

# Basic Script Formatting

## MOVIE FORMAT

There are three bodies of a script: Headings, Narrative and Dialogue. Each of these has three points to remember.

### Headings:

1. Master scene headings which include:
  - a) Camera location - EXT. (exterior or outside) or INT. (interior or inside)
  - b) Scene location (LOCAL RACE TRACK)
  - c) Time (DAY or NIGHT)
2. Secondary scene heading
3. "Special headings" for things such as montages, dream sequences, flashbacks, flash forwards, etc.

### Narrative Description:

1. Action
2. Character and settings (visual)
3. Sounds

### Dialogue:

1. The name of the person speaking appears at the top, in CAPS.
2. The actors direction (AKA parenthetical or wryly). Try to avoid these as much as possible. Both the director and actor will appreciate it.
3. The speech.

Putting all this together you should come up with something that looks like this:

```
INT. BARRY'S BAR - NIGHT

Beer stains the shirt of CLINT BILLINGTON.

                CLINT BILLINGTON
                (Drunkenly concerned)
                My wife will kill me if she sees
                this!

CLINT reaches for a cloth and topples off his stool.
```

**Fade In**  
The very first item on the first page should be these words

**Scene Heading**  
A one line description of the location and time of day of a scene

**Character's First Appearance**  
A description of the character, name should be CAPPED

**Character**  
A character's name always appears above his dialogue

**Subheader**  
For when a full scene heading is not necessary

**Mores and Continueds:**  
Use mores and continueds between pages to indicate the same character is still speaking.

**Intercut:**  
Instructions for a series of quick cuts between two scene locations

FADE IN:

EXT. WRITERS STORE - DAY

In the heart of West Los Angeles, a boutique shop's large OPEN sign glows like a beacon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WRITERS STORE - SALES FLOOR - DAY

Writers browse the many scripts in the screenplay section.

ANTHONY, Canadian-Italian Story Specialist extraordinaire, 30s and not getting any younger, ambles over.

ANTHONY  
hey, how's everyone doin' here?  
A WRITING ENTHUSIAST, 45, reads the first page of "The Aviator" by John Logan.

ENTHUSIAST  
Can John Logan write a killer first page or what?

ANTHONY  
You, sir, are a gentleman of refined taste. John Logan is my non-Canadian idol.

The phone RINGS. Anthony goes to--

THE SALES COUNTER

And answers the phone.

ANTHONY  
Writers Store, Anthony speaking.

VOICE  
(over phone)  
Do you have "Chinatown" in stock?

I/E LUXURIOUS MALIBU MANSION - DAY

A FIGURE roams his estate, cell phone pressed to his ear.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
'Course we have "Chinatown"! Robert Towne's masterpiece is arguably the Great American Screenplay...  
(MORE)

ANTHONY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I mean, that or "Shawshank Redemption" or "Network" or "American Beauty"... Yes, we do have "Chinatown".

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

FIGURE  
That is such great news. I've been

**Action**  
The narrative description of the events of a scene

**Transition**  
Film editing instructions

**Dialogue**  
Lines of speech for each character

**Parenthetical**  
Action or attitude direction for a character

**Extension**  
A note placed after the character's name to indicate how the voice will be heard onscreen

**Page Number**  
Located 0.5" from the top, flush right

2.

**TV NEWS FORMAT**

SLUG:  
 WRITER:  
 Date:

TRT:

VIDEO	AUDIO
<p><b>ANCHOR:</b> Anchor lead-in</p> <p><b>TAKE PACKAGE</b></p> <p><i>...remember to begin with an establishing shot—and/or—your very best shot!</i></p> <p><i>...here you will list all the shots you have used in your story...</i></p> <p><i>...shots are ELS, LS, MS, CU, ECU,</i></p> <p><b>TAKE SOT</b> &lt;&lt;if you have a soundbite in your package&gt;&gt;</p> <p><b>CG:</b> Name and title of soundbite subject</p> <p><i>List of shots continues</i></p> <p><b>ANCHOR:</b> Anchor tag</p>	<p>&lt;&lt;a lead into your package that is read by the anchor—should be no more than a couple of sentences and should introduce you as the reporter&gt;&gt;</p> <p>&lt;&lt;script for your package—should be written in the same conversational style as radio writing. TV scripts are usually written in all caps. Make sure you pictures match your script... Remember, you lead should be strong... remember you need to bring the soundbite to the viewer... give us a reason to want to hear this person &gt;&gt;</p> <p>-----<b>S O U N D B I T E</b>-----</p> <p>&lt;&lt;full text of the soundbite</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....&gt;&gt;</p> <p>-----<b>S O U N D B I T E O U T</b>-----</p> <p>&lt;&lt; script continues&gt;&gt;</p> <p><i>(standard outcue)</i></p> <p>THIS IS _____ WITH    PRODUCER _____    REPORTING FOR [insert name of station].</p> <p>&lt;&lt;a short tag the anchor reads that adds something else to your story&gt;&gt;</p>