"Film Title"

Written by

Screenwriter

Every script should have
a title page with one
contact address only in the
bottom left hand corner.
Always include a phone
number and an e-mail address
if you have one.

"Film Title"

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCATION #1 - DAY

If your film requires a pre-title Teaser, then indicate it like this. All Teasers and Acts must begin with FADE IN: followed by a scene heading. Scene headings are typed in capitals and must indicate: interior or exterior, the location, and day or night.

Scene action is double-spaced under the heading in upper and lower case text with double-spacing between paragraphs. Scene action should only deal with what is happening on the screen and must never stray into superfluous novelistic text related to character thoughts or back-story.

A general rule of thumb is to limit a paragraph of scene action to four or five lines. Consider each paragraph as a significant beat of action within your scene.

INT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

Begin a new scene with the heading triple-spaced from the preceding scene. Always follow a scene heading with a line of scene action.

                    CHARACTER #1
          Character names appear in capitals
          indented to around the middle of
          the page, but not centered. A
          character is designated by either
          their first or last name, but a
          role designation may be used
          instead with personal titles
          abbreviated. The designated name
          should remain consistent
          throughout the script.

                    CHARACTER #2
          Dialogue appears under the
          character name in regular text.
          Similarly, it is not centered.
                    (MORE)

                    CHARACTER #2 (CONT'D)
               (pause)
     Split dialogue between pages only
     if at least two lines appear on
     the first page, and only after a
     sentence.

                    CHARACTER #1
               (beat)
     Parenthetical instructions appear
     in lower case text enclosed within
     brackets on a separate line in the
     body of the dialogue.
               (pause)
     Never leave a parenthetical
     hanging at the bottom of a page
     when breaking a character's
     speech. Move it to the top of the
     next page under the character
     name.

If scene action interrupts a character's speech on the same
page...

                    CHARACTER #1 (CONT'D)
     Then you must begin a new
     character cue when continuing the
     dialogue, but including (CONT'D)
     isn't essential. Dialogue must
     always be preceded by a character
     name and never appear on its own.

End the Teaser and each Act in the following way.

                                        FADE OUT.

                         <u>END OF TEASER</u>

<u>ACT ONE</u>

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCATION #1 - NIGHT

Begin each new Act on a new page. On occasions, it may be
necessary to indicate two characters speaking simultaneously.
This should be used sparingly, but if you need to do it this
is how.

      CHARACTER #1   CHARACTER #2
Show your first character   While the character on the
speaking on the left.   right tries to get a word
                                in edgeways.

               CHARACTER #2
     And finally manages to achieve it.
     Try to limit the length of your
     overlapping dialogue.

EXT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

Sometimes you may need a character to speak in a foreign
language. Contrary to belief, it is not a good idea to write
the foreign language itself. A general rule of thumb is to
always submit a script in the same language as the person
who'll be reading it.

               CHARACTER #1
       (in French)
     Indicate the foreign language in
     parenthesis and write the dialogue
     as you normally would in English.

               CHARACTER #2
       (in Russian; English
        subtitles)
     If your character is speaking in a
     foreign language with subtitles,
     then this is how to show it.

If, however, the entire scene is being spoken in a foreign
language, then a special note should be included in the scene
action.

NOTE: THE DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN HUNGARIAN AND
SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH.

                    CHARACTER #1
          Then just write the dialogue
          normally, in English.

                    CHARACTER #2
          And when you reach the end of the
          scene, include another special
          note.

END OF SUBTITLES.

If there is a specific reason for showing the foreign
language and the translation, use the dual dialogue method
with the foreign language on the left and the translation on
the right -- indicating that they are subtitles in
parenthesis.

INT. LOCATION #2 - DAY

Scene transitions are technical information indicating the
method of changing from one scene to another and should only
be used in shooting scripts. But, if it's absolutely
necessary to specify one, it appears like this.

                                        DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) SERIES OF SHOTS: is a group of short shots which make up a
   narrative sequence, useful for advancing the story in a
   rapid or economical way.

B) The shots are presented in logical arrangement for the
   action with a beginning, middle and end point to the
   sequence.

C) MONTAGE: is a series of two or more images that blend into
   and out of each other in order to create a particular
   effect.

D) It is used to create an emotional environment, a main
   title sequence, or when representing archive stock
   footage.

E) Both are used to avoid multiple scene headings when scenes
   are too short to conform to the usual formatting rules.

EXT. LOCATION #1 - NIGHT

Don't leave loose headings hanging at the bottom of a page.

It's sometimes a good idea to start a new scene on a new page if there is only a line or two at the bottom of the previous one, but scenes can break over the page easily like this. Shooting scripts include CONTINUED at the top of the page, but this is unnecessary in a spec script.

LATER

If you need to indicate the passing of time through the same scene then use LATER as a sub-heading. There is no need to continuously repeat the master scene heading.

THE CORNER OF THE ROOM

Similarly, you can break up lengthy and complex scenes by focussing on specific areas of action with a sub-heading. This is useful when scripting large party or group scenes.

                                        FADE OUT.

                            END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

Sometimes it may be necessary to hear characters when we
can't actually see them.

                    CHARACTER #1 (O.S.)
          Off Screen means the character is
          physically present within the
          scene, but can only be heard, e.g.
          they are speaking from an
          adjoining room.

                    CHARACTER #2 (V.O.)
          Voiceover is used when the
          character is not present within
          the scene, but can be heard via a
          mechanical device such as a
          telephone or radio. It is also
          used when a character narrates
          parts of your story.

                    CHARACTER #2
          If you need to differentiate
          between a character's narration
          and their on screen dialogue, then
          handle it as separate speeches.

                    CHARACTER #2 (V.O.)
          As (O.S.) and (V.O.) are technical
          instructions, they appear next to
          the character name.

INTERCUT - INT. LOCATION #1/LOCATION #2 - DAY

If it's necessary to CUT back and forth between simultaneous
action in two different locations in the same scene, then
handle your scene heading like this. Use this method when
you want to show a phone conversation.

                    CHARACTER #1
                  (into phone)
          You can then type your dialogue as
          normal.

                    CHARACTER #2
                 (into phone)
          Whilst indicating that both
          characters are on the phone.

                    CHARACTER #1
                 (into phone)
          Just make sure you indicate when
          the character hangs up.
                 (hangs up)
          Especially if you are going to
          continue the dialogue and scene
          beyond the phone conversation.

INT. LOCATION #1 - DAY

Alternatively, you can establish both locations separately.

                    CHARACTER #1
                 (into phone)
          Show your first character speaking
          into the phone like this.

INT. LOCATION #2 - DAY

Then establish your next location.

                    CHARACTER #2
                 (into phone)
          And show your second character
          like this.

                                        INTERCUT:

                    CHARACTER #1
                 (into phone)
          Then continue the conversation,
          intercutting comfortably between
          the two characters.

                    CHARACTER #2
                 (hangs up)
          If you finish the conversation and
          stay with one character, you don't
          need to repeat the scene heading
          as it has already been established
          earlier.

INT. LOCATION #1 - NIGHT

Another way to write phone conversations is to show one
character speaking but only hear the other.

                    CHARACTER #1
               (into phone)
          This is the character we see on
          the phone.

                    CHARACTER #2 (V.O.)
          Whilst we hear the second
          character speaking at the other
          end.

                    CHARACTER #1
               (into phone)
          But the first character remains
          on-screen throughout the scene.

EXT./INT. LOCATION #1 - DAY

If you have a scene where the action is continuously moving
between the interior and exterior of the same location, such
as the hall and driveway of a house, do your scene heading
like this.

But use INTERCUT for cutting back and forth between two
separate pieces of action inside and outside.

                                   FADE OUT.

                         END OF ACT TWO

<u>ACT THREE</u>

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

On-screen text, such as letters, e-mails, or signs, are
formatted in a couple of ways. Brief text, such as a sign,
can go in the body of the scene action: "THIS IS A SIGN"

> "Something longer, like a letter, is
> formatted like dialogue enclosed
> within double-quote marks. It can be
> in normal upper and lower case text,
> OR ALL IN CAPITALS depending on the
> text it is representing."

EXT. LOCATION #1 - NIGHT - 1956, FLASHBACK

If you want flashbacks in your script, treat them as separate
scenes and format your headings like this.

                    YOUNG CHARACTER #1
          If it's important, you can include
          the specific year or time period.

                    YOUNG CHARACTER #2
          If your flashback takes place
          across a number of consecutive
          scenes, then specify it as a
          flashback sequence in the heading.

Indicate when the flashback or flashback sequence finishes
and begin a new scene.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LOCATION #1 - DAY

Scene numbers are not included on a spec script. They
generally only appear on shooting scripts along with camera
and technical directions (which should also be avoided).

Don't forget to number all of your pages -- page one begins
with the Teaser, not the title page. And keep all your pages
together with a simple paper binder in the top left corner.
Unfastened pages can become separated and get lost.

                                             FADE TO:

INT. LOCATION #2 - NIGHT

It is standard practice to sign-off a film script with THE END centered on the page, preceded by FADE OUT.

FADE OUT. only ever appears at the end of an Act and the entire script. If you want to indicate a FADE OUT. and a FADE IN: between two scenes within an Act, then the correct transitional term is FADE TO:

However, as mentioned above, scene transitions should be avoided in spec scripts where possible.

FADE OUT.

THE END