

Tips for Writing Scripts

If you've never written a play, you're like most people. Keep in mind that:

Plays are about **desire**. We witness a journey in which characters discover what they desire, try to get it, and succeed or fail. A play works when the desire is universal health, love, comfort, independence - and the obstacles are difficult to overcome.

Effective plays **show us** a story through dialogue and dramatic action. Prose tells us a story through narration. If you let us watch your characters interact at key moments, you won't need a narrator.

Plays are about **people in relationships**. We stay glued to our seats because events in the play cause the people, and their relationships, to change. Skip the car chases, physical violence and special effects; film does these better.

Create characters you can understand and care about. Find something to love or respect in every character, and we'll care about your characters too. Since each should be well developed, use as few characters as possible. Make each character essential to your story.

Plays come from experience, imagination, and knowledge. You've got all three. Mix them together and **write about what you know**, deep inside. Plays that work, regardless of their genre, style, or structure, give us a sense of truth.

To start planning, ask yourself:

- Who is the main character?
- What does the character desire (or want or need)?
- What gets in the way of achieving this?
- What tactics might the character use?
- Does the character succeed or fail?
- How is the character's world changed as a result of the struggle?
- How might our world be changed?

As you discuss, improvise, write and revise each scene, decide:

- Which characters will be in the scene;
- What each character wants to have happen in the scene;
- How the scene will move the story forward through a discovery, decision or declaration (the 3 Ds); and
- Where and when does the scene take place.
Choose settings that can be reflected in the dialogue and will help to reveal the characters and their relationships; one time and place per scene.

Leave plenty of time for revision. Playwriting is rewriting. Good luck with your play!