

SCREENPLAY FORMATTING ESSENTIALS

BASIC SETUP

- **Font:** Courier or Courier New, 12-point only
- **Margins:** 1" top and bottom, 1" left, 1" right (dialogue margins vary)
- **Page Numbers:** Top right corner, 0.5" from top. No number on page 1
- **Paper:** Standard 8.5" x 11" white, printed single-sided

SCENE HEADINGS (Slug Lines)

- Format: **INT./EXT. LOCATION - TIME OF DAY** (all CAPS)
- Examples: INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY | EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT
- Always followed by a blank line before action

ACTION / DESCRIPTION

- Left margin at 1.5", runs to right margin
- Single-spaced, present tense, active voice
- Character names in CAPS when first introduced
- Keep paragraphs short (3-4 lines maximum for readability)
- No camera directions unless absolutely essential

CHARACTER NAMES & DIALOGUE

- **Character name:** ALL CAPS, centered at 3.7" from left
- **Dialogue:** Begins at 2.5" from left, ends at 6" from left
- **Parentheticals:** (brief action/tone) - centered under character name, lowercase except proper nouns
- Leave one blank line before character name, no line after

DIALOGUE EXTENSION & TRANSITIONS

- **(CONT'D)** - Use when dialogue continues after action
- **(V.O.)** - Voice-over narration | **(O.S.)** - Off-screen, in scene but not visible
- **Transitions:** Right-aligned at 6", all CAPS (CUT TO:, FADE TO:, DISSOLVE TO:)
- Modern scripts rarely use transitions - use sparingly

TITLE PAGE

- Title: Centered, ALL CAPS, about 1/3 down the page
- "Written by" - centered, two lines below title
- Author name: Centered, one line below "Written by"
- Contact info: Bottom left corner (or agent/manager info if represented)

GENERAL RULES

- **Page length:** 1 page ≈ 1 minute of screen time
- **Never:** Use bold, italics, or underline (except for emphasis in dialogue, sparingly)
- **Three-hole punch:** Use only two brads (top and bottom holes)
- **Spell out numbers:** One through ninety-nine (100+ as numerals)
- **Industry standard length:** 90-120 pages (features), 50-60 pages (TV hour), 25-35 pages (TV half-hour)

For comprehensive formatting guidance, we recommend:

The Hollywood Standard: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Script Format and Style by Christopher Riley