

SCRIPT FORMAT EXAMPLE

There are a number of different ways that you can format a theatre script. The example below is a standard formatting and one that we like. (Note that theatre scripts and film scripts are usually formatted in different ways.)

If you have already written your play and your formatting is different from this, don't panic. Formatting for the theatre is flexible up to a point. As long as there is a clear differentiation between stage directions and dialogue, and the script is easy to read and carefully proofread, it may well be acceptable.

Don't forget to put your name and contact details on the cover page.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Stage directions are usually given in italics. Some writers put them in UPPER CASE ITALICS. OTHERS JUST PUT THEM IN UPPER CASE. The main idea is to differentiate them clearly from the dialogue.

CHARACTER 1 Dialogue is written in sentence case. Character names are given in upper case – again to differentiate them clearly from the spoken dialogue.

CHARACTER 2 It's a good idea to set a second-line tab so that dialogue always begins on the same vertical line. This makes it clearer and easier for actors to read.

CHARACTER 1 Dialogue is usually double-spaced *between* each character's speech, but single-spaced *within* a character's speech. This again makes it easier for the actors to differentiate between characters.

CHARACTER 2 Left align everything. *Don't* right hand justify the document.

CHARACTER 1 Use a font like Times New Roman or Arial. Fonts like Courier New and Arial Narrow are hard to read, and fancy fonts are just a nuisance. Remember that this is a working document and must be easy for actors and directors to use.

Pause

CHARACTER 2 If you need to write in a pause, it should go in italics or upper case, the same as other stage directions.

CHARACTER 1 (*to herself*) Brief stage directions that specifically apply to one character can be put in the dialogue like this.

SCENE 2

It's a good idea to keep stage directions to a minimum. Directors and actors need the space to put their own interpretations on what you have written. So forget about directions like 'she picks up a glass of wine' or 'he smiles sadly' unless it is integral to the action of the play. They just annoy the director.

CHARACTER 3 Don't forget to paginate your script. It's also a good idea to put the name of the script on each page as part of the header – in slightly smaller print than the dialogue.

CHARACTER 1 Some writers also like to put their name and the copyright symbol © on each page as a footer. You don't need to do this. Your play is protected by copyright whether you put the copyright symbol on it or not.

CHARACTER 3 Leave a decent margin. And of course only use one side of A4 paper.

CHARACTER 1 Proofread your finished script carefully AFTER you print it out and BEFORE you send it to us. Check spellings, punctuation, line spacings etc. Your play doesn't have to be grammatically correct – and you might choose not to use standard punctuation – but it DOES need to be consistent. Poor proofreading suggests a lack of professionalism.

CHARACTER 2 When you submit a play script to a theatre company or a script development organisation, don't staple it or bind it. Use a simple bulldog clip that can be easily removed.

THE END