

SCREENPLAY REMINDERS

- **SCENE HEADINGS (SLUGLINES)**

- Indicates a NEW scenes and/or a change in LOCATION and/or TIME
- Must be formatted as follows:
 - EXT / INT – LOCATION – TIME
 - EXT / INT
 - EXT = Exterior (outside, outside looking inside, etc.)
 - INT = Interior (inside a house, car, plane, etc.)
 - LOCATION
 - Provide details to help visualize
 - TIME
 - Can be general or specific
 - Smart to reference the previous scene
 - TWO HOURS LATER
 - CONTINUOUS
 - LATER THAT DAY

- **SCENE DESCRIPTION (ACTION)**

- The “meat” of a script where all the visual elements of a script are described.
- Must be written in the PRESENT TENSE at all times.
 - CORRECT – Bill pulls a cigar from his pocket, places it to his lips and takes a long drag.
 - INCORRECT – Bill took a cigar from his pocket and will take a long drag.
- Generally speaking, a screenplay should be approximately 60% action / 40% dialogue.
- Action / Descriptions should be scattered throughout the entire script
 - Avoid packing all the action at the start of a scene and running dialogue the rest of the way
- When a NEW character is introduced in the action for the first time, their name MUST be in ALL CAPS

- **CHARACTER NAMES**

- When a NEW character is introduced in the action for the first time, their name MUST be in ALL CAPS.
- After the character is introduced the first time in action, their name appears in regular case.

- **DIALOGUE**

- While dialogue is VERY important, a screenplay CANNOT be straight dialogue...
- You must remember to VISUALIZE your characters, setting and story.
- Dialogue MUST have proper grammar and punctuation.

- **PARENTHETICALS**

- Parentheticals should be used sparingly...
- Parentheticals represent action that is directly tied to what a character is saying
 - Avoid adding parentheticals that can be action / scene description instead

VISUALIZATION

Remember, screenplays are essentially films (not novels). Therefore, you MUST remember to visualize the setting, the characters, the emotions. You cannot simply write “Susie thought to herself...” because there is nothing to visualize here. Instead, consider what emotion Susie is feeling and figure out a way to SHOW that emotion. If Susie is sad, perhaps she put her face in her hands. If Susie is anxious, perhaps she paces frantically while chewing on her fingernails.

A screenwriter must remember to SHOW, not just tell...