

## Scriptwriting Skill Module

### Technical Instructions

#### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Understand that television and movie scripts follow a generally accepted format
- Gain command of script format to write a more professional script

#### RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – Technical Instructions that Make Your Script Look Professional

#### Additional Online Support:

- [www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com](http://www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com)
- [www.BlueNoseEd.com](http://www.BlueNoseEd.com)

### Teach the Skill

**1. Introduce Technical Instructions:** Technical Instructions are parts of TV and film scripts that tell filmmakers exactly how to shoot the story being told in a script. Over time, writers for TV and film have agreed upon a basic way to format a script. Tell the students that learning the right way to format a script will allow them to spend more creative energy on things like their story and their characters. Using the correct script format is like using good grammar. While it is possible to tell a good story without it, students are more likely to be taken seriously if their scripts conform to the format accepted by professionals.

#### 2. Teach Technical Instructions:

- Tell students that a film or TV script has three basic parts: 1) narrative descriptions, 2) dialogue, and 3) headings. Headings are also called “sluglines.” The sluglines contain established code words and abbreviations that tell readers and film technicians how the script should be captured by a camera. Sluglines always appear in **CAPITAL LETTERS**. And scripts for TV and movies are always printed in the **Courier** font. Tell the students that the following technical instructions are the ones that are most commonly used. They should memorize them, and use them when they are writing their scripts.

#### EXAMPLE

Type of Technical Instruction	Most Common Sluglines	Specific Examples
Main Scene Headings	Location of Camera: Exterior (EXT.) or Interior (INT.) Scene Location Time: (DAY or NIGHT)	INT. LIBRARY – NIGHT EXT. BASEBALL FIELD – DAY INT. FIRST CLASS CABIN IN 747 – NIGHT
Secondary and other headings	FADE IN: to gradually open on a scene FADE OUT: to gradually fade to black INTERCUT: to cut back to a scene in a different place, occurring at the same time as the main scene. INSERT: to focus on a detail in a scene.	FADE IN: EXT. ARMY BASE – DAY At the base’s main gate, a car pulls up. After a glance, the guard waves the car through. INTERCUT – THE OVAL OFFICE –THE WHITE HOUSE INSERT – A LARGE HAIRY HAND, BELONGING TO A GORILLA, PICKS UP THE RECEIVER TO A RED PHONE.

	<p><b>MONTAGE:</b> a quick series of images that establish a character’s mental process or the feel of a place.</p> <p><b>DREAM:</b> for dream sequences.</p> <p><b>FLASHBACK:</b> to go back in time.</p>	<p>As the phone rings, the GORILLA looks soulfully out the window of the White House.</p> <p><b>MONTAGE – THE GORILLA’S MIND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- - Babyhood in a peaceful jungle.</li> <li>- - Being captured by poachers.</li> <li>- - Escaping from the Washington zoo.</li> <li>- - Gaining entrance to the Oval Office, locking President in closet.</li> </ul> <p><b>BACK TO THE OVAL OFFICE</b></p> <p>The Gorilla talks into the phone.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GORILLA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes, I’d like a large pepperoni pizza, please. Extra cheese. And if you get here in fifteen minutes, I’ll give you a nice tip.</p>
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Other things about script formatting the students should know include: 1) the characters names in passages of dialog are centered, in all caps, 2) action is written in complete sentences, in the present tense

**3. Apply Technical Instructions:** Hand out copies of “You Try It: Technical Instructions that Make Your Script Look Professional.” After reading the directions, have the students work through the exercise individually. When all are finished, to ensure that all questions have been answered, work through the exercise as a class.

**QUICK CHECK** Ask students to define “technical instructions” in TV and movies. Have them give examples of the most common formatting headings, and tell how they are used.

## YOU TRY IT!

# Technical Instructions that Make Your Script Look Professional

### GOAL

**Technical Instructions**, such as headings that tell where the camera is located, what scene is being shot, and other vital information, is conveyed in scripts in a specific and generally recognized format. To make sure that your script gets a fair shot in the Blue Nose Scriptwriting Contest, use the format preferred by Hollywood professionals!

### Technical Effects that Make Your Script Look Professional

**DIRECTIONS** Read each scene on the right, then re-write the scene in the box on the left, using professional technical instructions and formatting.

Original Scene	Scene Re-Written In Professional Format
<p>A submarine on the surface of the ocean. You see it from the outside. Then you focus in on a large hole in the side of it. Then you go inside, to the bridge. The Captain, looking crazy, takes a long drink from a bottle of whiskey.</p> <p>Captain: Dive, ye scoundrels! Dive, I say!</p> <p>Lieutenant: But sir, we can't dive! We have a gigantic hole in the side of our submarine.</p> <p>Captain: What is this, eh? Mutiny? If it's mutiny, I'll have ye all strung up from the highest yardarm!</p> <p>Elsewhere on the ship, another officer, Commander Cody, is radioing headquarters.</p> <p>Commander Cody: Yes, sir. He's drunk as a lord, and he wants to dive. If he gets his way, we will perish in an instant. What's that? Obey his orders? What is happening? Has the entire admiralty gone barking mad?</p>	
<p>Two young lovers walk hand-in-hand through Central Park, in New York City. It's a warm afternoon in summer, and children are playing everywhere.</p> <p>Clancy: Zowie, what a day. This has been the madcap Manhattan weekend of which I'd always dreamed.</p> <p>Chase: Yep. Everything sure has been perfect.</p> <p>Clancy: Except . . .</p> <p>Chase: Except what?</p> <p>Clancy thinks back on the day. She remembers Chase falling in a tank full of sea lions at the Bronx</p>	

Zoo. Then she remembers him falling off the Empire State building, and just barely being caught by the safety net. Then she remembers him tumbling down the stairway to the Subway, and almost getting run over by a train.

She looks back at Chase. From underneath his enormous ten-gallon hat, he produces a lovely bouquet of daisies.

Chase: Except what, darlin'?

Clancy smiles, accepts the daisies.

Clancy: Except nothing. Everything has been completely perfect!

### **Self-Check**

Did your use of professional formatting techniques make the scripts look cleaner and more appealing? As you write for your script for the Blue Nose Scriptwriting Contest, remember to put it in the format that will help it be taken seriously by all who read it.