

SCREENPLAY FORMAT

Some general rules:

1 ½ inch left margin

1 inch right margin

Capitalize the names of characters when they *first* appear in the narrative and each time they speak.

Capitalize sounds, special effects, and specialized props. (This assists a production manager in analyzing and budgeting the script.)

Center the capitalized name of the person speaking.

Indent dialogue under the centered name.

Most new scenes begin with a capitalized, three-part header which identifies:

EXT. or INT. LOCATION DAY or NIGHT

Commonly-used Abbreviations:

Ext.	Exterior
Int.	Interior
CU	Close up
MS	Medium Shot
LS	Long Shot
POV	Point of View

WSU's Ablah Library and the downtown branch of the City Library have several film scripts which can be checked out.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

INT. WAREHOUSE NIGHT

MARY, a psychic, is sitting at a small table, in a dimly lit room, sorting TAROT CARDS. TODD approaches the table, from the darkness.

MARY

(not looking up)

Back so soon?

TODD

(sitting in the chair, opposite Mary)

She's going to stay in the truck, so we'll need to make this quick.

MARY

You've already paid. It's all the same to me.

(sweeps up the cards)

Let's forget the cards then and go a different direction.

TODD

Okay. Whatever works.

Mary places two long, silver NAILS in the center of the table, at a right angle to each other. We hear a truck door SLAM in the parking lot.

MARY

You and Teresa are in great conflict.

TODD

I don't guess that observation takes any supernatural powers.

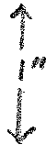
MARY

What you don't recognize is that people—some you've known, some not—are gathering to impact your relationship.

TODD

What people? How many?

Mary places several nails in a circle around the two that represent Todd and Teresa. In the background we see people emerging from the dark, to encircle Mary and Todd.



EXT. PARK SLOPE BROWNSTONE - DAY

It's spring and the trees are full of blossoms.

← 1 1/2" → INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CARA, 8, and her sister ALLIE, 4, sit on the sofa. Cara's ← 1 1/2" → reading to Allie from a book about fairies of the world.

← 3 1/2" → CARA
Caer is a beautiful fairy who
disguises herself as a swan. You
will know a swan is Caer if it has
← 2 1/2" → gold jewelry. Caer comes from Ear-
land. It's in Delaware.

ALLIE
Oh. Read about the pixies.

Cara throws the book on the floor.

CARA
I read you the pixies yesterday!
I'm sick of pixies! Anyway, pixies
are stupid! So are fairies!
They're for little girls!

ALLIE
I'm a big girl.

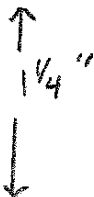
CARA
No you're not, you're a little girl
and you're stupid.

ALLIE
No I'm not!

← 3" → CARA
(imitating her)
No I'm not!

MOMMY (O.S.)
Girls! Cara, stop being mean to
your sister! I can't stand it
anymore!

CARA
I'm not reading your dumb, stupid,
stupid-head book anymore! I'm
gonna play with my Cool American
Teenager dolls!



ALLIE
I wanna play with the Cool American
Teenager dolls too.

CARA
You can't! You're too little and
stupid!

INT. APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

DADDY, late 30s, is playing Solitaire on his computer.
MOMMY, late 30s, pops her head in. He immediately switches
his screen to A WORD PROCESSOR ...in which is a mangled
attempt at a screenplay. The format's a mess. He types,
tabs, deletes, indents with the spacebar, backspaces -- and
it still doesn't look right.

MOMMY
Time to take the girls to the park.

DADDY
I'm writing.

MOMMY
No, you were writing...now you're
taking the girls to the park.

DADDY
Now I'm taking the girls to the
park, right.

He frowns and gets up.

MOMMY
Just keep one at one end of the
park and the other at the other and
they'll be fine.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - DAY

Daddy, Cara and Allie turn a corner and walk to the park
entrance. Cara pirouettes and leaps, her version of ballet
dancing. Allie tries too and stumbles to the ground. Cara
laughs. Daddy helps Allie up and shoots Cara a look, which
she ignores.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - THE LAKE - DAY

Daddy's laying on picnic blanket and pecking away at a
laptop.

Here is an excerpt of a script which contains most of the basic script elements:

SCENE
HEADING — EXT. STUDIO PARKING LOT - DAY

ACTION — A WRITER and an AGENT are walking from the parking lot towards an office.

CHARACTER — AGENT

PARENTHETICAL — (whispers)

DIALOGUE — Just follow my lead. I know
you're ready to do this pitch.

TRANSITION — DISSOLVE TO:

The parts of a scene heading are:

SCENE INTRO EXT. STUDIO PARKING LOT - DAY
LOCATION
TIME

A character extension is used when appropriate:

CHARACTER EXTEN. —

CHARACTER — NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Grand Canyon is one of the jewels
of our National Park System.

For a complete discussion of elements, see the Elements section.