

Storytelling - Narrative structures

SCREENWRITING

Topic 3



What precedes screenwriting

Development of the film or TV show does not start with writing the screenplay.

At the early stage, an author writes a **short summary** (several paragraphs) followed by a **synopsis**, which is a bit extended summary describing the core of the story, main plot points, and main characters.

The last stage before screenwriting is elaboration of a **treatment** and **step outline** (it already divides the story into scenes which are described in details).



Log line

Log line, or logline, is a very short summary (usually just one sentence) of a media piece.

Log lines have clearly given structure:

Inciting incident – beginning of the storyline

Protagonist – in rather abstract terms, main character is not mentioned

Action – what the protagonist does, what is the most important event

Antagonist – whom or what the protagonist faces



Screenplay

Screenplay or script is a written work that represents a story to be later turned into a film, television programme, or a game. Nowadays, scripts are also used to plan interactive exhibitions in museums or events where engagement of an audience is an important element. It can be an original work or adaptation from existing works, for example books.



Screenplay

Spec script (or speculative script) is unsolicited and meant to be sold on the open market. It's used by beginners in the field who want to prove their talent or by any other screenwriters who just try to sell their work to producers.

Commissioned script is written by authors who were hired by producers.

Shooting script is used during the production. Scenes and even the shots are assigned numbers.



Screenplay

Format of a screenplay

There is no standard format of the screenplay and requirements of studios, TV stations, or producers may slightly differ. However, there are two general typographical formats of so called **studio scripts**.

A) **Two columns** – descriptions of the scenes are on the left, dialogues are on the right.

B) **Continuous text** – descriptions of the scenes and dialogues are arranged one after another, but are aligned differently.

In this format, text is always written in **12 point and 10 pitch Courier**.



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

Each scene has a **slug line**, which is basically a heading. It contains the following information: whether the scene is **inside (INT.)** or **outside (EXT.)**, location, and time of the day.

Characters' names are written in all caps, e.g. JOHN.

They can speak in front of a camera, but their voices can also be heard when they are out of a camera range. In that case, they speak Off-screen which is indicated as follows:

MARY (O.S.)

When a narrator is meant to be heard, abbreviation for Voice Over is used:

MARY (V.O.)



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

When the scene ends, **transition or cut** can be indicated by one of the following:

CUT TO:
TIME CUT:
JUMP CUT:
QUICK CUT:
SMASH CUT:
MATCH CUT:
DISSOLVE TO:
FADE TO:
WIPE TO:



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

When it is needed to cut back and forth between scenes, which are happening at the same time (e.g. when two characters are on the phone), it's not necessary to repeat the scene heading, but the **INTERCUT** can be used instead.



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

A **shot** indicates that the focal point is changed within one scene. Hence it indicates cuts within one scene. A few examples are:

ANGLE ON = shot takes place in the same location as the previous one, but shows some details (e.g. landscape and one part of it)

CLOSE ON = similar to the previous one, but showing a close up of a subject (e.g. one flower)

PAN TO = camera moves horizontally across the scene

TILT TO = camera moves vertically

POV = point of view of the character

REVERSE ANGLE = it is used to film and edit conversation: reverse angle is seen when the second speaker is on the camera



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

Sizes of shots are also indicated in screenplays. Shots can be categorised by the field size (how much of the environment or the subject is visible, figure is also used to describe the scale) or camera placement (angle of the camera). For example:

EXTREME CLOSE UP = for example an eye or chin

LONG SHOT = whole environment

LOW-ANGLE SHOT = camera is placed low on the vertical axis and is looking up

HIGH-ANGLE SHOT = camera is placed high on the vertical axis and is looking down



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

Superimpose or Title

It is used to indicate that text or an image will be placed on the screen to deliver important information. It is not used to indicate subtitles.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Description

SUPERIMPOSE: Trnava city, Summer 2021



Terms and abbreviations used in screenplays

MONTAGE – series of scenes which are related but take place in various locations

SERIES OF SHOTS – series of scenes usually taking place in one location and concerning the same action

INSERT – it's used to indicate focus on something important in the scene, which is too small and could not be seen otherwise: **INSERT – PIECE OF PAPER**

Adlib – they are used in crowd scenes, when more people talk at the same time. For example: **The CROWD shouts: "You cannot do that" "It's not right!"**