

Short Intercept

CORRECT SCRIPT LAYOUT

This format is a recognised film industry standard which has evolved over eighty to ninety years' use by screenwriters working in the United States. It has become the universal standard script format for writers in the film medium world-wide, from short dramas through to feature-length films.

The Basics:

1. Write only what is SEEN and HEARD by the audience. For example, "Alan thinks about his past relationships" is obviously vague; instead, "Alan's expression softens" is at least visible. This helps potential film-makers see exactly what to shoot in order to tell your **story**.
2. Keep your language simple and direct. This helps to keep the **story** moving along. This means writing just the bare-bones of action and dialogue; and revealing the characters only through what they do and say (hence the saying, "character is action").
3. Only include details (eg., props, wardrobe) if the **story** would not make sense without them.
4. Similarly, never include camera or editing instructions unless the **story** would not make sense without them.
5. In general, directors, producers, and actors look for scripts which tell an engaging story. Thus, no amount of dazzling ideas for camera moves or set designs will make the basic story any clearer; in fact, they most often obscure it, thereby turning the reader off.
6. Related to this is the idea that a reader has a stronger experience if s/he is able to see the film in their own imagination. The more details you actually write, the more you therefore deny the reader that pleasure - thus weakening their reaction to your work. Evidently, it is a skill to write enough to ensure that the essence of your **story** is clear, but not so much that the reader feels excluded from imagining it.

continued

The Lay-out:

There are four basic categories in the standard screenplay format:

Scene description	(EXT. STREET. DAY.)
Scene direction	(ALAN walks down the street away from the cafe.)
Character name	(ALAN)
Dialogue	("You should never have got involved.")

They are laid out as such:

EXT. STREET. DAY.

ALAN walks down the street away from the cafe. KARMEL appears from the crowd of passers-by and stands in front of him.

KARMEL
You should never have got involved...
And now it's too late.

This frightens ALAN. He brushes past her and continues walking, quickly, but around the corner appears the Holden.

Notes:

1. INT = interior (indoors), EXT = exterior (outdoors).
2. There are 2 x returns between Scene Description and Scene Direction...
3. ... and 2 x returns between Scene Description + Dialogue (and vice versa)
4. ALL the dialogue needs to be indented (tabbed) exactly as above (NOT centred) so that accurate script timings can be made.
5. All SCENE DESCRIPTIONS are in capital letters, but scene directions and dialogue are not. NAMES are always in capitals when in the scene directions, but not in the dialogue.
7. There are no scene numbers (these are added once a script has been commissioned to go into production). However, pages are numbered.
8. The font used is Courier (the basic old-fashioned typewriter font). The size is 12 point (the standard typewriter size). The sample above is in Courier 12 point. This is the "ideal" font for the standard script format. If the typewriter or word processor you have access to does not have this font, don't worry about it - just use the one you've got.
9. The format is designed for maximum clarity for all stages of the film-making process. It is also designed for estimation of a film's length. A rough rule-of-thumb is one page = one minute.

Recommended: The screenwriting software FINAL DRAFT (for Mac & PC) automatically formats your script.