How to Script ...
a Great Short Film/Video

Many of the best writers and directors started out making short films. It's an excellent way to develop your skills when you don't have much writing experience. Plus, you won't have to invest nearly as much time and effort.

The only real difference between a short script and a feature-length script is length.

"Shorts used to be this artsy thing. But now there really is this explosion in film-making. With all this new technology, shorts films have a lot more interest among regular people, because so many people are making them and putting them on the web. Suddenly, we're not explaining short films to people. Everybody's seen one." ~ IndieWire:

So, when writing a short film, follow these guidelines:

Learn ... Don't "Borrow"
Watch as many short films as possible. CAUTION! ... Learn from, but don't "borrow," from other films. There are way too many clichés in short films and avoid stereotypes. Script what you're familiar with. Focus on what resonates with you ... what stimulates emotional responses in you.

Short is Great
For a 3-minute video, your script should be no more than 2+ pages. Remember ... "less is best." The shorter the film, the less it will cost you to produce. You may be doing things on the cheap – nothing wrong with that – but time still costs money and you probably have a film crew who require feeding and supplied with appropriate refreshments.

Take your time. Don't be hasty with your decisions. If you move too fast then your finished product may wind up looking quite amateurish. Cheap is good only as long as things don't look cheap!

Use Common Sense
Because of its length, writing a short video will allow you the opportunity to become more aware of the time and cost implications of each line of text. What you have created in your mind may be difficult to create on video unless you have plenty of financial backing and expertise. If you only have access to minimal resources, think small. Believe it or not, this will probably make for a better result.

Locations
Write your script for locations that are interesting and practical. You will need to be able to access your locations easily and without much in the way of interruption. Remember, time of day will be important because of lighting considerations. And, for budget reasons, keep them close to home.

Make It Visual

Remember "show and tell"? The important word for you is "show". Film is a visual medium so, in most cases, you should keep the "tell" to an absolute minimum. The less dialogue the better. With this in mind you will end up with a shorter script – less writing! – and a better film.

Those are the golden rules of screenwriting that the gurus keep telling us. Yet it's astonishing to see how "talky" most scripts are. Films are designed to tell stories in pictures which is also the most economical way to tell a story. And you will probably want to create visual back-stories for your characters.

The Basic Format

When story-telling you will usually have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. And the ending will usually tie back to the beginning. It's pretty basic.

Tell a Story

The best short films often explore a moment in time with a compelling story at its core. You must engage your audience emotionally. A common approach is to feature a central character/hero with some kind of challenge or adversary to deal with. Unless your film is extremely brief, a short film should have a hero with a goal and an obstacle/antagonist in the way.

It is always good to have some kind of goal or deadline that has to be met by the end. A little tension can be quite effective. However, if your film is more visual, aesthetics will play a more important role.

Get their Attention

You have very little time to make an impression so you must "hook" the viewers almost immediately. How do you want their emotions to progress through the screening? Your film should always leave viewers with a feeling of satisfaction ... that they didn't just waste their time ... that they got something out of the experience.

Contact

We are always delighted to help in any way possible.

Email: Support@3MinuteFestivals.com
Website: www.3MinuteFestivals.com