Purposed Productions

"Producing On Purpose"

Screenwriting Tips

Reference: https://www.storysense.com/

- A well-written script creates in the mind of the reader the experience of watching a movie. To that end, you must describe images, sounds, actions, and speech in such a way that the scenes unspool as they would on a screen.
- Employ props and clothing to give us visual clues, or reveal a character's identity subtly in dialogue. Don't editorialize by using adjectives or adverbs that express a personal reaction, such as "hideous," "amazing," or "incredible."
- Give them some business that indicates their personality or attitude. Open each scene with them already engaged in some action that relates to the story.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Washington, D.C. 1889"

- Do not abbreviate "SUPERIMPOSE" as "SUPER." Do not place the legend above the scene heading or immediately below the scene heading, but within the scene itself. In other words, it should come after at least one sentence of description. The term "TITLE:" would be incorrect. Titles appear only at the beginning of a movie. The term "TITLE CARD:" designates a separate graphic element, a card that is not superimposed over the scene. Title cards were common in silent films, but are seldom used today.

Refrain from using ALL CAPS just for emphasis. There are just three situations when it's permissible to use ALL CAPS in description:
1. When introducing a character,
2. To denote camera direction, and
3. To draw attention to sound effects. The main reason for using ALL CAPS is to aid the production manager in breaking down the script.
   - When indicating a sound effect, only one word should appear in ALL CAPS. For example, you might write "the SOUND of silverware hitting the floor" or "the sound of silverware HITTING the floor."

Text That Is Visible Onscreen
- Newspaper headlines, words on a sign, or on a computer monitor, should be set off in quotes.
- Song titles in the description should also be enclosed in quotes.

- Titles of books and publications should be <u>underscored</u> when they appear in the description.

One mark of a mediocre script is that the characters confide what's on their minds or in their hearts. If your characters keep their true thoughts and feelings hidden, your story will have greater tension and emotional resonance.

- Never use an anonymous character cue such as "MAN'S VOICE." Instead, identify the character by name, even if the speech originates off-screen from a character who has not yet appeared. In some situations, this may spoil the surprise, but all speeches must be assigned to an actor.

- If one character interrupts another, then end the first character's speech with an M-dash (a space followed by two hyphens), not with a period. Do not add an M-dash to the start of the second character's speech. If the first character's speech trails off, then end that speech with an ellipsis. If the second character finishes the first character's sentence, then start the second character's speech with an ellipsis.

- An initialism such as F.B.I. would be presented in dialogue as F – B – I, omitting the periods and using a hyphen flanked by spaces to separate each letter. This makes it clear that each letter should be spoken. Do not add hyphens in an acronym like NASA, which is pronounced as a word.

- Never use ALL CAPS, **bold**, or *italics* in dialogue. Instead, <u>underscore</u> the word or phrase you wish to emphasize.

- There is no standard way to indicate some passage of dialogue is in a foreign language. However, the most common way is to write the lines in English and enclose them in square brackets. When the first speech in a foreign language appears in the script, it's generally accompanied by a note in parentheses:

- Personal direction should be short, no more than a few words, and not a complete sentence. As such, it should not have the first word capitalized (unless it's a proper name), nor should it end in a period. If the direction is long enough to merit a complete sentence, then it should appear as an action element.

- Song lyrics in dialogue should appear in quotes under the personal direction "(sings)."

Flashback Scenes in Screenplays

- The proper technique for taking us into a flashback sequence is to insert the line "BEGIN FLASHBACK:" (in ALL CAPS and without the quotes) formatted as an action element. There should be only one blank line between this and the heading of the first scene of the flashback:

- If you use flashbacks, **make certain they are motivated**. Lead into the flashback by focusing on the character who is experiencing it, and then return to that same character after the flashback. The events may not be as significant as how the character feels about them. Consequently, it is essential that we see the character's reaction.

- Each scene in a flashback must have its own heading, even if it occurs in the same location as the character who is experiencing the flashback.

- Another action line takes us out of the flashback with the words "END FLASHBACK." (The period should be included.) It would be incorrect to insert the slug line "BACK TO SCENE" because the flashback is the scene. We must instead follow the flashback with a new scene heading, even if we are returning to the same place we were prior to the flashback (which usually is the case):

- If the flashback consists of only one scene, it's acceptable to simply write "(FLASHBACK)" as the last part of the scene heading:

- No parenthesis around the age of the character on introductions + follow by a comma