

THE SCREENWRITING SERIES • FREE COMPANION

HOW TO WRITE YOUR FIRST GOOD SCREENPLAY

A complete roadmap of all eleven chapters, one page each.

WHAT'S INSIDE EACH CHAPTER

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Each chapter exists as a short guide and a deep dive on its own, with worked examples drawn from real produced films. This roadmap gives you the shape of the whole method before you pick where to start.

PRESENTED BY PAUL DECU • SCREENWRITER AND DIRECTOR

01

CHAPTER 1 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

WHERE SCREENPLAY IDEAS COME FROM

Most writers wait for inspiration, then blame themselves when it doesn't arrive.

IN THIS CHAPTER

There are eight repeatable sources of ideas, not one mystical spark. This chapter separates a concept from a workable premise, and gives a five-test system for checking whether an idea can actually carry a full screenplay before you commit months to it.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can name where your idea came from, on purpose
- ✓ You can state your premise in one clean sentence
- ✓ Your idea survives all five premise tests
- ✓ You know the one mistake that kills most first drafts before page ten

02

CHAPTER 2 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

BUILDING THE WORLD AND THE PEOPLE INSIDE IT

Writers confuse setting with world, and character with characterisation, then wonder why nothing feels alive.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Eight decisions build a story that feels lived in: four that build the world (coordinates, rules, scarcity, hierarchy) and four that build a person (contradiction, want versus need, function, behaviour under pressure). Comes with a one page character sheet and a checklist for before you outline.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can tell your world's rules from its setting
- ✓ Every main character has a stated want and a different need
- ✓ You've filled a one page sheet for your protagonist
- ✓ You know what a character does under pressure, not just what they say

03

CHAPTER 3 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

THE STRUCTURE OF A SCREENPLAY

Writers know the three act shape by name, but not what actually has to happen at each turn.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Structure is not a template to fill in, it's a set of pressure points that force a story forward. This chapter maps what a real turning point does to a protagonist, why the midpoint is not just 'the middle', and how to test a structure before writing a single scene.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can name your story's real turning points, not just guess their page numbers
- ✓ You know what changes for your protagonist at the midpoint
- ✓ Your ending is set up by page one, not invented in act three
- ✓ You can defend why each act ends where it ends

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CHAPTER 4 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

WORKING IN BEATS AND SEQUENCES WITH CARDS

Writers jump straight into pages and get lost by scene forty, with no way to see the shape of the whole.

IN THIS CHAPTER

A card based method for planning a screenplay beat by beat and sequence by sequence, before a single line of dialogue is written. This is the tool that lets you rearrange, cut, and test a whole story in an afternoon instead of a rewrite.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can lay out your whole story as a set of cards
- ✓ Every sequence has a clear job in the story
- ✓ You can spot a sagging middle before it's fifty pages of dialogue
- ✓ You know which beats are load bearing and which can go

05

CHAPTER 5 OF 11 THE SCREENWRITING SERIES

Roadmap

FORMATTING A SCREENPLAY

Bad formatting reads as amateur before a reader gets to your first good idea.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The formatting rules that actually matter for a professional screenplay: sluglines, action lines, dialogue blocks, transitions, and the handful of habits that separate a script that reads fast from one that fights the reader on every page.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ Your sluglines are consistent and correctly placed
- ✓ Your action lines are lean, present tense, and visual
- ✓ Your page count sits in the right range for your genre
- ✓ A stranger could read ten pages without a formatting question

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CHAPTER 6 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

WRITING DIALOGUE THAT SOUNDS REAL

Dialogue on the page often sounds like people explaining themselves, not people talking.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Real dialogue is not real speech, it's a compression of it. This chapter covers subtext, what characters want in a scene versus what they say, how to cut the fat from a line, and how to give each character a voice that doesn't sound like the writer.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can cut a line of dialogue in half without losing meaning
- ✓ Your characters rarely say exactly what they want
- ✓ You can tell your characters apart with the names covered
- ✓ You know the difference between subtext and vagueness

07

CHAPTER 7 OF 11 THE SCREENWRITING SERIES

Roadmap

FROM OUTLINE TO SCREENPLAY

The gap between a solid outline and an actual finished draft is where most scripts die.

IN THIS CHAPTER

A method for turning cards and beats into real pages without losing momentum, including how to handle scenes you're not sure about yet, how to keep a first draft moving instead of perfecting it, and when to stop and go back to the outline.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You have a daily or weekly method for turning beats into pages
- ✓ You know when to keep writing forward instead of fixing backward
- ✓ You can finish a scene you're unsure about and move on
- ✓ You have a finished first draft, not an endless act one

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CHAPTER 8 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
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Roadmap

GENRE DIFFERENCES

The same structure lesson doesn't apply the same way to a thriller, a drama, and a comedy.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What actually changes by genre: pacing, the contract you make with the audience in the first ten pages, which conventions you can break and which will lose the reader, and how tone shapes every other choice in the script.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can name your genre's core promise to the audience
- ✓ You know which genre conventions you're using and which you're breaking, on purpose
- ✓ Your pacing matches what your genre trains readers to expect
- ✓ You can point to where tone is set in your first ten pages

Roadmap

WHAT SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T BE IN A SCREENPLAY

Writers put in what happened in their head and leave out what a reader actually needs on the page.

IN THIS CHAPTER

A screenplay is not a novel and not a shot list. This chapter draws the line on what belongs on the page, camera direction, interior thought, excess description, and what a script needs instead to read like something ready to be shot.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You've removed camera directions that aren't yours to give
- ✓ You've cut interior thoughts that can't be shown
- ✓ Every scene earns its place, or it's gone
- ✓ A director could read your script and see the film

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CHAPTER 10 OF 11
THE SCREENWRITING
SERIES

Roadmap

READING A SCREENPLAY AND GIVING FEEDBACK

Most feedback, given and received, is either too vague to use or too personal to trust.

IN THIS CHAPTER

A method for reading a screenplay properly, for your own drafts and for other people's, and for giving feedback that actually changes pages instead of just opinions. Includes how to separate a craft problem from a taste problem.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can read a script once for story before judging any line
- ✓ You can separate a craft issue from a personal taste issue
- ✓ Your feedback points at a fix, not just a complaint
- ✓ You know what kind of note to give and when to give it

Roadmap

MOVING FROM ONE DRAFT TO
THE NEXT

Writers either rewrite everything every time or refuse to touch what isn't working.

IN THIS CHAPTER

A structured approach to revision: how to diagnose what a draft actually needs, in what order to fix structural problems versus line problems, and how to know when a draft is done rather than just abandoned.

YOU'VE GOT IT IF

- ✓ You can diagnose your draft's real problem before rewriting a single scene
- ✓ You fix structure before you polish dialogue
- ✓ You have a clear order of operations for your next pass
- ✓ You can tell the difference between 'done' and 'given up on'