
80	41		
82	42		
84	43		
86	44		

88	45		
90	46	2nd Turning Pt – Act 3	
92	47		
94	48		
96	49	Climax begins	
98	50		
100	51		
102	52		
104	53		
106	54		
108	55		
110	56	Climax peaks	
112	57		
114	58	Resolution	
116	59		
118	60		
120		FADE OUT	

Source: <http://www.vikiking.com/>

PLOTS and SUBPLOTS - or A,B and C stories

Typically, the A story is the **`main' plot**, e.g. a murder-mystery detective story (and occupies about 70% of the film's screen time)

Your film's A PLOT

The B story is the **`love interest'** subplot (about 20% of the total).

Your film's B PLOT

And the C story often involves **light comic relief** for contrast (about 10% of screen time).

Your film's C PLOT

Of course, the PLOT of the STORY comes out of CHARACTER.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE YOU WRITE:

1. What's the name of your story's central character/s?
2. Why do you *care* about them? (ie and Why will we, your audience care about them, their situation, and their story?)
3. Exactly how (and when) in your story do we become *emotionally involved* with them?
4. What is the world - and the backstory - of your story? The genre? The tone (eg warm and nostalgic, or gritty and confronting)? The style (realism, expressionism)?
5. What does your Protagonist *want* in the beginning? But what does he/she *need*? And what does he/she *get* in the end?
6. Six months into the Backstory (before the first page of your script), what was the Protagonist's goal? Is it different to the goal at the start of your script? (ie Are you starting the story too early, or late?)
7. Who or what is stopping the Protagonist from accomplishing their goal in the film?
8. What is the Opening Situation for the Protagonist?
9. By the first 10-15 pages, what is the 'Inciting Incident' or 'kicker'? What kicks the story into gear?
10. By page 25, what is your first plot point?
11. What is the 'midpoint' of the story? Is the hero at rock bottom here?
12. What will the emotional climax of your story be?
13. Who is your Antagonist? Why will we hate them? When do we hate them? Is your Antagonist the 'mirror opposite' or shadow of the Protagonist?
14. How is it shown that the Antagonist - and other characters - come from a *different world* than the Protagonist (i.e. *Differentiate* the characters, especially their dialogue.)
15. What is the most interesting thing about this story subject to you? And Why will it interest 3 million other people?
16. What *emotions* will the audience feel at the start, middle, and end of your story? Explain the emotional journey you have planned for them.

THE '15 COMMANDMENTS' OF FEATURE FILM SCREENWRITING

- * THEME IS PARAMOUNT!
- * DRAMA IS CONFLICT!
- * STRUCTURE IS EVERYTHING!
- * A SCREENPLAY: A STORY TOLD WITH PICTURES
- * SHOW, DON'T TELL!
- * RAISE THE STAKES!
- * MAKE THE CHARACTERS 3-DIMENSIONAL
- * ACTION IS CHARACTER!
- * FORESHADOW & PAYOFF!
- * SUSPENSE, SURPRISE, REVERSALS, TWISTS
- * SCENES: COME IN LATE, LEAVE EARLY
- * ACTION LINES: SHORT, CONTROLLED BURSTS
- * USE DIALOGUE ONLY AS A LAST RESORT
- * DON'T WRITE SUBTEXT!
- * WRITING IS REWRITING

- * PS - *NOBODY KNOWS WHAT WORKS!* (i.e. Trust your instincts)

SCENE LENGTH

or, How Long Is a Piece of 2-inch String?

George Lucas once said:

"Sixty great two-minute scenes make a successful movie".

As a guide, you should have about 15 scenes in your first act, 30 in the second, and 15 in the third - namely: a total of sixty scenes, with an average scene length of **two pages** (i.e. and average of **two minutes** per scene).

Each of these scenes usually contains a plot 'beat'.

There is no lower limit to scene length (a short scene's often a good scene), but as for an upper limit, *four pages* is a pretty long scene.

The golden rule with writing each scene is:

**COME IN LATE,
and LEAVE EARLY.**

This means you don't have to show someone knocking on a door, waiting for it to be answered, have characters introduce themselves, and then begin a conversation...

Instead, have the 'point of attack' in each scene as *late as possible* – namely try to cut into the scene when they are in the middle of the conversation, and stay only long enough to get the crucial story information out, and then cut out of the scene. These days, audiences assume a great deal.

THE STRUCTURE OF EACH SCENE

Each scene should have a beginning, middle and end - and should do 4 things:

- 1) give new information (and/or reveal character)
- 2) involve bonding (the audience with the characters)
- 3) include conflict (or conflict resolution)
- 4) aid completion (i.e. move the story forward)

ON PACING YOUR SCENES

Juxtapose a long, slow scene (or sequence of scenes)- with a short, fast one. Pacing and rhythm is crucial to keep the viewer hooked.

EXPOSITION

Exposition (or the Set-Up) is that part of your script which *explains the dramatic situation*: anything relevant has gone before, and it also sets up (or identifies) the main characters and their relationships to each other.

Try to have your story's exposition revealed through a scene with *underlying conflict* or *overt action* going on, rather than just two or more "talking heads":

e.g.

The Fellowship of the Ring – Gandalf explains 'the ring situation' to Frodo while the black riders are outside, searching for it...

Raiders of the Lost Ark – the dissertation about the Lost Ark, and why it must be found before the Nazis get to it, is given to some 'ignorant' outsiders (army intelligence), so that Indy can become "Morrie the Explainer" in a lecture room.

Terminator – the "time travel and Terminator robot" scenario is explained to Sarah Connor during a car chase while actually escaping from it.

Titanic – the crew are shouting on a ship's deck, during a submarine recovery operation.

SUMMARIZE YOUR EXPOSITION SCENE:

FEATURE FILM LAYOUT

Screenplays are designed to be read, so the layout and presentation of the script is therefore crucial.

The script must be typed either in Courier 12-point font. (Pica is also accepted in the USA.)

Layout for feature film scripts is as follows:

* A 1-inch margin, top and bottom, left and right.

* SCENE HEADINGS are always written thus:

INT. KANE'S OFFICE - DAY

where firstly the writer indicates either INT. (i.e. interior, or indoors) or EXT. (exterior, or outdoors), followed by the location (e.g. KANE'S OFFICE) and the time of day (i.e. DAY or NIGHT, or sometimes MORNING, AFTERNOON, DUSK or DAWN)

* STAGE DIRECTIONS are typed all the way across the page.

* CHARACTER NAMES are not actually centered, but placed 5 tab stops across the page, i.e. near the center, but left-justified

* PARENTHETICALS (actor instructions) are 4 tabs across, e.g.

KANE
(furious)
Get out!

but the less they are used the better, as they can be seen to tell an actor or director how to do their job.

- CAMERA DIRECTIONS are in UPPER CASE, (e.g. CLOSE ON, WIDE ANGLE ON, CAMERA PUSHES IN ON) but also should only be used when absolutely necessary, otherwise again, you as the writer are “directing from the page”, telling the director how to do his job.
- The general rule of thumb for script timing in this format is ‘one page equals one minute’, so 120 pages roughly equals two hours.

BINDING

Scripts also need to be bound with black card front and back, 3-hole drilled, and held together with 2 brads only (top & bottom). No pictures, or quotations. (Just the facts!)

SCREENPLAY TERMS - GLOSSARY

ANGLE ON - Directs the camera to focus on a person or thing.

AD LIB - Instructs actors to make up and fill in dialogue in the scene.

BACK TO SCENE – usually follows a **FLASHBACK** or a **CUTAWAY**.

CONTINUED - Used at the beginning and end of a screenplay page. However fashion has changed - and it isn't used in screenplays anymore.

CRANE SHOT - The camera, fixed to a crane mechanism, is allowed to float through the air (Rather than use this in a screenplay suggest the same shot in another way)

BEAT - A pause written into a character's speech or action. Longer pauses can be written as "two beats", "three beats", etc. Equivalent to the beat of a waltz.

COVER PAGE - The first page of the screenplay. It contains the title, author names, and author address data.

CUT TO - To immediately go to another person or setting

DISSOLVE TO - A film editing technique where one scene "melts" or fades into another scene. Can be used in place of "cut to" to suggest a longer passage of time but not strictly necessary

ESTABLISHING SHOT - Used to give an overall perspective of a scene. This is rarely used now but would be done thus

EXT. ROBIN'S HOUSE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

EXT. - Used in the scene heading. Short for exterior.

FADE IN - This is the start of the screenplay. The screenplay always begins with this statement.

FADE OUT - Equivalent to **THE END** in a novel. The screenplay always ends with this statement.

FLASHBACK – an earlier scene. EXT. ROBIN'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

INT. - Used in the Master Scene Heading. Short for interior.

INSERT - An item that is inserted into the camera view. Usually a note, or picture is inserted so the audience can either read what is on the note, or see the picture.

LOG LINE - A one or two sentence summary of your screenplay which is designed to intrigue someone enough to want to read it.

MASTER SCENE HEADING (SLUG LINE) - Begins each new scene. It consists of three parts: The LOCATION, PLACE, and TIME of the scene. e.g.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT or INT. BEDROOM - DAY

MONTAGE / SERIES OF SHOTS - A number of different scenes shown one after the other, in bullet points. Used to show a number of events passing in a short period of time.

[MORE] and (CONT) – a parenthetical, used when a dialog speech continues over the page.

O.S. / O.C. - OFF SCREEN or OFF CAMERA. A character talks, or something happens out of view of the camera.

PARENTHETICALS (WRYLIES) - Direction for the actor in a scene e.g. "(wryly)" or "(sadly)" Usually signals an emotional action. Only use when it isn't obvious.

PAN - A camera shot from side to side. (Rather than use this in a screenplay, suggest the same shot in another way)

PLOT POINT - A turning point, or transition in the screenplay that propels the screenplay forward.

POV - Point of View. The perspective view of one character as they look at another character, or thing in the scene.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: (self explanatory – the camera pulls back)

SPEC SCRIPT - A speculative screenplay, written while not under contract.

SPLIT SCREEN - The location of the scene is divided into two, or more, sections. (Rather than use this in a screenplay, consider how silly the technique usually looks and decide not to)

SUBLIM - A shot lasting less than a second. (A very brief flashback)

SUPER - A superimposition. One image merged into another image. Or a subtitle, superimposed over the images.

TILT DOWN (or UP)– a vertical camera movement.

TREATMENT - A detailed, third person, present tense, narrative summary of a script. Usually about 20-40 pages. No direct dialogue.

V.O. - Voice Over. Usually used by a narrator of a scene. The character doing the VO is usually not in the same location as the scene.

ZOOM - A camera focus upon something in the scene. (Rather than use this in a screenplay, suggest the same shot in another way)

Source: <http://www.robinkelly.btinternet.co.uk/atoz.htm>

DIALOG

Dialog must be convincing and, in a feature film, the less there is, the better.

Remember Syd Field's Screenwriting Rule #1:

Show, Don't Tell.

In other words **use dialog only as a last resort**, if the information cannot be shown visually, or conveyed in some other way, i.e. via sound, or a character's body language, or actions.

TV is more 'talky' than film, usually because of lower budgets, and because as a medium, television is more explicit, whereas film is more implicit.

According to writer Alan Armer, dialog can simultaneously serve many functions:

- 1) advance the plot (moves the story forward)
- 2) communicate facts and information to the audience
- 3) reveal and deepen character
- 4) deliver exposition
- 5) establish relationships between characters
- 5) comment on the action
- 6) connect scenes

Armer summarizes it thus:

Dialog should advance the plot while revealing character.

Most lines of good dialog have 5 common elements:

1. Economy
2. Simplicity
3. Vernacular speech
4. Invisibility
5. Progression

Always keep the lines 'in character': i.e. Remember "*A Martian wouldn't say that.*"

Source: <http://industrycentral.net/writers/scriptips/6.htm>

SOME OTHER DIALOG `RULES`:

- Ask yourself: Are the CHARACTER VOICES distinctive? (As a test, cover the character names and read the dialog aloud. Can you pick who is talking in each case?)
- Use contrasting characters, each with utterly clear individual motivations and speech patterns. Does the hero have a strong GOAL?
- Dialog should always come OUT OF THE CHARACTER. Never just write a line borne of another line.
- Weave the dialog – and don't exhaust your topic: eg ABCDEFG is bad, ADBEACFEG - is good
- Slang, jargon and idiom helps fix a character's age group and class, and nationality.
- Dominant characters speak in imperatives: eg "Do it now." "I insist."
- Use bad grammar to “keep it real” - half-phrased thoughts, sentences without verbs, and word-association.
- A character's obsessions are reflected subliminally in his most frequently-used words: eg "friend, success, love."
- Remember behaviour modification: (We speak differently in front of the boss!)
- Short anecdotes can work well in film. (*See Quint's `Indianapolis' story in “Jaws”, Harry Dean Stanton in Paris, Texas, Rose's reminiscences in Titanic*)
- Dialog should never be `literary' - unless a literature professor is talking. It must always sound like real, live talk. (NB - Unless purposely stylized, like say in *A Clockwork Orange*)
- Use pauses and (beat) – as SILENCE has great dramatic effect in a cinema. Audiences can imply a lot into a character's meaningful silence. (Cinema is implicit. TV is explicit.)
- Remember: Economy of dialog.

SUBTEXT

TEXT is what is said in dialog.

SUBTEXT is what is **UNSAID** rather than SAID: ie what is really going on - what happens below the surface of a scene; thoughts, feelings, judgements.

Remember: SUBTEXT is when you're dating;

TEXT is when you're married...

As a writer, you want to seduce the audience.

"T.V. scriptwriting teaches you to write badly because you have to write about what you're seeing: you have to write about "The Problem" . You have no chance to create any SUBTEXT of a scene." Bob Towne

* Avoid "on the nose" dialog. Dialog that is "on the nose", is when you write the SUBTEXT. In real life, people seldom say what they mean.

FAMOUS LINES from films of the 1990's

“I'm the king of the world!” – Titanic

“I do wish we could chat longer, but I'm having an old friend for dinner.” Silence of the Lambs

“Yeah baby, yeah!” Austin Powers

“Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates” Forrest Gump

“I'll have what she's having” When Harry Met Sally

“You can't handle the truth!” A Few Good Men

“To infinity and beyond!” Toy Story

“What do you give a wife who has everything? An injection of insulin.” Reversal of Fortune

“Let's just keep going.” Thelma and Louise

MEMORABLE LINES FROM AUSTRALIAN FILMS

“That's not a knife – THAT's a knife.” Crocodile Dundee

“Shoot straight, you bastards!” Breaker Morant

“In this world only the strong survive. The weak get crushed like insects.” Shine

“You're terrible, Muriel.” Muriel's Wedding

“People don't believe in heroes anymore!” Mad Max

“The greatest thing you'll ever learn - is just to love and be loved in return.” Moulin Rouge

“Just what this country needs: a cock in a frock on a rock.” Priscilla, Queen of the Desert

“That'll do, pig. That'll do.” Babe

“It's just the vibe of it.” The Castle

GREAT MOVIE LINES

"I'm sorry Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that."

HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

"Did America give up when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?"

John Belushi as Bluto in *Animal House*

"Shut up and deal"

Shirley Maclaine as Fran Kubelik in *The Apartment*

"I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

Robert Duvall as Lt. Col. Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*

"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take this any more!"

Peter Finch as Howard Beal in *Network*

"Insanity runs in my family...It Practically Gallops!"

Cary Grant as Mortimer Brewster in *Arsenic And Old Lace*

"I'll alert the media."

John Geilgud as Hobson in *Arthur*

"A real woman could stop you from drinking."..."It'd have to be a real big woman."

Dudley Moore as Arthur Bach in *Arthur*

"Who are those guys?"

Paul Newman as Butch Cassidy in *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*

"Hoo-Haa!"

Al Pacino as Lt. Colonel Frank Slade in *Scent Of A Woman*

"Ahh, but the strawberries, that's, that's where I had them. They laughed at me and made jokes, but I proved beyond a shadow of a doubt and with geometric logic that a duplicate key to the wardroom icebox did exist... Naturally I, I can only cover these things from memory. If I've left anything out, why just ask me specific questions and I'll be glad to answer them one by one."

Humphrey Bogart as Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny*

"Here's looking at you kid."

Humphrey Bogart as Rick Blaine in *Casablanca*

"Play it for me, Sam."

Ingrid Bergman as Ilsa Laszlo in *Casablanca*

"Round up the usual suspects."

Claude Raines as Capt. Louis Renault in *Casablanca*

"You know you don't have to act with me Steve. You don't have to say anything and you don't have to do anything. Not a thing. Oh, maybe just whistle. You know how to whistle

don't you Steve? You just put your lips together and blow."
Lauren Bacall as Marie Browning in *To Have And Have Not*

"Badges? we ain't got no badges. we don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinkin' badges!"
Alfonso Bedoya as Gold Hat in *The Treasure Of The Sierra Madre*

"That's a pretty good catch, that catch 22."
Alan Arkin as Yossarian in *Catch-22*

"What we've got here is failure to communicate."
Strother Martin as Captain in *Cool Hand Luke*

"That's not a knife. this's a knife!"
Paul Hogan as Crocodile Dundee in *Crocodile Dundee*

"Garth, Klatu Barrada Nickto."
Patricia Neal as Helen Benson in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*

"This river don't go to Ainty. You done taken a wrong turn."
Bill Mckinney as the Mountain Man in *Deliverance*

"I know what you're thinkin': Did he fire 6 shots or only 5? Well to tell you the truth in all this excitement I've kinda lost track myself, but beein' this is a .44 magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world and would blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well do ya, punk?"
Clint Eastwood as Harry Calahan in *Dirty Harry*

"Go ahead, make my day."
Clint Eastwood as Harry Callahan in *Sudden Impact*

"Build it and they will come!"
Kevin Costner as Ray Kinsella in *Field of Dreams*

"You can't handle the truth!"
Jack Nicholson as the Marine officer in *A Few Good Men*

"and hold the chicken!"
Jack Nicholson as Robert Dupea in *Five Easy Pieces*

"Life is like a box of chocolates."
Tom Hanks as Forrest Gump in *Forrest Gump*

"Are we having fun yet?"
Carol Burnett as Kate Burroughs in *The Four Seasons*

"We came, we saw, we kicked ass!"
Bill Murray as Dr. Peter Venkman in *Ghostbusters*

"What did you do today?"..."Oh, same-o, same-o"
Bill Murray as Phil Connors in *Groundhog Day*

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."
Marlon Brando as Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*

"Bond, James Bond"
Sean Connery as James Bond

"Smith, Nevada Smith"
Steve McQueen as Max Sand in *Nevada Smith*

"Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn!"
Clark Gable as Rhett Butler in *Gone With The Wind*

"I don't know nuthin' bout birthin' babies."
Butterfly McQueen as Prissy in *Gone With The Wind*

"Do you like to play pool for money, Eddie?"
Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats in *The Hustler*

"Good Morning Vietnam!"
Robin Williams as Adrian Cronhauer in *Good Morning Vietnam!*

"He Choose poorly."
Robert Eddison as The Knight in *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*

"When the gods wish to punish us, they grant our wishes."
Meryl Street as Karen Bliksen in *Out of Africa*

"You're gonna need a bigger boat.."
Roy Scheider as Chief Martin Brody in *Jaws*

"Tell them to go out there... and win just one for the gipper."
Pat O'Brian as Knute Rockne in *Knute Rockne, All American*

"That's a real badge and I'm a real cop and this is a real gun!"
Mel Gibson as Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon*

"Love means never having to say you're sorry."
Ali Macgraw as Jenny Cavillieri in *Love Story*

"Alright. who did it? who did it?!"
James Cagney as The Captain in *Mister Roberts*

"Captain, it is I, Ensign Pulver, and I just threw your stinkin' palm tree overboard. Now what's all this crud about no movie tonight?"
Jack Lemmon as Ensign Frank Thurlow Pulver in *Mr. Roberts*

"I've got all your names and your addresses!"
Jack Lemmon as George Kellerman in *The Out-of-towners*

"Nobody throws me my own guns and says run. Nobody."
James Coburn as Britt in *The Magnificent Seven*

"By gad sir, you are a character!"
Sidney Greenstreet as Caspar Gutman in *The Maltese Falcon*

"Don't be silly. you're taking the fall."
Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*

"I don't know Ange, what do you feel like doin'?"
Ernest Borgnine as Marty in *Marty*

"Listen here pilgrim, you caused a lot of trouble this morning. Mighta gotten somebody killed, somebody oughta belt you in the mouth, but I won't, I won't. The Hell I won't!"
John Wayne as G.W. McClintock in *McClintock!*

"Yes my dear, but by noon I'll sober and you'll still be ugly!"
W. C. Fields as Harold Bissonette in *It's A Gift*

"The verdict was that he was the best shot in Texas."
W. C. Fields as Commodore Orlando Jackson in *Mississippi*

"You bet I'm shy. I'm a shyster lawyer!"
Groucho Marx in *Monkey Business*

"I shot an elephant in my pajamas, what he was doing in them, I will never know!"
Groucho Marx in *Animal Crackers*

"So brave nights, if you do doubt your courage or your strength, come no further, for death awaits you all with nasty pointy teeth!"
John Cleese as Tim The Enchanted in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*

"You little creep."
James Stewart as Roger Hobbs in *Mr. Hobbs Takes A Vacation*

"I'll live to see you, all of you, hanging from the highest yardarm in the British fleet!"
Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh in *Mutiny On The Bounty*

"I'm not an actor, I'm a movie star!"
Peter O'toole as Alan Swann in *My Favorite Year*

" We're all gonna have so much fun we'll need plastic surgery to remove our smiles!
You'll be whistling zip-a-dee-doo-dah out of your assholes!"
Chevy Chase as Clark Griswald in *National Lampoon's Vacation*

"Now it's garbage."
Walter Matthau as Oscar Madison in *The Odd Couple*

"I coulda' been a contender, I coulda' been somebody, instead of a bum. which is what I am."
Marlon Brando as Terry Malloy in *On The Waterfront*

"You won't have to tell your grandkids you shoveled shit in Louisiana!"
George C. Scott as General George S. Patton in *Patton*

"To Berlin! I'm gonna personally shoot that paper hangin' son of a bitch!"
George C. Scott as General George S. Patton in *Patton*

"Get your paws off me you damn dirty ape!"
Charlton Heston as George Taylor in *Planet Of The Apes*

"Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth!"
Gary Cooper as Lou Gherig in *The Pride Of The Yankees*

"What're we waitin for!"
Burgess Meredith as Mickey in *Rocky II*

"Did we win?"
Jackie Gleason as Sgt. Enos Slaughter in *Soldier in the Rain*

"Well, nobody's perfect."
Joe E. Brown as Osgood E. Fielding III in *Some Like It Hot*

"May the force be with you."
Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*

"That's a fact, Jack!"
Bill Murray as John Winger in *Stripes*

"You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? Then who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well I'm the only one here."
Robert Deniro as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*

"Hasta la vista, baby"
Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*

"I'll be back."
Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator in *The Terminator*

"You have no taste, a lousy sense of humor and you smell."
Cher as Alexandra Medford in *The Witches Of Eastwick*

"Did you call us beavers on your CB? I hate that. I hate when they call us beavers."
Geena Davis as Thelma Dickinson in *Thelma And Louise*

"If you don't work, you don't eat."
Michael Parks as Jim Bronson in *Then Came Bronson*

"Wanna see something really scary?"
Dan Akroyd in *Twilight Zone: The Movie*

"What's up doc?"
Barbar Streisand in *What's Up Doc*

"There's only two things I'm scared of...Women and the po-leece."
Burt Reynolds as Gator McKlusky in *White Lightning*

"I'll get you my pretty, and your little dog too!"
Margaret Hamilton as The Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard Of Oz*

"Toto? I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."
Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard Of Oz*

"Why don't you come up and see me sometime."
Mae West as Lady Lou in *She Done Him Wrong*

"I want to be alone."
Greta Garbo as Grusinskaya in *Grand Hotel*

"Well, there's another fine mess you've gotten us into."
Oliver Hardy

Source: <http://www.storydomain.com/movielin.htm>

SCRIPT EDITING QUESTIONS:

PREMISE

Is there a clear and strong premise, concept, or idea?

CHARACTER

Whose story is it? Who do we 'root' for?

Do we care about the people in the story, and what happens to them?

Are the characters interesting and big enough? Do they have clear wants?

How does the lead character change through the script?

Are there roles in this script for which actors would kill to portray?

STORY

What is the story?

Is the story 'big' enough for cinema?

Are there enough visual elements?

Does the story contain a strong protagonist/antagonist conflict?

Are there enough twists, surprises, reversals?

What is at stake?

STRUCTURE

Where does the story start? Is it too long/late in starting?

Do the plot points work?

Are the scenes sequenced well?

Does each scene push the story forward?

Are any scenes too long?

Is all the 'juice' wrung out from the scenes?

Is everything that is 'set up' in the first act, later 'paid off' in the third?

DIALOG

Is there too much dialog, and not enough visual action?

Is it dialog- rather than character-driven?

Is the dialog well differentiated for each character?

Is the dialog too obvious?

Is the tone consistent with the genre? (drama, thriller, comedy)

Is the script layout okay?

THEME

What is this story 'really' about?

Are there thematic visual metaphors?

SCRIPT EDITING: THE SCENE-BY-SCENE ANALYSIS

- 1 - What is the mood of this scene, and how is it indicated? What role does the setting play in creating this mood or ambience? Or does it counterpoint it? Is it ironic?
- 2 - What in this scene, is revealed (if any) of the backstory?
- 3 - What is the subtext of the scene? How is it evidenced by dialog, action and/or mood? What are the characters really saying to each other? That is, what are the emotions and strategies underlying the dialog?
- 4 - What do the characters bring to the scene from the previous action in the story?
- 5 - Summarize the character relationship.
- 6 - Whose scene is it? Do any character changes take place? What is the logic of the scene? – Are the actions and events are consistent and believable, composed of incidents that could reasonably happen?
- 7 - What does each character want - and why is it hard to get it – i.e. What is the nature of the conflict in the scene?
- 8 - What story point is made in the scene? What is the basic action?
- 9 - What is the scene's 'red dot'; (i.e. when the scene actually makes its story point.)
- 10 - Are there 'twists' in the scene? Twist is like a plot point, when the scene gets new energy, or bounces off in a new direction.
- 11 – Could this scene be cut?

SCRIPT ANALYSIS (by SCRIPT ASSESSORS or READERS)

When a screenplay is submitted to a studio, it is read by a Script Analyst, who does 'coverage' on it. COVERAGE is a 3-page document which includes a STORY SYNOPSIS (of 1 - 2 pages), and a page of one-paragraph COMMENTS on the following areas: PREMISE, STRUCTURE, PLOT, CHARACTER, DIALOG, THEME - as well as a paragraph on a few other issues, such as GENRE, COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL and BUDGET, TARGET AUDIENCE, POSSIBLE CAST and VISUAL STYLE. On coverages there is usually a grid such as the following:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PREMISE	X			
STRUCTURE		X		
PLOT		X		
CHARACTER	X			
DIALOG				X

Most script coverages have their X's in the 'POOR' column of the grid, although many have an excellent premise. The main reason for this is that although most people have a great idea for a film, the execution of the idea as a screenplay falls down. The skills of excellent dialog, pacing, plot and structure are rare in a single individual, which explains why studios pay several writers to do additional drafts, and why certain writers who can do everything are paid that much.

The coverage done by the reader results in one of three outcomes: the reader grades the script with either

PASS - which tells a studio executive not to waste their precious time reading a poor script

CONSIDER - which means read or give the script to another reader for a second opinion... or

RECOMMEND - which means read the script ASAP, with an eye to purchasing it. This is the rating all writers hope for.

The main reason for coverage is a filtration process, so that busy executives don't have to wade through reams of scripts in search of a gem. Most executives do not have time to read. The coverage done by a professional reader is attached to the script and is often the deciding factor in a script's reputation; a highly critical or negative coverage is difficult to overcome. One of the best books on script coverage (though mainly for the US market) is Reading For a Living by T.L. Katahn.

USEFUL SCREENWRITING WEBSITES

GOVERNMENT FILM BODIES

Australian Broadcasting Corporation <http://www.abc.net.au/>
Australian Film, TV & Radio School <http://www.aftrs.edu.au/>
Film Australia <http://www.filmaust.com.au/>
National Film & Sound Archive <http://www.archivenet.gov.au/nfsa/nfsa.htm>

NATIONAL FILM FUNDING BODIES

Australian Film Commission <http://www.afc.gov.au>
Australian Film Finance Corporation <http://www.ffc.gov.au>
Special Broadcasting Service <http://www.sbs.com.au/>

STATE FUNDING BODIES

South Australian Film Corporation <http://www.safilm.com.au>
Film Victoria <http://www.film.vic.gov.au/>
NSW Film & Television Office <http://www.filmtv.com.au/NSWFTO>
Pacific Film & TV Commission (Queensland) <http://www.pftc.com.au>
ScreenWest (Western Australia) <http://www.screenwest.com.au/>
Screen Tasmania <http://www.screentas.tas.gov.au/>
Film New Zealand <http://www.filmnz.org.nz/>

OTHER SITES

Australian Film Institute <http://www.cinemedia.net/afi>
Australian Film Institute (AFI) Awards <http://msn.com.au/afiawards>
Cybernet Australian Film & TV Database <http://www.filmtv.com.au/>
Film and Video Internet Gateway <http://www.clangbuzzthump.com/fvig.htm>
Sydney Film Festival <http://www.sydfilm-fest.com.au/>
Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance <http://www.alliance.aust.com/>
Women in Film & Television (NSW) <http://www.wift.org/>
Australian Writers Guild <http://www.awg.com.au/>
South Australian Writer's Centre <http://www.sawriters.on.net/>

NEWS & REVIEWS

Inside Film Magazine <http://www.if.com.au/>
Andrew Urban's Cinefile <http://www.urbancinefile.com.au/>
Encore Magazine <http://www.encoremagazine.com.au/>

HOLLYWOOD FILM RUMOURS

Coming Attractions <http://www.corona.bc.ca/films/>

GENERAL FILM INFO

Internet Movie Database <http://us.imdb.com>
FilmSite <http://www.filmsite.org/>
AFC Film Finder: <http://www.afc.gov.au/resources/searchd/checklists/featfind.html>

BOOKS ABOUT SCRIPTWRITING

Screenplay by Syd Field

Four Screenplays by Syd Field

The Screenwriter's Workbook by Syd Field

Making A Good Script Great by Linda Seger

How To Write A Screenplay in 21 Days by Viki King

The Writer's Journey by Chris Vogler

The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness by Maureen Murdock

Story by Robert McKee

And the classic, Adventures In The Screen Trade and follow-up Which Lie Did I Tell? by William Goldman

Also, a couple of other good texts worth noting are:

The Technique of Screen & Television Writing by Eugene Vale

Alternative Scriptwriting by Ken Dancyger & Jeff Rush

And specifically for the Australian market:

Scriptwriting Updated by Linda Aronson

Big Screen: Small Screen by Coral Drouyn

SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE

Although many writers prefer a simple word-processing package such as Word, there are also many software packages you can purchase to assist with formatting and editing screenplays and scripts on computer. They include:

Final Draft

Scriptware

ScriptThing

Script Wizard

Movie Magic Screenwriter

On the other hand, Woody Allen writes longhand in pencil while lying face-down across his bed, and some writers still use a typewriter.

STORY DEVELOPMENT SOFTWARE

These packages contain built-in craft tools for dramatic story development and structure.

Dramatica Pro

Story Builder

StoryCraft

FREE SCRIPT WARE TO DOWNLOAD:

Screenplay software is expensive. Here are some FREEWARE script writing programs you can download:

Script Buddy (<http://scriptbuddy.com>)

Story Mind (<http://storymind.com>)

Dependent Film (<http://dependentfilm.net/files.html>) offers three shareware templates: Script Maker, Simply Screenplay and ScreenForge.

KEEPING IT LOW BUDGET

Consider these Australian low-budget feature film makers:

Working Dog Ltd - *The Castle*
Rolf de Heer - *Bad Boy Bubby*
Paul Cox - *Man Of Flowers*
Jon Hewitt - *Redball*
David Caesar - *Mullet*

Low-budget international filmmakers:

Spike Lee - *She's Gotta Have It* (\$75000, 1986)
Hal Hartley - *The Unbelievable Truth* (\$100 000, 1989)
Robert Rodriguez - *El Mariachi* (\$7,225, 1993)

The Average budget of an Aust film:	\$3.5 m
" a US studio film:	\$54 m

Internationally, US\$6-12m films are seen as 'low budget'...

Yet 'high budget' in Aust is \$3-6m AUS - eg *Strictly Ballroom*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

Low budget is generally under AUS\$1.5 m : *Proof*, *Romper Stomper*, *What I Have Written*, *Bad Boy Bubby*, *Only The Brave and Everynight... Everynight*, and *The Quiet Room* were all under \$1m. *Mullet* was just over \$1m.

The Castle was shot on location in Melbourne and Canberra in 11 days with a Super 16 mm camera and on a budget of less than \$1 million.

Michael Brindley (writer of the film '*Shame*') in his workshop on "Writing the Low Budget Feature" says:

“- Think of production realities, crew functions and what things cost - make sure it's not television on the big screen!”

Movies to consider: *The Castle*, *Proof*, *The Unbelievable Truth*, *sex lies & videotape*, *Reservoir Dogs*

Source: Notes from 'LOW MEANS LOW' papers from the Low Budget Feature Seminar, Australian Film Commission, Woolloomooloo, 1996

RESEARCH YOUR LOW BUDGET MOVIE!

Roger Corman, legendary US low-budget exploitation film producer, and author of “How I Made 100 Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost A Dime” does *market research* on 3 areas of film:

1. Cast

(i.e. Which stars to cast? Who do audiences want to see up on the big screen in films?)

2. Genre

(i.e. Which genre do people want to go and see? Thrillers? Romantic Comedies? Horror? Nurse films? Prison films?)

3. Titles

(i.e. Which of the following films would you go and see on the strength of the title?)

Monster from the Ocean Floor (1954)

Day the World Ended, The (1956)

Beast with a Million Eyes, The (1956)

It Conquered the World (1956)

Attack of the Crab Monsters (1957)

The Saga of the Viking Women and Their Voyage to the Waters of the Great Sea Serpent, (1957)

Stakeout on Dope Street (1958)

I Mobster... The Life of a Gangster (1958)

Brain Eaters, The (1958)

Bucket of Blood, A (1959)

Little Shop of Horrors, The (1960)

Terror, The (1963)

Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women (1968)

Naked Angels (1969)

Student Nurses, The (1970)

Gasssss! Or It Became Necessary to Destroy the World in Order to Save It (1970)

Death Race 2000 (1975)

Frankenstein Unbound (1990)

Bloodfist VIII: Trained to Kill (1996)

Suicide Club, The (2000)

Escape from Afghanistan (2002)

Haunting of Slaughter Studios, The (2002)

Notable Corman films:

Boxcar Bertha (1972 - dir: Martin Scorsese)

Grand Theft Auto (1975 - dir & starring: Ron Howard)

Caged Heat (1974 - dir: Jonathon Demme)

Piranha 2: The Spawning (1981 - dir: James Cameron)

The Intruder... aka I Hate Your Guts! (1961)

The Fast & The Furious (1955)

Roger Corman started the careers of (among others): Jack Nicholson, Francis Ford Coppola, Bruce Dern, Peter Fonda, Jonathan Demme, Ron Howard, Martin Scorsese, James Cameron, William Shatner and Joe Dante.

THE SIX C'S OF LOW-BUDGET FILM MAKING:

by Michael Brindley*

CONCEPT - a cinematic approach to an original idea - "the triumph of content over form".

COLLABORATION - efficiency dictates that everyone is "working on the same show". The writer, director (film is the directors medium, TV is the writer's), DOP and production designer – and the actors!

CONTAINMENT - every camera move (new setup) costs time and money (which are the same thing). Keep them to a minimum. Can it be a 25-day shoot?

CAST - Try and get film actors. They'd best not be who you can see on TV!

CONTROL - on a low budget, leave as little as possible to chance (never work with WAK: water, animals, or kids!)

COST - know what you have to spend, and exactly how you will spend it (stunts, explosions, special effects, outdoor, nighttime, dialog in moving cars, expensive locations?)

It all comes back to **CONCEPT**: the strength of the low budget feature lies in its central idea.

*Source: Michael Brindley, "Writing the Low Budget Feature" from 'Low Means Low' - Papers from the Low Budget Feature Seminar, Australian Film Commission, Woolloomooloo, 1996

A SAMPLE FEATURE FILM BUDGET	
Title: Sample Feature Film	
Production company: AIP	
Above-the-line	
100 Screenplay	\$ 32,000
200 Producer	\$ 34,000
300 Director	\$ 25,000
400 Cast	\$110,000
	\$201,000
Below-the-line	
Production	
500 Production staff	\$ 41,400
600 Extras	\$ 12,000
700 Set operations	\$ 69,600
800 Sets	\$ 34,000
900 Props	\$ 21,200
1000 Costumes	\$ 13,800
1100 Makeup and hairdressing	\$ 14,000
1200 Production Equipment	\$ 42,000
1300 Locations/studio	\$ 25,600
1400 Laboratory & film	\$ 78,000
1500 Tests	\$ 500
1600 Production misc.	\$ 33,000
	\$385,600
Postproduction	
1700 Editing	\$ 92,000
1800 Sound	\$ 29,000
1900 Music	\$ 52,000
2000 Titles & opticals	\$ 10,000
2100 Laboratory	\$ 26,600
2200 Sound mix	\$ 23,600
	\$232,200
Other costs	
2300 Insurance	\$ 40,000
2400 Miscellaneous	\$ 50,200
	\$ 90,200
Total	\$909,000
10% Contingency	\$ 90,900
Grand total	\$999,900

Source: <http://victorian.fortunecity.com/cloisters/46/ch10.htm>

BUDGET - DETAIL	
100 Screenplay	
101 Story rights	
102 Writer, screenplay	\$ 31,000
103 Research and Travel	
104 Script copying	\$ 280
105 AWG registration	\$ 20
106 Script timing	\$ 700
	\$ 32,000
200 Producer	
201 Executive producer	
202 Producer	\$ 30,000
203 Associate producer	
204 Secretary	\$ 4,000
205 Assistants	
	\$ 34,000
300 Director	
301 Director	\$ 25,000
302 Dance director	
303 Secretary	
	\$ 25,000
400 Cast	
401 Lead players	\$ 70,000
402 Supporting players	\$ 30,000
403 Stunt persons	\$ 6,000
404 Looping allowance	\$ 4,000
	\$110,000
500 Production staff	
501 Production manager	\$ 17,000
502 First assistant director	\$ 8,000
503 2nd assistant director	\$ 4,000
504 Script Supervisor	\$ 5,600
505 Technical advisors	
506 Production assistants	\$ 2,400
507 Secretary	\$ 4,000
	\$ 41,400
600 Extras	
601 Extras	\$ 10,000
602 Stand-ins	
603 Stunt persons	\$ 2,000
	\$ 12,000
700 Set Operations	
701 Director of photography	\$ 9,600
702 Camera operator	
703 1st camera assistant	\$ 6,000
704 2nd camera assistant	\$ 4,000
705 Sound mixer	\$ 8,000
706 Boom operator	\$ 6,000
707 Gaffer	\$ 6,000
708 Best boy	\$ 4,000
709 Generator operator	

710 Electrician	\$ 4,000
711 Key grip	\$ 6,000
712 Set grips	\$ 12,000
713 Dolly grip	
714 Wranglers	
715 Still photographer	\$ 2,000
716 Special effects person	\$ 2,000
717 Welfare worker	
718 Guards	
	\$ 69,600
800 Sets	
801 Art director	\$ 8,000
802 Construction crew	\$ 16,000
803 Construction costs	\$ 10,000
	\$ 34,000
900 Props	
901 Property master	\$ 5,000
902 Assistant	\$ 3,200
903 Props purchase	\$ 4,000
904 Props rental	\$ 6,000
905 Props truck	\$ 3,000
	\$ 21,200
1000 Costumes	
1001 Wardrobe supervisor	\$ 5,000
1002 Assistant	\$ 3,200
1003 Wardrobe purchase	\$ 3,000
1004 Wardrobe rental	\$ 1,000
1005 Cleaning	\$ 1,400
1006 Misc. supplies	\$ 200
	\$ 13,800
1100 Makeup and hairdressing	
1101 Makeup person	\$ 8,000
1102 Hair stylist	\$ 6,000
1103 Assistants	
1104 Body makeup	
1105 Supplies purchase	
1106 Supplies rental	
	\$ 14,000
1200 Production Equipment	
1201 Camera package	\$ 22,000
1202 Sound package	\$ 4,000
1203 Lighting package	\$ 6,000
1204 Grip package	\$ 6,000
1205 Generator	
1206 Vehicles	\$ 4,000
1207 Miscellaneous	
	\$ 42,000
1300 Locations/studios	
1301 Location manager	\$ 8,000
1302 Location rental	\$ 11,000
1303 Permits	\$ 1,200
1304 Police and firemen	\$ 400

1305 Studio rental	\$ 2,000
1306 Studio personnel	\$ 1,600
1307 Dressing rooms	
1308 Portable rest rooms	\$ 2,000
	\$ 25,600
1400 Laboratory and film	
1401 Negative film stock	\$ 30,000
1402 Developing negative	\$ 16,000
1403 Daily printing	\$ 30,000
1404 Still film and printing	\$ 2,000
	\$ 78,000
1500 Tests	
1501 Makeup tests	\$ 1,000
1502 Screen tests	
	\$ 1,000
1600 Production miscellaneous	
1601 Animals	
1602 Telephone	\$ 4,000
1603 Catering	\$ 14,000
1604 Mileage	\$ 12,000
1605 Shipping	\$ 3,000
	\$ 33,000
1700 Editing	
1701 Editor	\$ 36,000
1702 Assistant editor	\$ 18,000
1703 Apprentice editor	\$ 8,000
1704 Editing facility rental	\$ 14,000
1705 Editing equip. rental	\$ 8,000
1706 Supplies purchase	\$ 1,600
1707 Coding	\$ 6,000
1708 Preview screenings	\$ 400
	\$ 92,000
1800 Postproduction Sound	
1801 Sound transfer	\$ 8,000
1802 Dialogue editing	\$ 6,000
1803 Looping costs	\$ 4,000
1804 Sound effects editor	\$ 6,000
1805 Sound effects costs	\$ 4,000
1806 Foley recording	\$ 1,000
	\$ 29,000
1900 Music	
1901 Composer	\$ 20,000
1902 Conductor	
1903 Musicians and singers	\$ 21,000
1904 Arranger	
1905 Copyist	\$ 2,000
1906 Recording facility	\$ 5,000
1907 Instrument rental	\$ 1,000
1908 Misc. supplies	\$ 1,000
1909 Music rights	
1910 Music editor	\$ 2,000
	\$ 52,000

2000 Titles and opticals	
2001 Main & end titles	\$ 8,000
2002 Optical effects	\$ 2,000
	\$ 10,000
2100 Laboratory	
2101 Black and white dupes	\$ 2,000
2102 Reprints	
2103 Stock footage	
2104 Optical sound track	\$ 600
2105 Answer print	\$ 16,000
2106 Misc. lab costs	\$ 2,000
2107 Negative cutting	\$ 5,000
	\$ 25,600
2200 Sound mix	
2201 Mixing facility	\$ 20,000
2202 3-stripe magnetic stock	\$ 1,600
2203 Optical transfer	\$ 1,000
2204 1/4" protection copy	\$ 400
2205 Special equipment rental	\$ 600
	\$ 23,600
2300 Insurance	
2301 Negative insurance	
2302 Errors and omissions	
2303 Workman's compensation	
2304 Cast insurance	
2305 Other allow	
	\$ 40,000
2400 Miscellaneous	
2401 Business license	\$ 1,200
2402 Accounting	\$ 6,000
2403 Legal	\$ 20,000
2404 Misc. supplies	\$ 5,000
2405 Office and phone	\$ 12,000
2406 Postage	\$ 1,000
2407 Promo	\$ 5,000
	\$ 50,200
Subtotal	\$909,000
10% Contingency	\$ 91,000
Completion bond	
Grand total	\$999,900

THE QUERY LETTER*

A Query Letter is an invitation for a producer/agent/director/actor to read your script. It should be no more than a page. An example:

Dear Mr Thalberg

Michael Eisner suggested I contact you about my new screenplay, LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL. It's a bittersweet drama about a Jewish man in 1943 Italy who tries to hide the horrors of the Nazi occupation from his young son by pretending it's all a big game. Although the historical events are sorrowful, the story is uplifting and even comedic.

My grandfather survived the Holocaust himself, and I wanted to bring to life some of the almost unbelievable stories he told me.

If you are interested in taking a look at the screenplay, please let me know. An SASE is enclosed for your reply. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours

* **Source** : suggestions from www.craftyscreenwriting.com

FINDING AGENTS, PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS, ACTORS

To have your screenplay read, you need to contact talent.

Online Trade Directories:

The Australian Film & TV Production Directory:
<http://www.filmtv.com.au/links.html>

FilmTVBiz.com is a free web database of talent contacts. Online registration is free, and you can contact the talent via anonymous email. (However it may soon charge a fee.)

Alternately,

The Australian Media Facilities Directory
<http://www.amfd.com.au>

Alternately, buy the *Encore Directory*, which is published annually. It costs approx \$110, and lists all Encore-registered talent (and their credits) in the industry.

It is published by:

REED BUSINESS INFORMATION Pty Ltd
Tower 2
475 Victoria Avenue
Chatswood NSW 2067

Tel: 02 9422 2999

RELEASE FORM

This is an example of a (American) release form. Some producers ask that you send a signed release form along with your script.

Note- It is not advised that you use this exact form in Australia.

Writers' Script Network suggests that you ensure your attorney looks over the release form and that you have fully read and understand it before signing and using it.

Writers' Script Network accepts no liability or responsibility should any disagreements or suits, with third parties, result from use of this release form.

RELEASE FORM

Date: _____

Writers' Name: _____

TO: _____

Following your request, I am submitting to you the following Script/s (referred to as "The Material") for your consideration:

TITLE: _____

Registration/copyright #: _____

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PLOT: (Log line) _____

I realize that you (and your staff) are in the production and/or management of material for motion picture, television and/or other media and, as such, are likewise engaged in the search for material and literary properties and the development of ideas, stories and suggestions for exploitation in any and all entertainment media which said production or management necessitates. Such material, ideas or suggestions may relate to format, theme, characterizations, treatments and/or means of exploiting a production based on such ideas and suggestions once completed. As a result, I recognize that you will not discuss, consider or read ideas, scripts, treatments, formats or the like submitted to you by persons not in your employ without first obtaining the agreement of the person submitting same to the provisions of this letter.

I hereby acknowledge and agree as follows:

I warrant that I am the sole owner and author of the above described material and that I have the full right and authorization to submit the material to you. I agree that any part of the submitted material which is not novel or original and not legally protected may be used by you without any liability on your part to me and that nothing herein shall place you in any different position with respect to such non-novel or non-original material by reason hereof.

You shall not be under any obligation to me with respect to the submitted material except as may later be set forth in a fully executed written agreement between us. I realize that you may have had access to and/or may have independently created or have had created ideas, themes, formats and/or other materials which may be similar to the theme, plot, idea, format or other element of the material now being submitted by me and I agree that I will not be entitled to any compensation by reason of the use by you of such similar material.

Sincerely, Signature:

Print Name: _____

Your Street Address: _____

Town/City: _____

State: _____

Postal/Zip Code: _____

Country: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax #: _____

Your Email Address: _____

Source: http://www.writerscriptnetwork.com/release_form.php

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This is an example of a (American) Non-Disclosure Agreement. Note- It is not advised that you use this exact form in Australia, it is simply an example of one. However you, as a screenwriter, may wish to have anyone to whom you give your script to, sign an NDA.

NDA

In connection with the presentation to me of certain facts and information by _____ (hereafter referred to as “_____”), regarding its various business activities and relating to my possible involvement with or connection to the above, I agree to abide by the following terms and conditions:

1. In consideration for being provided with certain facts, information, plans, products, customer lists and records, technology and technical information, methods, processes, products, inventions, product design information, cost and pricing information, computer programs and listings, source code, object code, marketing techniques, trade secrets, copyrights, other intellectual property, creative ideas and/or proprietary information (hereafter collectively referred to as “Confidential Information”), and having the opportunity to consider participation in the business activities of _____, I hereby agree to refrain from disclosing in any manner, to anyone, any and all Confidential Information that is provided to me, except with the express written consent of _____.
2. All Confidential Information and other items furnished to me by _____ will be considered confidential and proprietary. I shall not duplicate or copy any Confidential Information, written materials, artwork, designs, prototypes, equipment, audio materials, or video materials that have been given to me by _____. Upon the request of _____, I agree to immediately return any Confidential Information, written materials, artwork, designs, prototypes, equipment, audio materials or video materials that have been given to me, or that are otherwise in my possession or control, as a result of my involvement and communication with _____.
3. I acknowledge that _____ or its designee is the owner and copyright holder of all Confidential Information, written materials, artwork, audio materials and video materials given to me. I understand that any use in any manner of such Confidential Information or other materials by me without the express written consent of _____ is a violation of federal copyright law, and will subject me to applicable penalties and legal remedies.
4. If it appears that I have disclosed (or have threatened to disclose) any Confidential Information, _____ shall be entitled to an injunction to restrain me from disclosing, in any manner, any Confidential Information. _____ shall also have the right to pursue any and all other legal remedies available in this Agreement or otherwise by law, in the case of any violation of any provision of this Agreement by me.

5. I acknowledge that should I violate any of the terms of this Agreement, _____ may commence legal action against me for breach of contract and/or copyright infringement. Along with monetary damages, _____ shall be entitled to injunctive relief or the specific enforcement of this agreement, in addition to any other legal remedies available at law. I agree to pay all of _____'s court costs, expenses and attorney's fees incurred in pursuing any legal action against me.

6. I agree that all of my employees and agents shall be bound by all of the terms of this Agreement. I shall not disclose any information covered by this Agreement to any of my employees or agents without the prior written consent of _____, and unless such employee or agent has first signed a copy of this Agreement.

7. I acknowledge that neither I nor _____ have any obligation under this Agreement to use any Confidential Information in any manner, or to purchase any service or product or item from each other, or to offer third parties any services, products or items which incorporate any Confidential Information. I further acknowledge that this Agreement does not create any agency, partnership or joint venture between _____ and myself, or _____ and any other person, firm or entity.

8. The interpretation and enforcement of this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the state of Washington. The venue for any legal proceedings involving this Agreement shall be in the courts of Snohomish County, Washington. I hereby agree to be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of Snohomish County, Washington, for the purposes of any legal proceedings involving this Agreement.

9. This Agreement shall not be assignable by me. I shall not be permitted to delegate any of my duties, responsibilities or obligations under this Agreement, except with the prior written consent of _____. This Agreement shall remain in full force and effect until revoked in writing by _____.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Company:

By _____
 [Your signature]

Signature:

Print Name:

Address:

Source: <http://www.holytoledo.com/Templates/NDA.doc>

And finally, all the very best with your screenplay.

j.t. velikovsky

screenwriter

www.joeteevee.com

And remember: "Success is just moving from failure to failure
without losing enthusiasm"

Winston Churchill

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the books and web sites referenced herein.

Now, WRITE!