

#1 Elements of a Screenplay

The main elements of a screenplay are:

1. Scene Slug (Scene heading)
2. Action (Scene description)
3. Character Slug
4. Dialogue
5. Parenthetical
6. Extentions
7. Transition (Optical Direction)
8. Shot

Aside from following and using the main elements of a screenplay, there are also specific margin usage, position and font case attributes that make a screenplay's format to allow the consistency that had come to be expected by both writers and readers. They are described in the following sections.

#2 Basic Formatting

Font Type Face:

The entire screenplay should be printed in 12-point Courier, or Courier New. Use only this font throughout, do not use bold or italics. (*Courier is used here)

If you are using a typewriter, use the following fonts:

-10-cpi Courier (electric typewriters)

-12-point "Pica" (manual typewriters)

Margins:

Left Margin: 1.5 inches

Right Margin: 1.25 inches

Top Margin 1 inches

Bottom Margin: 1 inches

Tabs:

Dialogue 1 inch (both sides)

Parentheticals 1.75 inches

Character Slugs 3.5 inches, or centered justified

Optical Directions right justified

Use your ruler line to set your tabs. These measurements begin at the left margin, not from the edge of your page.

Spacing:

Single space throughout; but double space between scenes.

Justification:

Only use left justification. Except for your optical directions, which are right justified. Or, if you choose to centered justified your character slugs.

Never use full justification.

Caps:

All scene slugs, character slugs, and optical directions (transitions) should be capitalized.

Each time a speaking character is first introduced (in the scene description), their name should be capitalized.

Sound or sound effects that are to be heard on screen are to be capitalized.

If lyrics are copied onto the script, they need to be capitalized.

Page Numbering:

Place page numbers on upper right hand corner and follow by a period. Copy page and page one need not be numbered.

Spelling and Grammar:

Use proper spelling and grammar. Dialogue can be written in slang.

Sides:

Single side your entire screenplay.

Paper:

Use standard weight (20 lbs) three holed punched 8.5 inches by 11 inches paper. Use either black or white covers only. Do not put anything on the front or back cover.

Binding:

Use #5 or #6 brads through the top and bottom holes of the three-holed punch. Never put a brad through the middle.

Length:

Aim between 90 to 120 pages for feature scripts. Try not to exceed 130 pages. Ideally, 1 page of script count will translate to approximately 1 minute on screen.

See the following example:

JACK
I don't think this is such a smart
idea after all..

Dan
Why not?

JACK
Because the car will blow up!

CUT TO:

#3 Scene Slugs (Scene Headings):

1. Define the scene. Each location requires a separate scene slug – whenever you cut to a new location, a new scene slug needs to be inserted.
2. Do not number your scenes, or at the very least, only number your last draft. The draft that is ready to be broken down.
3. A scene slug is always follow by at least one line of description of the upcoming scene.
4. Do not leave a slug “floating” at the bottom of a page. Begin with the scene slug on the next page instead.
5. The three parts of a scene slug are:
 1. the location type, interior (INT.) or exterior (EXT.)
 2. the description (JACK’S APARTMENT)
 3. the time of the day, use a hyphenation (-) before putting the time of day (DAY or NIGHT are the standards, but you can also specify more specific time such as: DAWN, MORNING, DUSK etc)

See the following example:

INT. JACK’S APARTMENT – DAY

An empty apartment except for a twin sized bed in the middle of the living room.

Some more tips:

When shooting vehicle (cars, trains, boats) scenes, it is an INT. if you are inside the vehicle; an EXT. if you are outside.

However, even if you are inside the vehicle, if the vehicle is on the road, it will then be considered an EXT.; and INT. if you are inside an indoor garage.

If the sun can reach your characters directly, it will likely be an EXT.