Feature Screenwriter's Workbook

by j.t. velikovsky
A GUIDE TO

FEATURE FILM WRITING

A Screenwriter's Workbook

& Reference Guide

Compiled

by

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This work is intended as an academic review of the literature and theory in the field of Feature Film screenwriting. It is not intended for sale. Wherever possible, please buy and read any or all of the texts referenced within.
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INTRODUCTION

So, Feature Film Screenwriting.

Twenty years ago, there were two books on the subject. Now there are thousands (see www.Amazon.com, and search on “screenwriting”).

So - Where to start? Which book to read first?

In 1995, while studying Screenwriting at film school, I noticed there were about 100 books on the shelf in the school library. I wasn’t sure which were the best ones, so I read them all, and summarized them. This is essentially a collation of my summary notes.

This Workbook is therefore just an Overview of the field. It is intended more as an Introduction, than a ‘set of tools’ for Feature Film writers... and, it is certainly not meant to replace the original Screenwriting Manuals / Texts themselves.

- It also contains various ‘Story Templates”, but most usefully - it contains summaries of some of the key published texts on Writing Feature Film Screenplays.

It also has tables and worksheets, where, as a writer, you can fill out your own film’s plot beats and ‘character information’... in preparation for writing your own feature film screenplay.

But, for the actual nuts-and-bolts of all these writing theories - that’s all they are - there are probably no magic formulae, or else all writers would always write perfect scripts. But if there is one formula, it’s: Learn all the rules, then try and forget them - and write from the heart.

So - I respectfully request, please buy and read the actual original texts themselves. I don’t wish to deny the likes of Syd Field, Linda Seger, Viki King, John Truby, Linda Aronsen, Blake Snyder or Robert McKee their dues.

So. Hopefully this Workbook will be useful for you, whether you’re a new, or even an experienced screenwriter.

- We need great stories; they make for great films, which the world needs most right now...

Our film stories are our myths. Our myths are what we live by.

And just remember, screenplays are never finished - they are only ever abandoned (and then hopefully, shot!)

Best,

Joe T. Velikovsky
A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF SCREENPLAY MANUALS

There are many more than these. But this is a brief overview:

1913 – William Lewis Gordon - *How to Write Moving Picture Plays*
1914 – A W Thomas - *How to Write a Photoplay*

**CUT TO:**

1979 - Syd Field: *Screenplay*
1987 – Linda Seger: *Making a Good Script Great*
1989 – Michael Hauge: *Writing Screenplays That Sell*
1992 – Christopher Vogler: *The Writer's Journey*
1994 - Phillips & Huntley: *Dramatica* (software)
1997 - McKee: *Story*
2002 - Richard Stefanik: *Megahit Movies*
2005 – Blake Snyder: *Save The Cat!*
2007 – John Truby: *The Anatomy of Story*
2010 – Todd Klick: *Something Startling Happens*

These are some key milestones.
**WHAT IS A SCREENPLAY?**

**ON FORM & CONTENT**

**CONTENT:**

Various industry professionals have offered opinions on what a feature film screenplay is:

- Alan Armer: “A blueprint for a movie.”
- Syd Field: “A story told with pictures.”
- Paul Schrader: “An invitation to collaborate on a work of art. They contain 3 things - theme, character, structure. That’s all.”
- Louis Nowra: “Screenplays are simply a blueprint for a director. It’s not an art – It’s a collaborative process.”
- Bob Towne: “A movie is just four or five moments between two people. The rest of it exists to give those moments their impact and resonance.”
- William Goldman: “Screenplays are structure.”
- Viki King: “A feature screenplay is a document you can create in 21 days.”
- Linda Seger: “Five things: the story lines, the characters, the underlying idea, the images and the dialog.”
- Linda Aronsen: “A screenplay is - a technical instruction manual for everyone involved in the process of creating the film.”

**FORM:** Either way, the form is universally agreed upon, by consensus:

**SCREENPLAY FORM:** 185 to 120 pages, in standard Screenplay format, in Courier 12-point font, with 1-inch margins all round, and with black card front & back, 3-hole drilled, and bound with 2 `brads” in the top & bottom holes. 10
A FEW FILM CLASSICS...

Some classic films, worth studying for their scripts, including international films:

- Vertigo
- Tokyo Story
- The Searchers
- Battleship Potemkin
- The Bicycle Thieves
- The Seventh Seal
- The Rules Of The Game
- The Red Shoes
- Annie Hall
- Ben-Hur
- Blue Velvet
- Bonnie and Clyde
- The Passion of Joan Of Arc
- L’Atalante
- The Hidden Fortress
- My Life As A Dog
- The Killer
- Solaris (Dir: Tarkovsky)
- The Wings Of Desire
- Casablanca
- Dances With Wolves
- La Dolce Vita
- The Exorcist
- Fanny and Alexander
- The Godfather
- The Graduate
- La Grande Illusion
- It’s A Wonderful Life
- Jules et Jim
- King Kong
- Lawrence of Arabia
- The Sound of Music
- A Night At The Opera
- City Lights
- Peeping Tom
- Pickpocket
- Raging Bull
- Rio Bravo
- Shadows
- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- Twelve Angry Men
- Wild Strawberries
AN OVERVIEW OF “THE SCREENWRITING PROCESS/STEPS”

From Premise to Screenplay

The usual steps (and documents) involved in writing a feature screenplay: (though sometimes some - or many – of the below, are omitted)

**The Premise** (1-3 sentences) The Premise (sometimes called the Concept) is a simple statement of the main character/s, and their dilemma.

**The Synopsis** (3 paragraphs) The synopsis is about 3 paragraphs long, and Each paragraph reflects the beginning, middle and end of the story.

**The Outline** (1-3 pages) One, Two or Three pages, describing the setup, development and resolution, and sketching the details of the characters.

**Character Notes** (1-3 pages for each major character) Outlines the different characters, and their Backstories.

‘Pitch’ Document (10 pages) Contains all of the above documents, and some images.

**Scene Breakdown** (2-3 pages) A ‘beat sheet’ or list of points, outlining the key event/s of each scene. Can also be done on approximately 60 index cards (e.g. one for each scene).

**The Treatment** (say 20-40 pages) Twenty to forty pages, virtually a short story, which is an expanded version of the Outline, but with more character detail, and various dramatic ‘moments’ and key scenes fleshed out in more detail. Usually each scene is a paragraph. Usually contains no direct dialog, and is written in the third-person present tense.

**The Scriptment** (say 80 pages) A hybrid of Treatment-and-Script. Famously, James Cameron wrote one of these for *Spider-Man*.

**Sample Dialog** (say, 1 page for each major character) ‘Test scenes’ or monologues, so that each of your characters speaks in their own distinctive voice.

**The Screenplay** (85-120 pages) On A4 pages, in standard Screenplay format, in Courier 12-point font, and with black card front & back, 3 hole drilled & 2 brads in the top & bottom holes. Has scene headings, stage directions (also called “big print”) and dialog.
WHERE TO START? (WITH `FILM STORY IDEAS’)

Screenwriters can start anywhere, including (but not limited to):

- **AN IDEA**, possibly featuring a central character and a situation (e.g. perhaps inspired by: a news story, or a song, or, a dream, or - everyday life in general - etc.)

- **A PREFERRED GENRE** – such as thriller, romantic comedy, action-adventure, sci-fi, crime-thriller

- **AN IMAGE** (possibly suggesting the story’s main character, or the antagonist, or the film’s climax, etc)

- **A THEME** (“There’s No Place Like Home”, “Family”, “Honour Among Thieves”, “Revenge” etc.)

- **AN ADAPTATION** (i.e. a screenplay adapted from a novel, short story, biography, real-life event, etc.). In these cases it is usually important to acquire the rights, first.
THEME

“Theme” revolves around ‘having something to say’, or, the overall meaning of the story.

However the Theme that the writer/director/filmmakers intended - and the Theme the audience interprets may differ. (Results may vary.) This is also known as “the intentional fallacy”. (How can we ever be sure that, what we think someone meant - is what they actually meant? However - this particular Philosophical can-o-worms can stay shut for now.)

As for Theme - screenwriter Paul Schrader (author of Taxi Driver) advises:

“As a novelist, you have to be sure at least 100,000 people will respond to your work. But - for a screenwriter, you have to ask yourself: Will at least 3 million people react to this? Otherwise, you should write poetry.”

On the other hand, Themes which are too explicit/obvious in a script, or ‘preached’ at an audience (say, in dialog) are referred to as ‘on the nose’.

Infamous Golden Age of Hollywood studio boss, Sam Goldwyn is famed for saying ‘If you have a message, send it Western Union’. Sam clearly believed movies were for entertainment only. However it can be argued, most enduring and popular films do have a clear Theme. (Sometimes, many.)

The Theme is the message of the film. Many believe, in good scripts, it pervades most scenes.

Some example film Themes:

- The futility of war - Full Metal Jacket, Apocalypse Now, Gallipoli
- ‘There's no place like home’ - The Castle, The Wizard of Oz
- Great love defies even death - Moulin Rouge!, Titanic, Romeo + Juliet
- Tell the truth - Breaker Morant, Tootsie, Witness
- Nothing is what it seems - American Beauty, The Matrix, The Usual Suspects
- Loneliness - Proof, Storm Boy, Taxi Driver
- Honour among thieves - Chopper, Reservoir Dogs
- Ruthless ambition leads to its own destruction - The Bank, MacBeth
- COURAGE to overcome self-doubt leads to self-esteem - Strictly Ballroom, Rocky
- Revenge - Mad Max, Gladiator, Hamlet
- Make Things Happen - Muriel's Wedding, The Dish, Lorenzo's Oil
- “You have to be rich to get away with murder” - Chinatown

Note - Lajos Egri's book THE PRINCIPLES OF DRAMATIC WRITING outlines such Themes in regard to plays, although Egri refers to them as the play’s ‘Premise’. Hollywood screenwriting terminology can also differ - in that - the Premise is often actually the ‘dramatic situation’ posed by the film’s set-up.
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

In his 1926 book *The Art of Thought*, psychologist Graham Wallis identified four stages of the creative process which are common to most creative enterprises (including screen, prose, poetry, song writing and painting).

They are:

1) PREPARATION - gaining the necessary knowledge (i.e. craft skills and adequate research on the story subject)
2) INCUBATION - letting the idea(s) simmer in the subconscious mind...
3) ILLUMINATION - the actual inspiration and 'putting forth' of the masterpiece into an available physical reality (i.e. a manuscript)
4) VERIFICATION - editing the raw work into a polished, presentable form

These four steps are useful tools for a writer. If the screenplay isn't working, or you're experiencing "writer's block", you may want to check if you're missing one of these steps.


TWO OTHER EXCELLENT BOOKS ABOUT "THE CREATIVE PROCESS":

*Explaining Creativity* – by R. Keith Sawyer
http://ascc.artsci.wustl.edu/~ksawyer/explainingcreativity/

and

*Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (winner of "Thinker Of The Year" award)

http://www.amazon.com/Creativity-Flow-Psychology-Discovery-Invention/dp/0060928204
THE GREEK LEGACY: 3-ACT STORY STRUCTURE

In feature film we have mostly inherited the “3-act structural paradigm” of drama from the Greeks.

In circa 350 B.C., Aristotle laid down some principles of dramatic structure which many still adhere to, in his book *Poetics*.

French New Wave filmmaker Godard said “All stories have a beginning, middle and end, but not necessarily in that order”

5 ACTS..?

As an interesting side note, Shakespeare often used 5 acts in his plays. Some Greek tragedies had 5 `episodes`.

Robert McKee in his book 'Story' talks about using 5 story beats, within 3 acts, in modern film stories.

William Goldman often uses 5 acts (*Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid, All The President's Men, Misery, The Right Stuff*)
THE PREMISE

Premise in mainstream feature films generally follows this structure:

_A certain type of person_ has a certain _goal_, and encounters _obstacles_ that have changed him/her when finally they do (or do not) achieve that goal.

Namely, the structure is composed of:

1) The Exposition (or SETUP)
2) The Confrontation (or DEVELOPMENT) 
and
3) The Resolution (or DENOUEMENT) of the dramatic problem posed by the story...

Or more simply: in Act One you get a person up a tree, in Act Two you throw rocks at them, and in Act Three you get them down again.

The key philosophy behind a film Premise is:

_**Someone wants something very badly, and is having a lot of trouble getting it.**_

Exercise: Write your film’s Premise here:
SCREENPLAY CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Buy these screenplays - and study the writing in them. *(NOTE - All copyright remains with the original authors)*

**WITNESS** by William Kelley & Earl W. Wallace

RACHEL LAPP. A young woman of perhaps twenty-seven. Her face is pale and drawn. In happier circumstances, although there haven’t been too many of late in Rachel’s life, we would see a robust, sensual woman of full figure, spirit and intelligence.

JOHN BOOK comes striding though the others. He is about 40, with a rangy, athletic body.

**TAXI DRIVER** by Paul Schrader

TRAVIS BICKLE, age 26, lean, hard, the consummate loner.

*(NB - see also the First Page of the script, for a detailed character description of Travis.)*

**TITANIC** by James Cameron

JACK DAWSON and FABRIZIO DE ROSSI, both about 20, exchange a glance as the other two players argue in Swedish. JACK is American, a lanky drifter with his hair a little long for the standards of the times. He is also unshaven, and his clothes are rumpled from sleeping in them. He is an artist, and has adopted the bohemian style of art scene in Paris. He is also very self-possessed and sure-footed for 20, having lived on his own since 15.

The Renault stops and the LIVERIED DRIVER scurries to open the door for a YOUNG WOMAN dressed in a stunning white and purple outfit, with an enormous feathered hat. She is 17 years old and beautiful, regal of bearing, with piercing eyes. It is the girl in the drawing. ROSE. She looks up at the ship, taking it in with cool appraisal.
THELMA & LOUISE by Callie Khouri

LOUISE is a waitress in a coffee shop. She is in her early thirties, but too old to be doing this. She is very pretty and meticulously groomed, even at the end of her shift.

LETHAL WEAPON by Shane Black

DETECTIVE ROGER MURTAUGH, seated in the bathtub. He groans, throws a towel over himself, and mutters in mock indignation. Roger is tough: An old-fashioned fighter, wears his past like a scar. Piercing eyes; cynical.

He is surrounded by his family; wife and three children, names and ages as follows: TRISH: Roughly thirty-eight. She used to be a stunner. NICK: Ten years old. Precocious. CARRIE: Age seven. Eyes like saucers. Adorable. RIANNE: Heartbreaker stuff, Seventeen. Takes your breath away folks.

THE SIXTH SENSE by M. Night Shyamalan

MALCOLM CROWE sits on the floor at the coffee table, his vest and tie on the sofa behind him. A jacket and an overcoat lay on a briefcase next to him. Malcolm is in his thirties with thick, wavy hair and striking, intelligent eyes that squint from years of intense study. His charming, easy-going smile spreads across his face.

SPIDER-MAN (unproduced screenplay - by James Cameron):

We see PETER PARKER, a pleasant faced senior who's among the top in his class. Sincere and serious, he has yet to develop a way with women.

SPIDER-MAN (produced - by David Koepp):

PETER PARKER, a 17 year old boy. High school must not be any fun for Peter, he’s one hundred per cent nerd: skinny, zitty, glasses.

A girl stands in the entrance to the alleyway. MARY-JANE WATSON, seventeen, painfully sexy already, with a knowledge and sadness that are way beyond her years.
COSI by Louis Nowra

LEWIS, 21, handsome and shy enough to be a patient, pauses before the sign - and after taking a deep breath enters the hospital grounds.

MY BRILLIANT CAREER by Eleanor Whitcombe

Beyond the open door and windows, SYBYLLA, a skinny girl of sixteen-seventeen years old, with a vital if not pretty face, paces backwards and forwards, holding a stub of pencil and an old exercise book, deep in concentration, oblivious to her surroundings.
CHARACTER DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE:

The character description in a feature screenplay is usually composed of:

NAME, age, physical, nationality, social, psychological.
Plus - any defining physical character traits, including props, for actors `business`.

Exercise: Your Film's Central Character – Character Description:
EXAMPLE SYNOPSIS: *THE WIZARD OF OZ*

*THE WIZARD OF OZ* by L. Frank Baum (novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*)
Screenplay by Noel Langley and Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf.
(Some say *The Wizard of Oz* story universe was the original 'transmedia' work; Frank Baum used to give storytelling lectures about Oz, and had drawn maps of the storyworld.)

SYNOPSIS

Dorothy Gale, 16, an attractive, spirited and energetic girl with a great love for animals, who has a little dog Toto, wants to escape the boredom of her life at home on her farm in Kansas.

However when a tornado sweeps her away into a strange land called Oz, she encounters strange beings and situations and makes new friends.

Finally, both in spite of - and because of - her amazing journey, she realizes there is “no place like home”.

*In other words, ideally, the STORY has an engaging central character, with an intriguing dilemma, and strong conflict.*
YOUR FILM’S PREMISE:

__________________________________________________________
(name, age, physical, psychological).

__________________________________________________________
(a defining characteristic)

wants ___________________________________________.
(the character’s goal in the story)

However ____________________________________________
(the central conflict/obstacle, and the turning point)

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Finally, _____________________________________________.

(i.e. - how has the character changed?)
THE HOOK – and "THE VERBAL PITCH"

The Pitch is the 25-words-or-less that 'hooks' the listener’s interest, and ideally ‘sells’ the screenplay concept to a producer.

THE HOOK – The Opening Scenario of the film that “Hooks” the listener: It makes they say “Tell me more”. Or “And what happens then...?”

For example:

- A poet falls for a beautiful courtesan working at the Moulin Rouge whom a jealous duke covets – Moulin Rouge!
- An American reporter goes to the Australian outback to meet an eccentric crocodile poacher and invites him back to New York City. - Crocodile Dundee
- Two unemployed losers raised on TV decide to rob a bank – Idiot Box
- A man kept locked in his house for 30 years by his overly-possessive mother ventures out into the outside world. - Bad Boy Bubby
- A young girl bets her prized telescope she can prove to the young town bully that her new neighbour is not an alien. - Sally Marshall Is Not an Alien

YOUR FILM’S HOOK HERE:
THE ONE-PAGE PITCH

Write your Pitch down on this page.
( NB- Ideally this becomes content for a Query Letter. )

- Title, Genre, Setting (place & time)

- Logline: (25 words or less) for the TV Guide. Usually contains the Premise.

- “When two films collide” (Film A meets Film B).

- The film’s Theme.

- Plot Synopsis

- Title and ‘Tagline’ (Tagline = the catchy phrase/words, on the movie poster)
CONFLICT IS DRAMA

In her classic book *MAKING A GOOD SCRIPT GREAT* - Script Analyst Linda Seger outlines 5 different TYPES OF CONFLICT (and the more you have in your screenplay, the better):

- **PERSONAL** - uncertainty or self-doubt, a struggle with conscience
  eg: *Hamlet, 8 and ½, Crime & Punishment, Strictly Ballroom*

- **RELATIONAL** - with a love interest, family or friends, work colleagues
  eg: *Kramer vs Kramer, Ten Things I Hate About You, Chopper*

- **SOCIETAL** - within the character’s social environment
  eg: *Fight Club, The Castle, The Elephant Man, Philadelphia, Gattaca, Crocodile Dundee*

- **SITUATIONAL** - the physical environment
  eg: *Dead Calm, Twister, The Poseidon Adventure, Armageddon, The Towering Inferno*

- **COSMIC** - versus God or Satan (or some other deity/ies)
  eg: *Bliss, The Last Temptation of Christ, The Evil Dead, The Exorcist, The Odyssey of Homer*

CHARACTER

People are what they do, not (just) what they say, and therefore...

Character is ACTION!

The biggest criticism of film characters are that they are not 3-dimensional, or that they are "cardboard cut-outs" or unbelievable. Some say there are 3 dimensions to character.

They can include:

1) PHYSICAL - how they look
2) SOCIOLOGICAL - how they live
3) PSYCHOLOGICAL - how they behave

PHYSICAL - refers to aspects such as sex, height, weight, age, hair and eye color, voice, race, complexion, nationality, speech, health, any distinguishing features and manner of dress...

SOCIOLOGICAL - includes marital status, geographical origin, family background, education, occupation, interests, social contacts, religion, morality, sports, politics, intellectual capacities and ambitions...

and PSYCHOLOGICAL means their personality (extra- or introverted, a "thinking" or a "feeling" type), sexual preference, fantasy life, phobias, hang-ups, star sign, likes and dislikes...

NB - A great web site links page to articles on Character:
http://www.screenwritersforum.com/character.htm
ENNEAGRAM PERSONALITY TYPES

Enneagram personality typing dates back some 10,000 years. The oral tradition is woven into the Kabbalah, and also used by Sufi mystics. In the 1970's Western psychologists refined and developed it further.

Source: http://www.9points.com/types.htm

Point One - The Perfectionist
Worldview: Life is about correcting error and striving for improvement.
Unconscious Drive: Internalized Anger - Resentment
Gift: Discernment

Point Two - The Helper
Worldview: (My) Love makes the world go round.
Unconscious Drive: Pride
Gift: Empathy

Point Three - The Performer
Worldview: Life is about presenting a successful image.
Unconscious Drive: Self-Deceit
Gift: Efficacy and Adaptability

Point Four - The Romantic
Worldview: Something essential is missing from life. I'll be complete if I can just find it.
Unconscious Drive: Envy
Gift: Uniqueness and Emotional Intensity.

Point Five - The Observer
Worldview: Knowledge will keep me safe.
Unconscious Drive: Avarice
Gift: Detachment

Point Six - The Loyal Skeptic
Worldview: The world is a dangerous place. Most people have hidden agendas.
Unconscious Drive: Fear/Doubt
Two flavors of six: Phobic and Counter-phobic
Gift: Loyal commitment and planning

Point Seven - The Epicure
Worldview: Life is an adventure with limitless possibilities.
Unconscious Habit: Gluttony
Gift: Optimism
Point Eight - The Boss
Worldview: Only the strong survive.
Unconscious Drive: Lust (Excess)
Gift: Strength

Point Nine - The Mediator
Worldview: Life is about harmony - going with the flow.
Unconscious Drive: Sloth (Self-forgetting)
Gift: Acceptance
THE 4 HIPPOCRATIC HUMORS

Hippocrates postulated that an imbalance among the humors (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile) resulted in pain and disease, and that good health was achieved through a balance of the four humors; he suggested that the glands had a controlling effect on this balance. For many centuries this idea was held as the basis of medicine. Galen introduced a new aspect, that of four basic temperaments reflecting the humors:

- the sanguine, cheerful, buoyant type; (associated with blood)
- the phlegmatic, apathetic, sluggish type; (associated with mucous)
- the choleric, angry, quick-tempered type; (associated with bile)
- and the melancholic, depressed, dejected type (associated with black bile).

In time any personality aberration or eccentricity was referred to as a humor. In literature, a "humor character" was one in whom a single passion predominated; this interpretation was especially popular in Elizabethan and other Renaissance literature.

(NB - compare with psychology’s 4 types: MAD, SAD, GLAD, SCARED)

http://www.bartleby.com/65/hu/humor.html 32
PHYSICALITY: SOMATYPES

An **ectomorph** (endurance athlete) possesses a low body fat percentage level, small bone size, a high metabolism, and a small amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the brain/thinking.

A **mesomorph** (power athlete) possesses a low to medium body fat percentage level, medium to large bone size, a medium to high metabolism, and a large amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the muscles/intuition.

An **endomorph** (non-athlete) possesses a high body fat percentage level, large bone size, a slow metabolism, and a small amount of muscle mass and muscle size. Associated with the gut/spirituality. 33
JUNG’S PERSONALITY TYPES

EXTRAVERTS

Extraverted Sensation
Realistic; making few factual errors, good assimilation of details; experiencing each moment fully, enjoying the good things of life such as food, music, sports, the beauty of nature and art etc.; easygoing, tolerant, patient; often good with mechanical equipment as in carpentry, decorating, graphic art, fashion, cooking or any work demanding attention to detail.

Extraverted Intuitive
Spontaneous, innovative, initiating, non-conforming and versatile; identifies the practical possibilities in a situation; quick, focus on entire situation, flexible; enjoys complexity; adaptable and easy acquisition of new skills.

Extraverted Feeling
Warm, friendly, sensitive; value friendships; tactful, trying to meet others needs; adhering to societal values and appropriate behaviour; valuing others opinions; wanting approval; full of zest and enthusiasm; able to express feelings freely; strong awareness of likes and dislikes; harmonious, empathic.

Extraverted Thinking
Organising and labelling facts into logical units; supporting laws, objectives, policies and rules; governed by reason and not emotion; striving for perfection based on universal idea or law; judge behaviour on the ideal model; treat others fairly but impersonally; wanting to find meaning in life and the world; wanting to get things done with the least cost in time and energy and plan ahead.
INTROVERTS

Introverted Sensation
Awareness of bodily sensations, both physical and emotional; good with routine, non-distractible, persevering; good memory and recall; adhering to own inner sense of reality which may be at odds with others; strong aesthetic appreciation often for abstract forms of art.

Introverted Intuitive
Guided by own inner images, seldom limited for long to a single perspective; inner fantasy life; may have difficulty communicating insights to others; good insight into complex situations; uses metaphors to explore possibilities; creative, quick insight into relationships with others; often has innovative ideas with creative meanings.

Introverted Feeling
Using own internal standard to judge people and things, not submitting to peer pressure or current trends, loyal, devoted, knowing own likes and dislikes, often idealistic, working for a cause or purpose; may not be overtly affectionate, holding tenderness and passionate conviction in reserve; often believe they understand others but experience themselves as misunderstood; strong sense of values and ethics.

Introverted Thinking
Analysing the world based on own inner convictions and abstract categories, not easily swayed by others; enjoying intellectual activities, abstract ideas, subjects like philosophy, maths, crossword puzzles; decisive with ideas; working from principles; unconcerned with practical applications of their work; often work independently and may be shy with people.

Source: http://indigo.ie/~autoweb/team/jung1.html
ASTROLOGICAL STAR SIGNS

Aries (March 21-April 19) Symbol: the ram Element: fire Ruler: Mars
Characteristics: competitive, impulsive, independent, dynamic, quick-tempered, domineering, trusting, honest
Aries celebrities: Maya Angelou, Warren Beatty, Marlon Brando, Charlie Chaplin, Joan Crawford, Leonardo Da Vinci, Bette Davis, Celine Dion, Thomas Jefferson, Nikita Khrushchev, Eddie Murphy, Vincent Van Gogh

Taurus (April 20-May 20) Symbol: the bull Element: earth Ruler: Venus
Characteristics: patient, dependable, practical, determined, artistic, loyal, stubborn, self-indulgent
Taurus celebrities: Bono, James Brown, Buddha, George Clooney, Salvador Dali, Queen Elizabeth II, Duke Ellington, Sigmund Freud, Audrey Hepburn, Karl Marx, Willie Mays, William Shakespeare, Barbra Streisand, Harry S. Truman, Orson Welles

Gemini (May 21-June 20) Symbol: the twins Element: air Ruler: Mercury
Characteristics: curious, versatile, expressive, persuasive, changeable, clever, restless, talkative
Gemini celebrities: Bob Dylan, Clint Eastwood, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Tom Jones, John F. Kennedy, Henry Kissinger, Marilyn Monroe, Brooke Shields, Queen Victoria, Richard Wagner, Walt Whitman, William Butler Yeats

Cancer (June 21-July 22) Symbol: the crab Element: water Ruler: Moon
Characteristics: tenacious, emotional, intuitive, sensitive, sympathetic, traditional, moody, manipulative

Leo (July 23-August 22) Symbol: the lion Element: fire Ruler: Sun
Characteristics: dramatic, dignified, idealistic, ambitious, proud, generous, romantic, overbearing
Leo celebrities: Lucille Ball, Napoleon Bonaparte, Fidel Castro, Bill Clinton, Cecil B. de Mille, Henry Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Mick Jagger, Carl Jung, Madonna, Herman Melville, Mussolini, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Robert Redford, Arnold Schwarzenegger

Virgo (August 23-September 22) Symbol: the virgin Element: earth Ruler: Mercury
Characteristics: gentle, industrious, dependable, methodical, soft-spoken, humane, sincere, easily worried
Virgo celebrities: Lauren Bacall, Johann Bach, Ingrid Bergman, Sean Connery, Jimmy Connors, Queen Elizabeth I, Gloria Estefan, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, D. H. Lawrence, Sophia Loren, Keanu Reeves, Leo Tolstoy, H. G. Wells

Libra (September 23-October 22) Symbol: the scales Element: air Ruler: Venus
Characteristics: cooperative, careful, artistic, persuasive, diplomatic, logical, indecisive, fickle

Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Symbol: the scorpion Element: water Ruler: Pluto Characteristics: passionate, penetrating, private, resourceful, loyal, determined, temperamental, intolerant

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) Symbol: the archer Element: fire Ruler: Jupiter Characteristics: generous, honest, daring, friendly, confident, enthusiastic, argumentative, blunt
Sagittarius celebrities: Maria Callas, Andrew Carnegie, Winston Churchill, Dick Clark, Emily Dickinson, Joe DiMaggio, Walt Disney, Jane Fonda, Bette Midler, Richard Pryor, Frank Sinatra, Tina Turner, Mark Twain

Capricorn (December 22-January 19) Symbol: the goat Element: earth Ruler: Saturn Characteristics: cautious, focused, responsible, serious, conventional, reliable, hardworking, unforgiving
Capricorn celebrities: David Bowie, Paul Cezanne, Benjamin Franklin, Mel Gibson, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Alexander Hamilton, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henri Matisse, Richard Nixon, Edgar Allen Poe, Elvis Presley, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-tung


Pisces celebrities: Drew Barrymore, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Johnny Cash, Nat King Cole, Cindy Crawford, Albert Einstein, Jane Goodall, Mikhail Gorbachev, Jerry Lewis, Liza Minnelli, Sidney Poitier, John Steinbeck, Elizabeth Taylor, George Washington

Source: http://www.infoplease.com/astrology/profiles.html
LIST YOUR MAIN CHARACTER’S STAR SIGN & PERSONALITY TRAITS:
HERO'S JOURNEY CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

The *Hero's Journey* `monomyth` story template was discovered by anthropologist Joseph Campbell after studying thousands of the world's myths.

In his book “The Hero With A Thousand Faces” he revealed the basic `monomyth“ that united all cultures via narrative.

Chris Vogler wrote a legendary memo while working at Disney - and then refined it in his book “The Writer’s Journey” which Hollywood embraced in the 1990's.

One summary of the *monomyth* is as follows:

*The Hero's Journey: the Hero starts in their ordinary world.*

The Herald appears, and announces the Call to Adventure.

The Hero refuses it.

A Mentor appears, and gives the Hero the ‘supernatural’ key, tool or aid they need to embark on the quest.

*The Hero then reluctantly accepts, and crosses the First Threshold (which is guarded by Threshold Guardians) and enter into the Other world, where they meet with Tests, Allies and Enemies on their way to confronting the Shadow (their nemesis).*

*The Hero also can encounter a Trickster (who may become a sidekick character) along the way, and a Shapeshifter (who first appears as an ally but becomes an enemy - or vice-versa, or another character type altogether).*

*If it is a male Hero, along the way they may meet the Heroine, who may also be the love interest, (or indeed the Jewel/Sword/Elixir)*...

*They approach the Innermost Cave (often the Shadow's headquarters), confront the Shadow, seize the “sword”( reward) and then escape, and the Road Back usually involves a chase.*

*Finally they return to their tribe and restore the elixir, bringing a boon to the community.*
HERO'S JOURNEY ARCHETYPES - Worksheet

Note that - *not all film stories are 'Hero's Journeys'.
(But if yours is – then list out your Character Types here.)

HERO

HEROINE

HERALD

MENTOR

THE SHADOW

SHAPE-SHIFTER

TRICKSTER

THRESHOLD GUARDIANS

ALLIES

ENEMIES

SYD FIELD’S CHARACTER TEMPLATE

According to screenwriting guru Syd Field, in *Screenplay*, good film characters have:

1. A Dramatic need
2. Point of view
3. Change
4. Attitude

DRAMATIC NEED - What the character REALLY WANTS in the film:

Do they get it in the end? (Y or N): __

*Also, viewed from another perspective:*

What they THINK they want:

What they REALLY (ie without knowing it) NEED:

Do they get the 2 things below, by the end of the story?

1) What they think they need?
2) What they really need?

P.O.V. - the way they SEE the world
(eg Vegetarian, Devout Christian/Muslim/Buddhist/Scientologist, Conscientious Objector, Dreamer/ Idealist/Sociopath/Saint etc)

CHANGE - (eg over the course of the story of the film - To go from Loser to Winner (eg *The Hustler, Rocky*), from Not Trusting people to Trusting, Introvert to Extrovert, Intolerant to Tolerant, Shy to Confident, Emotionally Withdrawn to Loving, etc)

ATTITUDE - Positive or Negative/ Superior or Inferior, Cynical or Naive, Critical or Supportive, Pessimistic or Optimistic, Happy or Sad, Strong or Weak, Tough or Soft

A 3-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTER PROFILE - STRIKING POINTS

What is your main character's name? And - nickname?

How does it reflect/play against their character?

NAME ________________________________________________________

Reasoning behind the name/nickname: _____________________________

Note down, in one or a few words, anything striking about the character, ie things that differentiate or separates them from other characters in the film... what makes them an INTERESTING CHARACTER?

PHYSICAL (eg has a limp, chain-smoker, tattoos, skinny, bodybuilder, hunchback?)

SOCIOLOGICAL (eg working class, uni Professor, a Mensa member, a Mason, or is homeless, etc).

PSYCHOLOGICAL (eg genius, autistic, schizophrenic, was raised by apes, incredibly bent sense of humour, claustrophobic, etc)

DIALOG CATCHPHRASE (Something they say a lot - eg 'Whoa.', 'Incontheivable!' 'Fugeddaboudit' - etc)
CHARACTER ARCS

A `character arc' refers to the CHANGE or GROWTH that a character goes through in the course of a screenplay: basically, their emotional development. *(Film is often about characters who change, and TV is often about characters who do not – or, cannot.)*

The obstacles they encounter in striving to achieve their goal are chosen by the writer to make the character grow. The leading character in the story usually is the person who has the furthest to go; who has to undergo the biggest change.

Most leading characters undergo a positive growth through the course of the story. Their character arc could be, for example, from fear to confidence, from cynical to trusting, from pessimist to optimist, etc.

CENTRAL QUESTION: WHAT DOES MY CHARACTER WANT?

INNER (STORY) GOAL: ________________________________

OUTER (PLOT) GOAL: ________________________________

HOW DO THEY CHANGE IN THE STORY? __________________

THE POINTS AT WHICH WE SEE THEM CHANGING: __________

WHAT WILL THEY STAND TO GAIN or LOSE? (ie What are the Stakes?) eg - their life?

(AND - For distinctly Australian stories)
WHAT IS THEIR PYRRHIC VICTORY? ________________________________
THE STAKES & MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who identified an 8-tiered system of human needs. Once the lowest level is satisfied or achieved, the human condition is such that it desires the next level, and so on up the hierarchy...

1. Self-realisation: creative & spiritual fulfillment
2. Order: a sense of place in society & the cosmos
3. Understanding
4. A Desire for Knowledge
5. A Sense of Recognition: self esteem
6. Acceptance: a sense of belonging & community
7. Security: employment
8. Survival: food, safety, shelter

Source: http://www.connect.net/georgen/maslow.htm

STAKES

These needs can be translated into the stakes for a character. The Stakes are what the character stands to lose. Eg their house, job, car, husband/wife, their self-respect, life savings, life. Perhaps the ultimate stakes are the destruction of Earth and its inhabitants. Drama becomes more involving if these stakes are raised as the story progresses.

WHAT ARE THE STAKES IN YOUR FILM?

HOW ARE THEY RAISED - as the story progresses at each major ‘turn’ (i.e. – If you are using ‘3 Act structure’: End of Act 1, Midpoint, End of Act 2, Climax)?
THE HERO or PROTAGONIST

The hero is often the most likable and easily related-to character. He or she has 'rooting interest’, namely is someone to cheer for, e.g. Indiana Jones, Luke Skywalker, Crocodile Dundee, Babe, Muriel Heslop.

Alternately they can be an anti-hero, like Tyler Durden, Chopper, Mickey & Mallory, or Travis Bickle. The hero is the one who undergoes the greatest character growth or has the biggest transformational character arc, and in most Hollywood films, the hero rarely dies.

Spoiler alert: In many Australian ones, he/she dies: Breaker Morant, Phar Lap, Gallipoli, Picnic At Hanging Rock, etc.

To have rooting interest, a hero must have AUDIENCE EMPATHY. Ways to engender empathy from audience include creating a Hero who has suffered some undeserved misfortune.

Also - such empathetic/admirable qualities as:

- Vulnerability
- Underdog status
- Loyalty
- Morals
- Ethics
- Altruism
- Death of a loved one
- and mostly: COURAGE
THE ANTAGONIST
(or Villain, or `Bad Guy' or `Shadow')

The antagonist is, rather obviously, the character who opposes the Hero.

“The devil gets all the best lines...”

Memorable bad guys:


**Australian films:** Chopper (Chopper), The Humungus (Mad Max 2), Ned Kelly (Story of the Kelly Gang), Brett Sprague (The Boys), Simon O’Reilly (The Bank), Eddie Fleming (The Interview), Hughie Warriner (Dead Calm).

Australian films are also often renowned for having a group or `entity" antagonist (such as authority) rather than a sole main nemesis character.

Memorable Australian antagonist `entities': society (Priscilla, The Sum of Us, Sally Marshall Is Not An Alien), the airport (The Castle), the authorities (Rabbit Proof Fence, Sunday Too Far Away), the environment (Burke & Wills, Picnic At Hanging Rock, Crocodile Dundee).

*Note - In most Hollywood action films, the story `protagonist' is actually the villain; he drives the action, and during the story it is the reluctant hero who REACTS to the villain.*
CHARACTER PROFILE WORKSHEETS

CHARACTER NAME:........................................................................................................

PHYSIOLOGICAL

HEIGHT: WEIGHT: AGE:

COMPLEXION: NATIONALITY/RACE/ETHNICITY:

CASTING TYPE:

SPEECH: MANNERISMS:

HEALTH:

ADDICTIONS:

HANDICAPS OR IMPAIRMENTS:

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES, MARKS OR SCARS:

MANNER OF DRESS:

SOCIOLOGICAL

MARITAL STATUS:

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN:

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

EDUCATION:

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND STATUS:

OCCUPATION:

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

PAST OCCUPATIONS:

INTERESTS:

SOCIAL CONTACTS:
PETS:

CAR: (make/model/age)

SPORTS/HOBBIES:

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**

CHARACTER ‘HOLE’: (personal ‘lack’/emotional scar)

SPECIAL GIFTS/TALENTS:

RELIGION:

STAR SIGN:

ARCHETYPE:

ENNEAGRAM TYPE:

HIPPOCRATIC HUMOUR:

MORALITY:

PHOBIA/FEARS:

SECRET:

FANTASY LIFE:

HANGUPS OR PROBLEMS:

VALUES:

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

LIKES OR DISLIKES:

PARADOXES:

OTHER NOTES OF INTEREST:
CHARACTER INTERVIEW

CHARACTER NAME.................................................................

Describe yourself, in 25 words or less.

Who are the most important (or prominent) people in your life - and how do they see you? And how do they treat you?

What single incident(s) in your childhood has most affected you Positively?

And how about - Negatively?

How do you feel about/relate to - your parents?

What’s your attitude towards sex? Are you abstinent/healthy/promiscuous, etc?

Thoughts on Religion? Are you religious? Is there a God?

State your 'Philosophy of Life', or the "code' you live by, if any.

How would you spend a million dollars today?

Describe your favourite hobby/s.

Describe what you hate the most.

What do you fear the most?

What do you love the most, in Life?

How do other people react to you on meeting you?

List your proudest achievement in Life. - And Why?

What are you most ashamed of, and have never/rarely told?

Describe your favourite fantasy.

Describe what you try hardest to avoid.

Who has had the greatest influence on you? (e.g. real person/ parent/ teacher/

Fictional character/novelist, entrepreneur, singer/pop star/actor/artist,etc)

What are your chief taboos? (things you never do, for moral reasons)
What kind of person would you ultimately like to be remembered as?

How far away from this ideal are you?

What, if anything, is worth dying for?

What makes life truly worthwhile?

What’s your attitude towards:
• Money?
• Drugs?
• Politics?
• The Government?
• Homosexuality/bisexuality/transexuality?
• Dogs, and cats?
• Euthenasia?
• Abortion?
• Computers & technology (including the WWW)?
• Anything else you feel strongly about/want to bring up here?

How do you foresee your future?

Are you popular? Are you self-centred?

What is your favourite movie/s - and why? (minimum of 1, maximum of 3 please)

Your favourite songs, and albums, performers - and why? (max of 3)

Your favourite book and why? (max of 3)

What’s your job/occupation - and how do you feel about it? And - How and why did you get into it? Plan to stay in it? Ideally, what’s the future hold careerwise?

What do you do in your spare time?

Who is your perfect love/romance partner/s? And why?

Describe in about 25 words, your best friend, (eg What do they do for a living, hobbies, talents) what kind of person are they, and why do you like them?

What’s your own best talent, do you think?

And what do others around you see as your “best point”? Do you agree?

And finally - "What do you think Humanity's Purpose on Earth is’? (i.e. Personal view of “The Meaning of Life”)
Last question. While you've got the microphone, is there anything else you want to say, off the top of your head?
CREATE 5 MEMORABLE SCENES

As a Writer, you now know intimately your main character’s likes and dislikes, loves, hopes and fears (including phobias).

In creating your story’s plot, think of 5 circumstances that would elicit a very strong reaction from your character. (love, hate, fear, anger, amusement).

Thus, create 5 memorable scenes, in line with your story’s THEME.

Answer in 2 parts:

A) What event/circumstance/situation occurs? And B) How do they react?

1. A)____________________________________________________________
   B)____________________________________________________________

2. A)____________________________________________________________
   B)____________________________________________________________

3. A)____________________________________________________________
   B)____________________________________________________________

4. A)____________________________________________________________
   B)____________________________________________________________

5. A)____________________________________________________________
   B)____________________________________________________________
A CHARACTER’S BACKSTORY

A character's BACKSTORY is their past life experience. Everything that has happened to them up till the point that the film story starts. Before writers start their screenplay, they may construct a few pages of BACKSTORY for their characters, so that the characters feel real. This Backstory is usually the character’s life story, in prose form.

AN EXAMPLE BACKSTORY: “Milestones in a Life” by Richard Kostelanetz

| 0 Birth          | 39 Indebtedness      |
| 1 Teeth          | 40 Raise             |
| 2 Walk           | 41 Daughter          |
| 3 Talk           | 42 Perseverance      |
| 4 Read           | 43 Vice-Presidency   |
| 5 School         | 44 Speculations      |
| 6 Toys           | 45 New House         |
| 7 Television     | 46 Cadillac          |
| 8 Games          | 47 Son               |
| 9 Swim           | 48 Country Cottage   |
| 10 Hobbies       | 49 Over-Extensions   |
| 11 Books         | 50 Collapse          |
| 12 Baseball      | 51 Separation        |
| 13 Football      | 52 Psychoanalysis    |
| 14 Friends       | 53 Reconciliation    |
| 15 Girls         | 54 Grandchild        |
| 16 Smoking       | 55 Prosperity        |
| 17 Sex           | 56 Drinking          |
| 18 College       | 57 New House         |
| 19 Fraternising  | 58 Private Schooling |
| 20 Copulation    | 59 Illness           |
| 21 Study         | 60 Recuperation      |
| 22 Commencement  | 61 Leadership        |
| 23 Military      | 62 Senior Vice-Presidency |
| 24 Marriage      | 63 Directorships     |
| 25 Job           | 64 Security          |
| 26 Daughter      | 65 Testimonial Dinner|
| 27 Promotion     | 66 Retirement        |
| 28 Son           | 67 Florida           |
| 29 Responsibility| 68 Leisure           |
| 30 Exhaustion    | 69 Solitude          |
| 31 New Job       | 70 Television        |
| 32 Failure       | 71 Reading           |
| 33 Unemployment  | 72 Religion          |
| 34 Divorce       | 73 Weakness          |
| 35 Indolence     | 74 Senility          |
| 36 Loneliness    | 75 Bereavement       |
| 37 Remarriage    | 76 Measles           |
| 38 Extravagance  | 77 Death             |

Source: http://www.richardkostelanetz.com/inven3.html
JOHN CARROLL’S “9 CORE THEMES”

Australian sociologist John Carroll has identified nine archetypal stories in Western literature - which are crucial to our culture and our search for meaning in our lives:

1. the virtuous whore
2. the troubled hero
3. salvation by a god
4. soulmate love
5. the mother
6. the value of work
7. fate
8. the origin of evil
9. self-sacrifice.

TOBIAS' 20 PLOTS

In his book “20 Plots” Ronald Tobias proposes twenty basic plots:

1. Quest
2. Adventure
3. Pursuit
4. Rescue
5. Escape
6. Revenge
7. The Riddle
8. Rivalry
9. Underdog
10. Temptation
11. Metamorphosis
12. Transformation
13. Maturation
14. Love
15. Forbidden Love
16. Sacrifice
17. Discovery
18. Wretched Excess
19. Ascension
20. Descension.

POLTI’S 'THE 36 DRAMATIC SITUATIONS'

Georges Polti’s 1868 book The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations outlines just over thirty-five different dramatic situations, and even goes so far as to say this is the definitive list of all the types of dramatic situation that exist. They are:

1. SUPPLICATION (in which the Supplicant must beg something from Power in authority) Elements: "A persecutor, a suppliant and a power in authority" e.g. fugitives imploring the powerful for help against their enemies.
2. DELIVERANCE - "an unfortunate, a threatener, a rescuer" e.g. the appearance of a rescuer to the condemned.
3. CRIME Pursued by Vengeance. "an avenger and a criminal" e.g. the avenging of a slain parent or ancestor.
4. VENGEANCE Taken For Kindred Upon Kindred
5. PURSUIT
6. DISASTER
7. FALLING PREY To Cruelty Or Misfortune
8. REVOLT
9. DARING Enterprise
10. ABDUCTION
11. THE ENIGMA
12. OBTAINING
13. ENMITY Of Kinsmen
14. RIVALRY Of Kinsmen
15. MURDEROUS Adultery
16. MADNESS
17. FATAL Imprudence
18. INVOLUNTARY Crimes Of Love
19. SLAYING of a Kinsman Unrecognized
20. SELF-Sacrificing For An Ideal
21. SELF-Sacrifice For Kindred
22. ALL Sacrificed For A Passion
23. NECESSITY Of Sacrificing Love Ones
24. RIVALRY Of Superior And Inferior
25. ADULTERY
26. CRIMES Of Love
27. DISCOVERY Of The Dishonor Of A Loved One
28. OBSTACLES To Love
29. AN ENEMY Loved
30. AMBITION
31. CONFLICT With A God
32. MISTAKEN Jealousy
33. ERRONEOUS Judgment
34. REMORSE
35. RECOVERY Of A Lost One
36. LOSS Of Loved Ones

Source: http://bricolage.bel-epa.com/etc/drawer/polti.html

The excellent book Story Structure Architect (2005), by Victoria Lynn Schmidt extrapolates Polti's 36 dramatic situations into 55, with a feminine perspective.
JOHNSTON/BLAKE’S 9 PLOTS

Irish playwright Denis Johnston said all great theatre could be reduced to eight plots, found in fairytales and ancient myths.

The American writer Robert Blake added a ninth.

1. Unrecognised virtue at last recognised.
2. The fatal flaw.
3. The debt that must be paid.
4. The love triangle.
5. The spider and the fly.
7. The treasure taken away (loss, sometimes followed by search).
8. The irrepressible winner.
9. The homeless loner.

Source: http://www.adelphiasophism.com/goddess/plot/001.html
GENRE IN FILMS

The golden rule of genre in feature films:

“Deliver the genre” at least once every reel
(i.e. approximately every ten minutes. This goes back to 35mm film reels.)

Genres are how studios market their films, and how audiences know what type of emotional experience to expect in the cinema.

E.g.

- Action-adventure – Crocodile Dundee, Raiders of The Lost Ark
- Romantic Comedy – Strictly Ballroom, Mrs Doubtfire
- Horror – Razorback, Halloween H20
- Film Noir – The Interview, Seven
- Science Fiction – Incident at Raven’s Gate, Contact
- Fantasy - Dark City, Star Wars
- Children’s – Sally Marshall Is Not An Alien, Babe, The Lion King

And there are many other genres, including of course the Western which seems to have died out in recent years.

Some theorists believe the popularity of genres runs in 20-year cycles. Witness the `disaster" movies of the 70”s and 90”s, and the horror films of the 60”s and 80”s.

Some say that each Genre has its own inherent set of meanings:

- Detective films sometimes assert that Crime Doesn’t Pay.
- Romantic Comedies often imply that Love Conquers All.
- Horror tells us that `Breaking taboos brings dire consequences".
- Sci-Fi often posits "technology as humanity's savior".
- Westerns often employ the Old Testament morality of “Revenge”.

ON GENRE CHOICE

- Writers sometimes choose their Genre to help convey their theme/s.
- Studios choose Genres to market their films.
- Audiences choose Genres to gain an emotional experience.
A RANDOM LIST OF GENRES

- Comedy
- Romance
- Thriller
- Drama
- Psychological
- Action
- Adventure
- Crime
- Family
- Social Realism
- Children's
- Mystery
- Women
- Horror
- Historical
- Biographical
- Science Fiction
- Erotic
- Musical
- Teen
- Road Movie
- Satire
- War
- Fantasy
- Melodrama
- Political
- Police
- Experimental
- Dance
- Epic
- Gangster
- Gay
- Prison
- Mindbender / Twitch Psychological Thriller
- Bromance

Note that hybrid genre films are now popular.
SCREENPLAY STORY STRUCTURE

One way to look at screenplay structure is:

STRUCTURE GIVES YOU THE FREEDOM TO BE CREATIVE

Structure frees you as the writer, so you don't have to make decisions about the form of the work, thereby allowing you to concentrate on style and content.

Some story structure analysts and their 'Story Tools' include:

- Campbell/Vogler - The Hero's Journey monomyth
- Truby - Story
- McKee - Story
- Vorhaus – Story Maps
- Eco - the James Bond stories
- David Siegel – The 9-Act Structure
- Richard Stefanik – the Megahit Movies
- Barry Pearson’s - Story Structure
- Blake Snyder – Save The Cat!

Of course, the more all these 'story maps" are used, the more they become cliched... leading audiences to complain that writers are creating predictable, formulaic pictures.

However, as a screenwriter be aware of these tools, either as a reference point, as diagnostic aids, or even as 'negative role models" for creating your own emotionally, intellectually and spiritually satisfying narratives. They are often most useful when editing stories that aren't fully 'working".

Other story myths screenwriters may use as 'templates" include

- Grimm's Fairy tales,
- Greek, Roman & Norse mythology,
- and of course The Bible.
THE HERO’S JOURNEY - CAMPBELL

Anthropologist Joseph Campbell studied thousands of world myths and narrowed them down into one narrative pattern called “the monomyth” or ‘The Heros Journey’, in his book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*.

The 17 stages of the monomyth:

1) Departure
   - The Call to Adventure
   - Refusal of the Call
   - The Supernatural Aid
   - The Crossing of the First Threshold
   - The Belly of The Whale

2) Initiation
   - The Road of Trials
   - The Meeting With the Goddess
   - Woman as Temptress
   - Atonement with the Father
   - Apotheosis
   - The Ultimate Boon

3) Return
   - Refusal of the Return
   - The Magic Flight
   - Rescue from Without
   - The Crossing of the Return Threshold
   - Master of Two Worlds
   - Freedom to Live
THE HERO’S JOURNEY - VOGLER

Story analyst Chris Vogler has further transposed the monomythical framework into a film story template, in his book *The Writer’s Journey*.

The Hero’s Journey features a number of archetypal characters, as mentioned before including the Hero, the Shadow, the Mentor, etc.

This Hero’s Journey story template has 12 steps:

1. The Ordinary World
2. The Call To Adventure
3. The Refusal of the Call
4. The Meeting With the Mentor
5. Crossing the First Threshold
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave
8. The Supreme Ordeal
9. The Reward
10. The Road Back
11. The Resurrection
12. The Return with the Elixir

Possibly the most famous films to use the Hero’s Journey story template is the *Star Wars* series, but it can also be identified in such films as the *Harry Potter movies*, *Lord of the Rings* series, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Thelma and Louise* and even *Pulp Fiction*.
`STORY WARS': HARRY POTTER vs. STAR WARS Episode IV

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.
Star Wars: A New Hope; synopsis

Harry Potter

Luke Skywalker is an orphan living with his uncle and aunt on the remote wilderness of Tatooine.

He is rescued from aliens by wise, bearded Ben Kenobi, who turns out to be a Jedi Knight.

Ben reveals to Luke that Luke's father was also a Jedi Knight, and was the best pilot he had ever seen.

Harry

Quidditch player

Luke is also instructed in how to use the Jedi light saber as he too trains to become a Jedi.

Harry

Wizard

Luke has many adventures in the galaxy and makes new friends such as Han Solo and Princess Leia.

Ron

Hermione

In the course of these adventures he distinguishes himself as a top X-wing pilot in the battle of the Death Star, making the direct hit that secures the Rebel victory against the forces of evil.

Harry

Gryffindor

Lord Voldemort

Luke also sees off the threat of Darth Vader, who we know murdered his uncle and aunt.

Parents

In the finale, Luke and his new friends receive medals of valor.

Harry

Win the House Cup.

All of this will be set to an orchestral score composed by John Williams.

Source: http://www.theforce.net/rouser/essays/harry-potter.shtml
TRUBY’S STORY STRUCTURE

Screenwriting analyst John Truby has developed a "Classic Story Structure" template which runs somewhat contrary to the Syd Field “3-act structural paradigm”.

- Problem/Need
  - the situation affecting the hero - and what's missing within the hero
- Desire
  - or what the hero *wants* in the story
- Opponent
  - the character competing for the same goal as the hero
- Plan
  - how the hero will overcome the opponent and succeed
- Battle
  - the final conflict that decides who gets the goal
- Self-Revelation
  - the fundamental understanding the hero gains about him or herself which fulfills the need
- New Equilibrium
  - the world back to normal with the hero at a higher or lower point

In Truby’s system, these 7 points actually expand out to a total of 22 points, for plotting scenes, and sequences of scenes.

Also, by way of comparison, Truby’s system has about 6 to 10 ‘plot turning points” rather than Syd Field’s two.

Source: http://screenwritersguild.org/storystructure.htm 66
THE HEROINE’S JOURNEY

In 1990 Maureen Murdock published the excellent *The Heroine’s Journey* as a response to Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (with its masculine hero focus).

The Heroine's Journey (adapted from Maureen Murdock)

1. Separation From The Feminine
2. Identification With The Masculine & Gathering Of Allies
3. Road Of Trials, Meeting Ogres & Dragons
4. Finding The Boon Of Success
5. Awakening To Feelings Of Spiritual Aridity: Death
6. Initiation & Descent To The Goddess
7. Urgent Yearning To Reconnect With The Feminine
8. Healing The Mother/Daughter Split
9. Healing The Wounded Masculine
10. Integration Of Masculine & Feminine

Source: http://www.maureenmurdock.com/heroine.html
ROBERT McKEE’S SCREENPLAY STRUCTURE

Screenwriting lecturer Robert McKee teaches a combination of the 3-act Aristotelian model, and `classical" five-part narrative structure. This involves:

- inciting incident
- progressive complications
- crisis
- climax
- resolution

Source: http://www.mckeestory.com/outline.html
THE STORY MAP

Another story tool is the following template, as promoted by screenwriting instructor John Vorhaus in his book *The Comic Toolbox*:

1. Who is the hero?
2. What does the hero want?
3. The door opens
4. The hero takes control
5. The spanner is thrown in the works
6. Things fall apart
7. The hero hits rock bottom
8. The hero risks all
9. The hero wins

Source: http://members.aol.com/act4screenplays/tips14.html
BARRY PEARSON’S SCREENPLAY STRUCTURE

Another structural guide, this time from screen structure teacher Barry Pearson. This paradigm applies to a 100-page screenplay.

THE SETUP: The first 10 pages – sets up the Hero or Bonding character (villain, or monster, or potential love-interest).

THE BONDING EVENT: between pages 9 and 18 - an event occurs which brings the Hero into contact and interaction with the Bonding Character.

NB - THE OPPOSING/ATTACKING FORCE – note that the Bonding Event is typically the culmination of a sequence of Backstory events set in motion and propelled by the evil or negative force in the story (the Opposing/Attacking Force).

THE LOCKING EVENT: occurs between pages 20 to 35. Introduces a turn of circumstances that alters the relationship between the two major characters, so that they cannot easily disengage from each other.

ESCALATING EVENT: occurs somewhere between pages 40 to 55. There is a development that raises the stakes for the Hero and Bonding Character, the

ESCALATING EVENT. This event often raises matters to a life-and-death issue.

SENDING YOUR HERO TO HELL: from pages 60 to 75 - a sequence of developments wherein the Hero tries to accommodate, adjust to, and escape from - the situation of jeopardy in which he or she finds himself or herself.

THE PLAN THAT FAILS - pages 75 to 85 - the Hero plans to defeat the forces opposing him. The Hero puts a plan into motion - and locks horns with the opposing force or forces, in an effort to defeat them.

THE HIDDEN WEAKNESS - the Hero’s plan has failed and he or she looks to be utterly, finally defeated. Now there is a sequence in which he or she discovers what appears to be a hidden weakness in the opposing force or forces.

THE PLAN THAT SUCCEEDS - occupies pages 85 to 95 - the Hero having discovered the hidden weakness of the opposing forces, initiates the "plan-that-succeeds" and the Hero battles and defeats the opposition.

THE WIN AND THE PRIZE - pages 95-100 - Following the Hero’s victory, there is a final sequence in which the writer dramatizes the Hero’s new status and situation, and allows the audience to vicariously savor the Hero’s victory, even if it is bittersweet - which it often is.

Source: http://www.createyourscreenplay.com/structure.htm 68
UMBERTO ECO & THE JAMES BOND PLOTS

In his book *The Role of the Reader* Umberto Eco has analysed Ian Fleming’s `Bond" novels for a basic narrative template:

1) M moves, and gives a task to Bond.
2) The villain moves, and appears to Bond.
3) Bond moves, and gives a `first check" to the villain - or the villain gives `first check" to Bond.
4) Woman moves, and shows herself to Bond.
5) Bond consumes the woman: possesses her, or begins her seduction.
6) The villain captures Bond.
7) The villain tortures Bond.
8) Bond conquers the villain.
9) Bond convalescing enjoys the woman, whom he then loses.

This structure obviously also applies to many of the films in the Bond franchise.

Source: http://www.mind.to/plot/bond.htm
DAVID SIEGEL’S NINE-ACT STRUCTURE

David Seigel, WWW design legend and author of Designing Killer Web Sites has invented his own structural film story paradigm.

His ‘Nine-Act Structure” runs thus:

Act 0: Someone Toils Late into the Night. (e.g. Say, a villain plans a crime)
Act 1: Start with an image.
Act 2: Something bad happens.
Act 3: Meet the Hero (and the Opposition).
Act 4: Commitment.
Act 5: Go for the wrong goal.
Act 6: The reversal.
Act 7: Go for the new goal.
Act 8: Wrap it up.

Source: http://www.dsiegel.com/film/Film_home.html 69
RICHARD MICHAELS STEFANIK – “MEGAHIT MOVIE” STRUCTURE

Stefanik studied films that made over $250m at the box office.

In a 120-page script:

- Prelude = 10 pages
- Act 1 = 30 pages
- Act 2 = 45 pages
- Act 3 = 30 pages
- Resolution = 5 pages

In the Prelude, the first ten pages of the screenplay, the writer must "hook" the audience by creating empathy for the protagonist, hatred for the antagonist, and establish the primary objective of the story. This is the most important section of the screenplay.

In Act One the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is further developed up to the first plot twist.

In Act Two the conflict is further "complicated" up through the second major plot twist. By this time about 85 minutes of screen time will have passed.

In Act Three the climactic battle between the protagonist and antagonist will occur. The action will be extremely intense and very fast, ending with the victory of the hero over the villain.

The Resolution scene of the story will be the shortest, showing that the protagonist has achieved his primary objective and showing his victory being celebrated by the community.

Source: http://www.megahitmovies.com/
ON THEMATIC VISUAL METAPHORS

To give your film resonance, in your screenplay, try and open with an image that is a visual metaphor for the whole story – e.g. the lantana bush in Lantana (a bush that looks pretty but whose beauty conceals hidden thorns).

Otherwise, include thematic visual metaphors when you can – e.g. the spiral staircase (DNA) in Gattaca, the picket fence in Jaws (teeth), the shadows of Indy in Raiders of the Lost Ark, the taxi in Taxi Driver.
Viki King's “INNER MOVIE METHOD” SCREENPLAY STRUCTURE

Viki King's *The Inner Movie Method: How To Write a Screenplay In 21 Days* builds on the 'screenplay paradigm' work of story analysts Syd Field and Linda Seger.

1) FIRST MINUTE: (FIRST PAGE) - In the first minute, you will know everything you need to know about a movie: you will see a place, a time, and a mood. Is it a big picture? With a musical overture and large vistas? The size and scope of the story are revealed right away. In the first minute, we also see the POINT OF VIEW. E.g. in the Dirty Harry movies; "This is a dirty world and someone's gotta clean it up" - If possible, start with a visual metaphor for your whole story. Also, put a page-turner at the bottom of the page to get the reader hooked. We have to know who it's about, too. Start with your main character if you can.

2) Page 3 - Find a line of dialog that expresses the central theme (e.g. Jake Gittes in Chinatown "You have to be rich to get away with murder.")

3) Pages 3 to 10 - What's it about? Whose story is it? What does he/she want? What's stopping him from getting it? Do we like him/her? Or care what happens to him? Why? (show vulnerability, or undeserved misfortune, engender audience empathy) Do we care if he/she gets what he wants? Are we wondering what happens next? Make sure all the main characters are introduced in the first 10 pages.

* Page 15 – The Inciting Incident - the event that triggers the story, and propels the hero into action.

4) Page 25 or 30 – The First Turning Point. The story takes a sharp left turn. First Act ends. The Second Act begins...

5) Page 45 - The Act 2 metaphor (a symbolic scene or action that gives a clue to the story's resolution.

6) Page 60 – The Point of no return - our Hero commits totally to his/her goal After this, a lighter moment; breathing space. Show the hero changing.

7) Page 75 - a New Development – the hero's just about to give up...

8) Page 90 – The Second Turning Point, end of Act 2 - an event that "educates" the hero about how to achieve their goal. They have an epiphany. Act 3 begins... 71

9) The Climax – 95-110. The hero can see their goal, but faces the final obstacle – the final moment of truth – all or nothing. They find their inner strength, and devotion to something bigger than themself.

10) The End – i.e. last 3-5 pages – The Resolution. The goal is to touch the audience deeply, and affect them profoundly.

Source: http://www.vikiking.com/
THE BLAKE SNYDER “STORY BEAT SHEET”

In his books in the SAVE THE CAT! series, Blake Snyder identifies 12 plot beats in film. Snyder’s ‘Genre breakdown’ is remarkably insightful, including: The Golden Fleece, Monster In the House, and many other story genres.

Snyder’s screenplay structure is as follows:

1. Opening Image (page 1):
2. Theme Stated (page 5):
3. Set-Up (page 1-10):
4. Catalyst (page 12):
5. Debate (pp 12-25):
6. Break into Two (p 25)
7. B Story (p 30):
8. Fun and Games (pp 30-55):
9. Midpoint (p55):
10. Bad Guys Close In (pp55-75):
11. All Is Lost (p75):
12. Dark Night of the Soul (pp75-85):
13. Break into Three (p85):
14. Finale (pp85-110):
15. Final Image (p110):

Source: http://www.blakesnyder.com/tools/
PLOTS and SUBPLOTS - or A, B and C stories

Typically, the A story is the `main' plot, e.g. a murder-mystery detective story (and occupies about 70% of the film’s screen time)

Your film’s A PLOT:

The B story is the `love interest” subplot (about 20% of the total).

Your film’s B PLOT:

And the C story can often involve “light/comic relief” for contrast (about 10% of screen time).

Your film’s C PLOT:

Of course, the PLOT of the STORY comes out of CHARACTER.
SOME QUESTIONS TO ANSWER - BEFORE YOU WRITE:

1. What’s the name of your story’s central character/s?

2. Why do you care about them? (ie and Why will we, your audience care about them, their situation, and their story?)

3. Exactly how (and when) in your story do we become *emotionally involved* with them?

4. What is the world - and the backstory - of your story? The genre? The tone (e.g. warm and nostalgic, or gritty and confronting)? The style (realism, expressionism)?

5. What does your Protagonist *want* in the beginning? But what does he/she *need*? And what does he/she *get* in the end?

6. Six months into the Backstory (before the first page of your script), what was the Protagonist’s goal? Is it different to the goal at the start of your script? (i.e. Are you starting the story too early, or late?)

7. Who or what is stopping the Protagonist from accomplishing their goal in the film?

8. What is the Opening Situation for the Protagonist?

9. By the first 10-15 pages, what is the ‘Inciting Incident’ or ‘kicker’? What kicks the story into gear?

10. By page 25, what is your first ‘plot point’? (If you have 3 “acts”)

11. What is the ‘midpoint” of the story? Is the hero at rock bottom here?

12. What will the emotional climax of your story be?

13. Who is your Antagonist? Why will we hate them? When do we hate them? Is your Antagonist the ‘mirror opposite” or shadow of the Protagonist?

14. How is it shown that the Antagonist - and other characters - come from a *different world* than the Protagonist (i.e. *Differentiate* the characters, especially their dialogue.)

15. What is the most interesting thing about this story subject to you? And Why will it interest 3 million other people?

16. What *emotions* will the audience feel at the start, middle, and end of your story? Explain the emotional journey you have planned for them.
VELIKOVSKY’S ‘15 COMMANDMENTS’ OF FEATURE FILM SCREENWRITING

1. THEME IS PARAMOUNT (Put it in every scene)
2. DRAMA IS CONFLICT (Put it in every scene)
3. STRUCTURE IS EVERYTHING! (Start the story at the right time)
4. A SCREENPLAY is: A STORY TOLD WITH PICTURES
5. SHOW, DON’T TELL (Don’t use dialog, if you can show it in images)
6. RAISE THE STAKES!
7. MAKE THE CHARACTERS 3-DIMENSIONAL
8. ACTION IS CHARACTER
9. FORESHADOW & PAYOFF
10. SUSPENSE, SURPRISE, REVERSALS, TWISTS
11. SCENES: COME IN LATE, LEAVE EARLY
12. ACTION LINES: use SHORT, CONTROLLED BURSTS
13. USE DIALOGUE ONLY AS A LAST RESORT
14. DON’T WRITE SUBTEXT
15. WRITING IS REWRITING
SCENE LENGTH

George Lucas once said:
"Sixty great two-minute scenes make a successful movie".

As a guide (for a 120-page screenplay), you could have about 15 scenes in your first act, 30 in the second, and 15 in the third - namely: a total of sixty scenes, with an average scene length of two pages (i.e. an average of two minutes per scene).

Each of these scenes usually contains a plot ‘beat’ (sometimes more than one).

There is no lower limit to scene length (a short scene’s often a good scene), but as for an upper limit, four pages is a “pretty long” scene.

The golden rule with writing each scene is:

COME IN LATE, and LEAVE EARLY.

This means you don’t have to show someone knocking on a door, waiting for it to be answered, have characters introduce themselves, and then begin a conversation... Instead, have the ‘point of attack’ in each scene as late as possible – namely try to cut into the scene when they are in the middle of the conversation, and stay only long enough to get the crucial story information out, and then cut out of the scene. These days, audiences assume a great deal.

THE STRUCTURE OF EACH SCENE

Each scene should have a beginning, middle and end - and should do 4 things:

1) give new information (and/or reveal character)
2) involve bonding (the audience with the characters)
3) include conflict (or conflict resolution)
4) aid completion (i.e. move the story forward)

ON PACING YOUR SCENES

Juxtapose a long, slow scene (or sequence of scenes) - with a short, fast one.

Pacing and rhythm is crucial to keep the viewer hooked.
EXPOSITION SCENES

Exposition (or Set-Up) is that part of your script which explains the dramatic situation: anything relevant that has gone before, and - it also sets up (or identifies) the main characters - and their relationships to each other.

Try to have your story's Exposition revealed through a scene (or scenes) with underlying conflict - or overt action going on, rather than just two or more “talking heads”:

e.g.

*The Fellowship of the Ring* – Gandalf explains ‘the ring situation’ to Frodo while the black riders are outside, searching for it...

*Raiders of the Lost Ark* – the dissertation about the Lost Ark, and why it must be found before the Nazis get to it, is given to some ‘ignorant" outsiders (army intelligence), so that Indy can become “Morrie the Explainer” in a university lecture room.

*Terminator* – the “time travel and Terminator robot” scenario is explained to Sarah Connor during a car-chase - while actually escaping from it.

*Titanic* – the crew are shouting on a ship’s deck, during a submarine recovery operation.

SUMMARIZE YOUR EXPOSITION SCENE/S HERE:
SOME SCREENPLAY TERMS – A GLOSSARY

ANGLE ON - Directs the camera to focus on a person or thing.

AD LIB - Instructs actors to make up and fill in dialogue in the scene.

BACK TO SCENE – usually follows a FLASHBACK or a CUTAWAY.

CONTINUED - Used at the beginning and end of a screenplay page. (However fashion has changed - and it isn't used in screenplays anymore.)

CRANE SHOT - The camera, fixed to a crane mechanism, is allowed to float through the air (Rather than use this in a screenplay suggest the same shot in another way)

BEAT - A pause written into a character's speech or action. Longer pauses can be written as "two beats", "three beats", etc. Equivalent to the beat of a waltz.

COVER PAGE - The first page of the screenplay. It contains the title, author names, and author address data.

CUT TO - To immediately go to another person or setting

DISSOLVE TO - A film editing technique where one scene "melts" or fades into another scene. Can be used in place of "cut to" to suggest a longer passage of time but not strictly necessary

ESTABLISHING SHOT - Used to give an overall perspective of a scene. This is rarely used now but would be done thus

EXT. ROBIN'S HOUSE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

EXT. - Used in the scene heading. Short for exterior.

FADE IN - This is the start of the screenplay. The screenplay always begins with this statement.

FADE OUT - Equivalent to THE END in a novel. The screenplay always ends with this statement.

FLASHBACK – an earlier scene. EXT. ROBIN'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

INT. - Used in the Master Scene Heading. Short for interior.

INSERT - An item that is inserted into the camera view. Usually a note, or picture is inserted so the audience can either read what is on the note, or see the picture.

LOG LINE - A one or two sentence summary of your screenplay which is designed to intrigue someone enough to want to read it.
MASTER SCENE HEADING (SLUG LINE) - Begins each new scene. It consists of three parts: The LOCATION, PLACE, and TIME of the scene. e.g.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT or INT. BEDROOM - DAY

MONTAGE / SERIES OF SHOTS - A number of different scenes shown one after the other, in bullet points. Used to show a number of events passing in a short period of time.

[MORE] and (CONT) – a parenthetical, used when a dialog speech continues over the page.

O.S. / O.C. - OFF SCREEN or OFF CAMERA. A character talks, or something happens out of view of the camera.

PARENTHEticals (WRyLIES) - Direction for the actor in a scene e.g. "(wryly)" or 
"(sadly)" Usually signals an emotional action. Only use when it isn’t obvious.

PAN - A camera shot from side to side. (Rather than use this in a screenplay, suggest the same shot in another way)

PLOT POINT - A turning point, or transition in the screenplay that propels the screenplay forward.

POV - Point of View. The perspective view of one character as they look at another character, or thing in the scene.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: (self explanatory – the camera pulls back)

SPEC SCRIPT - A speculative screenplay, written while not under contract.

SPLIT SCREEN - The location of the scene is divided in to two, or more, sections.

SUBLIM - A shot lasting less than a second. (A very brief flashback)

SUPER - A superimposition. One image merged into another image. Or a subtitle, superimposed over the images.

TILT DOWN (or UP) – a vertical camera movement.


V.O. - Voice Over. Usually used by a narrator of a scene. The character doing the VO is usually not in the same location as the scene.

ZOOM - A camera focus upon something in the scene. (Rather than use this in a screenplay, suggest the same shot in another way)

Source: http://www.robinkelly.btinternet.co.uk/atoz.htm
DIALOG

Dialog must be convincing and, in a feature film, the less there is, the better. Remember Syd Field’s Screenwriting Rule #1: Show, Don’t Tell.

In other words - use dialog only as a last resort, if the information cannot be shown visually, or conveyed in some other way, i.e. via sound, or a character’s body language, or actions.

TV is more ‘talky’ than film, usually because of lower budgets, and because as a medium, television is more explicit, whereas film is more implicit.

According to writer Alan Armer, dialog can simultaneously serve many functions:

1) advance the plot (moves the story forward)
2) communicate facts and information to the audience
3) reveal and deepen character
4) deliver exposition
5) establish relationships between characters
6) comment on the action
7) connect scenes

Armer summarizes it thus:

Dialog should advance the plot while revealing character.

Most lines of good dialog have 5 common elements:

1. Economy
2. Simplicity
3. Vernacular speech
4. Invisibility
5. Progression

Always keep the lines ‘in character”: i.e. Remember “A Martian wouldn’t say that.”

Source: http://industrycentral.net/writers/scriptips/6.htm
SOME OTHER DIALOG `GUIDELINES':

· Ask yourself: Are the CHARACTER VOICES distinctive? (As a test, cover the character names, and read the dialog aloud. Can you pick who is talking, in each case?)

· Use contrasting characters, each with utterly clear individual motivations and speech patterns. Does the hero have a strong GOAL?

· Dialog should always come OUT OF THE CHARACTER. Never just write a line borne of another line.

· Weave the dialog – and don’t exhaust your topic: eg ABCDEFG is not great, ADBEACFEG - is better

· Slang, jargon and idiom helps fix a character's age group, class, and nationality.

· Dominant characters speak in imperatives: eg "Do it now." "I insist."

· Use bad grammar to “keep it real” - half-phrased thoughts, sentences without verbs, and word-association.

· A character's obsessions are reflected subliminally in his most frequently-used words: eg "friend, success, love."

· Remember behaviour modification: (We speak differently in front of the boss!)

· Short anecdotes can work well in film. (See Quint’s ‘Indianapolis’ story in “Jaws”, Harry Dean Stanton in Paris, Texas, Rose’s reminiscences in Titanic)

· Dialog should never be ‘literary’ - unless a literature professor is talking. It must always sound like real, live talk. (NB - Unless purposely stylized, like say in A Clockwork Orange)

· Use pauses and (beat) – as SILENCE has great dramatic effect in a cinema. Audiences can imply a lot into a character's meaningful silence. (Cinema is implicit. TV is explicit.)

· Remember: Economy of dialog.
**SUBTEXT**

TEXT is what is said in dialog.

SUBTEXT is what is UNSAID rather than SAID: i.e. What is `really going on` - what happens below the surface of a scene; thoughts, feelings, judgements.

Remember: SUBTEXT is when you're dating; TEXT is when you're married...

As a writer, you want to seduce the audience.

"T.V. scriptwriting teaches you to write badly because you have to write about what you're seeing: you have to write about "The Problem". You have no chance to create any SUBTEXT of a scene." Bob Towne

* Avoid "on the nose" dialog. Dialog that is "on the nose", is when you write the SUBTEXT. In real life, people seldom say what they mean.
FAMOUS LINES from films of the 1990’s

“I’m the king of the world!” – Titanic

“I do wish we could chat longer, but I’m having an old friend for dinner.” Silence of the Lambs

“Yeah baby, yeah!” Austin Powers

“Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates” Forrest Gump

“I’ll have what she’s having” When Harry Met Sally

“You can't handle the truth!” A Few Good Men

“To infinity and beyond!” Toy Story

“What do you give a wife who has everything? An injection of insulin.” Reversal of Fortune

“Let’s just keep going.” Thelma and Louise

SOME MEMORABLE LINES FROM AUSTRALIAN FILMS

“That’s not a knife – THAT’s a knife.” Crocodile Dundee

“Shoot straight, you bastards!” Breaker Morant

“In this world only the strong survive. The weak get crushed like insects.” Shine

“You’re terrible, Muriel.” Muriel’s Wedding

“People don’t believe in heroes anymore!” Mad Max

“The greatest thing you’ll ever learn - is just to love and be loved in return.” Moulin Rouge

“That’ll do, pig. That'll do.” Babe

“It’s just the vibe of it.” The Castle
SOME CLASSIC MOVIE LINES

"I'm sorry Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that."
HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

"Did America give up when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?"
John Belushi as Bluto in *Animal House*

"Shut up and deal"
Shirley Maclaine as Fran Kubelik in *The Apartment*

"I love the smell of napalm in the morning."
Robert Duvall as Lt. Col. Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*

"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take this any more!"
Peter Finch as Howard Beal in *Network*

"Insanity runs in my family...It practically gallops!"
Cary Grant as Mortimer Brewster in *Arsenic And Old Lace*

"I'll alert the media."
John Geilgud as Hobson in *Arthur*

"A real woman could stop you from drinking."..."It'd have to be a real big woman."
Dudley Moore as Arthur Bach in *Arthur*

"Who are those guys?"
Paul Newman as Butch Cassidy in *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*

"Hoo-Haa!"
Al Pacino as Lt. Colonel Frank Slade in *Scent Of A Woman*

"Ahh, but the strawberries, that's, that's where I had them. They laughed at me and made jokes, but I proved beyond a shadow of a doubt and with geometric logic that a duplicate key to the wardroom icebox did exist... Naturally I, I can only cover these things from memory. If I've left anything out, why just ask me specific questions and I'll be glad to answer them one by one."
Humphrey Bogart as Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny*

"Here's looking at you kid."
Humphrey Bogart as Rick Blaine in *Casablanca*

"Play it for me, Sam."
Ingrid Bergman as Ilsa Laszlo in *Casablanca*

"Round up the usual suspects."
Claude Raines as Capt. Louis Renault in *Casablanca*
"You know you don't have to act with me Steve. You don't have to say anything and you don't have to do anything. Not a thing. Oh, maybe just whistle. You know how to whistle don't you Steve? You just put your lips together and blow."
Lauren Bacall as Marie Browning in *To Have And Have Not*

"Badges? We ain't got no badges. We don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinkin' badges!"
Alfonso Bedoya as Gold Hat in *The Treasure Of The Sierra Madre*

"That's a pretty good catch, that catch 22."
Alan Arkin as Yossarian in *Catch-22*

"What we've got here is failure to communicate."
Strother Martin as Captain in *Cool Hand Luke*

"That's not a knife. This's a knife!"
Paul Hogan as Crocodile Dundee in *Crocodile Dundee*

"Garth, Klaatu Barada Nikto."
Patricia Neal as Helen Benson in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*

"This river don't go to Aintry. You done taken a wrong turn."
Bill McKinney as the Mountain Man in *Deliverance*

"I know what you're thinkin': Did he fire 6 shots or only 5? Well to tell you the truth in all this excitement I've kinda lost track myself, but bein' this is a .44 magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world and would blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well do ya, punk?"
Clint Eastwood as Harry Calahan in *Dirty Harry*

"Go ahead, make my day."
Clint Eastwood as Harry Callahan in *Sudden Impact*

"Build it and they will come!"
Kevin Costner as Ray Kinsella in *Field of Dreams*

"You can't handle the truth!"
Jack Nicholson as the Marine officer in *A Few Good Men*

"and hold the chicken!"
Jack Nicholson as Robert Dupea in *Five Easy Pieces*

"Life is like a box of chocolates."
Tom Hanks as Forrest Gump in *Forrest Gump*

"Are we having fun yet?"
Carol Burnett as Kate Burroughs in *The Four Seasons*
"We came, we saw, we kicked ass!"
Bill Murray as Dr. Peter Venkman in *Ghostbusters*

"What did you do today?"..."Oh, same-o, same-o"
Bill Murray as Phil Conners in *Groundhog Day*

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."
Marlon Brando as Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*

"Bond, James Bond"
Sean Connery as James Bond

"Smith, Nevada Smith"
Steve McQueen as Max Sand in *Nevada Smith*

"Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn!"
Clark Gable as Rhett Butler in *Gone With The Wind*

"I don't know nuthin' bout birthin' babies."
Butterfly McQueen as Prissy in *Gone With The Wind*

"Do you like to play pool for money, Eddie?"
Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats in *The Hustler*

"Good Morning Vietnam!"
Robin Williams as Adrian Cronhauer in *Good Morning Vietnam!*

"He chose poorly."
Robert Eddison as The Knight in *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*

"When the gods wish to punish us, they grant our wishes."
Meryl Street as Karen Bliksen in *Out of Africa*

"You're gonna need a bigger boat..."
Roy Scheider as Chief Martin Brody in *Jaws*

"Tell them to go out there... and win just one for the gipper."
Pat O'Brian as Knute Rockne in *Knute Rockne, All American*

"That's a real badge and I'm a real cop and this is a real gun!"
Mel Gibson as Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon*
"Love means never having to say you're sorry."
Ali MacGraw as Jenny Cavilleri in *Love Story*

"Alright, who did it? who did it??"
James Cagney as The Captain in *Mister Roberts*

"Captain, it is I, Ensign Pulver, and I just threw your stinkin' palm tree overboard. Now what's all this crud about no movie tonight?"
Jack Lemmon as Ensign Frank Thurlow Pulver in *Mr. Roberts*

"I've got all your names and your addresses!"
Jack Lemmon as George Kellerman in *The Out-of-towners*

"Nobody throws me my own guns and says run. Nobody."
James Coburn as Britt in *The Magnificent Seven*

"By gad sir, you are a character!"
Sidney Greenstreet as Caspar Gutman in *The Maltese Falcon*

"Don't be silly. You're taking the fall."
Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*

"I don't know Ange, what do you feel like doin'??"
Ernest Borgnine as Marty in *Marty*

"Listen here pilgrim, you caused a lot of trouble this morning. Mighta gotten somebody killed, somebody oughta belt you in the mouth, but I won't, I won't. The Hell I won't!"
John Wayne as G.W. McLintock in *McLintock!*

"Yes my dear, but by noon I'll sober - and you'll still be ugly!"
W. C. Fields as Harold Bissonette in *It's A Gift*

"The verdict was that he was the best shot in Texas."
W. C. Fields as Commodore Orlando Jackson in *Mississippi*

"You bet I'm shy. I'm a shyster lawyer!"
Groucho Marx in *Monkey Business*

"I shot an elephant in my pajamas, what he was doing in them, I will never know."
Groucho Marx in *Animal Crackers*

"So brave nights, if you do doubt your courage or your strength, come no further, for death awaits you all with nasty pointy teeth!"
John Cleese as Tim The Enchanted in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*
"You little creep."
James Stewart as Roger Hobbs in *Mr. Hobbs Takes A Vacation*

"I'll live to see you, all of you, hanging from the highest yardarm in the British fleet!"
Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh in *Mutiny On The Bounty*

"I'm not an actor, I'm a movie star!"
Peter O'Toole as Alan Swann in *My Favorite Year*

"We're all gonna have so much fun we'll need plastic surgery to remove our smiles!
You'll be whistling zip-a-dee-doo-dah out of your assholes!"
Chevy Chase as Clark Griswald in *National Lampoon's Vacation*

"Now it's garbage."
Walter Matthau as Oscar Madison in *The Odd Couple*

"I coulda' been a contender, I coulda' been somebody, instead of a bum. which is what I am."
Marlon Brando as Terry Malloy in *On The Waterfront*

"You won't have to tell your grandkids you shovelled shit in Louisiana!"
George C. Scott as General George S. Patton in *Patton*

"To Berlin! I'm gonna personally shoot that paper hangin' son of a bitch!"
George C. Scott as General George S. Patton in *Patton*

"Get your paws off me - you damn dirty ape!"
Charlton Heston as George Taylor in *Planet Of The Apes*

"Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the Earth!"
Gary Cooper as Lou Gehrig in *The Pride Of The Yankees*

"What're we waitin' for!"
Burgess Meredith as Mickey in *Rocky II*

"Did we win?"
Jackie Gleason as Sgt. Enos Slaughter in *Soldier in the Rain*

"Well, nobody's perfect."
Joe E. Brown as Osgood E. Fielding III in *Some Like It Hot*

"May The Force be with you."
Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*

"That's a fact, Jack!"
Bill Murray as John Winger in *Stripes*
"You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? Then who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well I'm the only one here."
Robert DeNiro as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*

"Hasta la vista, baby"
Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*

"I'll be back."
Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator in *The Terminator*

"You have no taste, a lousy sense of humor, and you smell."
Cher as Alexandra Medford in *The Witches Of Eastwick*

"Did you call us beavers on your CB? I hate that. I hate when they call us beavers."
Geena Davis as Thelma Dickinson in *Thelma And Louise*

"If you don't work, you don't eat."
Michael Parks as Jim Bronson in *Then Came Bronson*

"Wanna see something really scary?"
Dan Akroyd in *Twilight Zone: The Movie*

"What's up, Doc?"
Barbar Streisand in *What's Up Doc*

"There's only two things I'm scared of...Women and the po-leece."
Burt Reynolds as Gator McKlusky in *White Lightning*

"I'll get you my pretty, and your little dog too!"
Margaret Hamilton as The Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard Of Oz*

"Why don't you come up and see me sometime?"
Mae West as Lady Lou in *She Done Him Wrong*

"I want to be alone."
Greta Garbo as Grusinskaya in *Grand Hotel*

"Well, there's another fine mess you've gotten us into."
Oliver Hardy

"Toto? I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."
Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard Of Oz*

Source: http://www.storydomain.com/movielin.htm
SOME SCRIPT EDITING QUESTIONS:

PREMISE
Is there a clear and strong premise, concept, or idea?

CHARACTER
Whose story is it? Who do we `root" for?
Do we care about the people in the story, and what happens to them?
Are the characters interesting and big enough? Do they have clear wants?
How does the lead character change through the script?
Are there roles in this script for which actors would kill to portray?

STORY
What is the story?
Is the story `big" enough for cinema?
Are there enough visual elements?
Does the story contain a strong protagonist/antagonist conflict?
Are there enough twists, surprises, reversals?
What is at stake?

STRUCTURE
Where does the story start? Is it too long/late in starting?
Do the plot points work?
Are the scenes sequenced well?
Does each scene push the story forward?
Are any scenes too long?
Is all the `juice' wrung out from the scenes?
Is everything that is `set up" in the first act, later `paid off" in the third?

DIALOG
Is there too much dialog, and not enough visual action?
Is it `dialog-driven', rather than character-driven?
Is the dialog well-differentiated for each character?
Is the dialog too `obvious'?
Is the tone consistent with the genre? (e.g. thriller, comedy)
Is the script layout okay?

THEME
What is this story `really" about?
Are there thematic visual metaphors?
SCRIPT EDITING: THE SCENE-BY-SCENE ANALYSIS

1 - What is the mood of this scene, and how is it indicated? What role does the setting play in creating this mood or ambience? Or does it counterpoint it? Is it ironic?

2 - What in this scene, is revealed (if any) of the backstory?

3 - What is the subtext of the scene? How is it evidenced by dialog, action and/or mood? What are the characters really saying to each other? That is, what are the emotions and strategies underlying the dialog?

4 - What do the characters bring to the scene from the previous action in the story?

5 - Summarize the character relationship.

6 - Whose scene is it? Do any character changes take place? What is the logic of the scene? – Are the actions and events are consistent and believable, composed of incidents that could reasonably happen?

7 - What does each character want - and why is it hard to get it – i.e. What is the nature of the conflict in the scene?

8 - What “story point” is made in the scene? What is the basic action?

9 - What is the scene’s ‘red dot’; (i.e. when the scene actually makes its story point.)

10 - Are there ‘twists” in the scene? Twist is like a plot point, when the scene gets new energy, or bounces off in a new direction.

11 – Could this scene be cut?
THE SIX C’S OF LOW-BUDGET FILM MAKING

by Michael Brindley*

1. CONCEPT - a cinematic approach to an original idea - "the triumph of content over form".

2. COLLABORATION - efficiency dictates that everyone is "working on the same show". The writer, director (film is the directors medium, TV is the writer’s), DOP and production designer – and the actors!

3. CONTAINMENT - every camera move (new setup) costs time and money (which are the same thing). Keep them to a minimum. Can it be a 25-day shoot? Less?

4. CAST - Try and get film actors. They’d best not be who you can see on TV!

5. CONTROL - on a low budget, leave as little as possible to chance (never work with WAK: water, animals, or kids!)

6. COST - know what you have to spend, and exactly how you will spend it (stunts, explosions, special effects, outdoor, nighttime, dialog in moving cars, expensive locations?)

It all comes back to CONCEPT: the strength of the low budget feature lies in its central idea.

*Source: Michael Brindley, “Writing the Low Budget Feature” from `Low Means Low’ - Papers from the Low Budget Feature Seminar, Australian Film Commission, Woolloomooloo, 1996
SOME MORE BOOKS ABOUT SCRIPTWRITING

Screenplay by Syd Field
Four Screenplays by Syd Field
The Screenwriter’s Workbook by Syd Field
Making A Good Script Great by Linda Seger
How To Write A Screenplay in 21 Days by Viki King
The Writer’s Journey by Chris Vogler
The Heroine’s Journey: Woman’s Quest for Wholeness by Maureen Murdock
Story by Robert McKee
Adventures In The Screen Trade by William Goldman
Which Lie Did I Tell? by William Goldman

Also, a couple of other good texts worth noting are:

The Technique of Screen & Television Writing by Eugene Vale
Alternative Scriptwriting by Ken Dancyger & Jeff Rush

And specifically for the Australian market:

Scriptwriting Updated by Linda Aronson
Big Screen: Small Screen by Coral Drouyn
SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE

Although some writers prefer a simple word-processing package such as Word, there are also software packages you can purchase to assist with formatting and editing screenplays and scripts on computer. They include:

- Final Draft
- Scriptware
- ScriptThing
- Script Wizard
- Movie Magic Screenwriter
- Celtx (free)

On the other hand, Woody Allen writes longhand in pencil while lying face-down across his bed, and some writers still use a typewriter.

STORY DEVELOPMENT SOFTWARE

These packages contain built-in craft tools for dramatic story development and structure.

- Dramatica Pro
- Story Builder
- StoryCraft
- Blockbuster
Finally,

All the very best with your Screenplay!

Joe T Velikovsky
Screenwriter

http://on-writering.blogspot.com/

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Now, WRITE!