

TV DRAMA SCREENWRITING PROCESS

"I didn't go to film school. One thing that's hard for me as a writer, is every time I write, i feel like I'm still figuring out my process. So I watched myself during this last script and took notes on what I do."

PLAN At a basic level, answering a series of questions you ask yourself.

1	2	3	4
WHAT'S THE STORY?	HOW WILL I TELL IT?	WHY WILL WE CARE?	WHY NOW?
This is about character and plot .	This is about genre , structure and POV .	This is about the protagonist .	This is about theme , irony , relevance .

STRUCTURE Shakespeare wrote drama in 5 acts and basically, we still do that.

TEASER	ACT 1	ACT 2	ACT 3	ACT 4	ACT 5
INCITING INCIDENT	THE SETUP	STORY DEVELOPS	THE HITCH	EMOTIONAL PAYOFF	RESOLVE OR PLOT THICKENS

"I write the story on 5x8 cards. A scene per card. Then I mess with the structure more cinematically"

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Escalating Complications. Ways the story and characters continue to get in the way of the protagonist's goals and/or the protagonist gets in their own way.

OUTLINE Next, I write a detailed outline. Every scene of the story, written in prose.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who the characters are and what they want. The emotional arcs of the characters. The order of the scenes. 	18 pages	"This is NOT a how-to. This is just what works for me."

WRITE I build a first draft, questions I ask when writing scenes:

- What needs to happen to tell the story? Whose point of view is this? How can I show this psychologically? What is cool about the scene? Why am I excited about writing it? If I'm not, then there's something that could be cooler about it.
- What do we learn about the characters? How are they changed?
- How does this move story forward? Can I write this in a way I haven't seen before? In a way I don't expect to see it? Can I skip the part we assume happened? What would make this scene more memorable, visually?
- What would make this scene funnier? More moving? What would REALLY happen in real life, not on TV?
- In what order does the information in the scene reveal itself? How do I get from a, b to c with exposition and conflict? What's the most efficient way to start the scene? Where does the scene need to LAND so the viewer/reader digests what's just happened?

Most scenes make one story point. Some two, rarely three. If a scene is trying to do too much (serve too much plot or too many storylines): I ask, is half the scene a later beat? Better saved for a later episode?

REVIEW Be the critical voice who will read the draft. Get in front of what they might say.

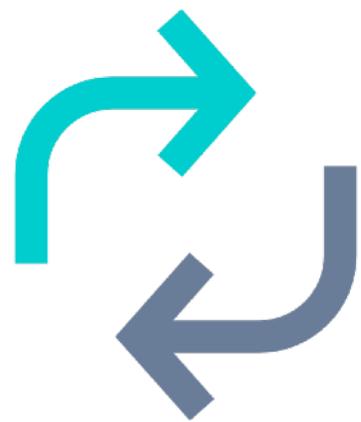
<p>What are the stakes/danger? Where's the tension? Why do we care? What makes me want to see more? Why do they HAVE to get what they want? What is your intent? What are the themes?</p>		<p>"Address potential challenges and questions you can predict execs will ask you by answering them IN THE WRITING and prevent having to do it anyway in the next draft."</p>
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REWRITE

1. Revise, cut and tighten the dialogue.
2. Push characters/story further than feels comfortable to make bolder choices that will reveal character.
3. Tighten action lines so verbs are more active. So lines fit on less lines. More white space, faster read.
4. *Walk around thinking about how I can improve the work. Dance to my headphones. Splurge on good food and eat well. I read stuff that takes my mind off the story or deepens my understanding of it.*
5. Skim the script for the main story beats. Is this the right order? I pretend I'm watching it in fast motion. Where do scenes seem out of order?
6. Re-structure and re-order scenes.
7. Voila! I have a SECOND DRAFT.

REPEAT

1. Trim and tighten the 2nd draft.
2. Next, I focus scenes on their point in the story. Less is more.
3. I CUT my darlings, and then cut MORE darlings.
4. Another dialogue/action line pass.
5. I check the structure and scene order again.
6. *I get feedback from 2-3 trusted readers/friends/colleagues who share my sensibility and address their notes.*
7. *I sleep on it.*
8. I read it one sitting and I polish it.
9. *Someone proofreads it for typos and inconsistencies.*
10. Then, I TURN IT IN!



SUBMIT

And wait for notes...THE END.