

Screenwriting and Ideation

Act 1

25% of story

Audience must know the genre within the first few pages.

Set up - something starts to happen.

Usually introduce protagonist first.

Introduce other characters.

Create the world of the story (as well as your take on it)

-what are the rules?

Act 1 (cont.)

-What is emphasized? Doesn't have to be realistic. Has to be believable

Introduce antagonist. Set up a conflict at the end of the first act.

Set up the stakes. Why is it worth it to go after the goal?

What is the decision that must be made in order for the protagonist to go after his/her goal?

The Inciting Incident - takes the character in another direction.

Know what your character wants.

Act 1 (cont.)

“Somewhere in the first five minutes of a well-structured screenplay, someone (usually not the main character) will pose a question, or make a statement (usually to the main character) that is the theme of the movie.

“Be careful what you wish for,” this person will say, or “Pride goeth before a fall” or “Family is more important than money.”

It won't be this obvious, it will be conversational, an off-hand remark that the main character doesn't quite get at the moment – but will have far-reaching and meaningful impact later. This is the movie's thematic premise.”

Act 2

Two thirds of the story.

Confrontation.

Throw obstacles in the face of your character.

Protagonist must make choices to pursue goal

-these choices must escalate

At the end of the first act, the protagonist knows that they must confront antagonist.

Act 3

Fulfill the promise of the set up while still maintaining the concept of surprise. Inevitable but surprising.

Answers the central question.

Climax - final beat.

Audience must believe that the character has changed.

Denouement - aftermath.

Additional Notes

Just when you think you know where your character is going, think of the opposite thing that could happen. TURN IT

You must be able to tell your story in 3 sentences. Spoken out loud. Do this before you can write.

How to reveal character: Think about what's going on emotionally

Treatment

A prose description of the plot, written in present tense, as the film will unfold to the audience, scene by scene.

Genre

A class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, technique, or the like

A kind, category, or sort of literary or artistic work



ACTION



ADVENTURE



COMEDY



**CRIME &
GANGSTER**



DRAMA



**EPICS/
HISTORICAL**



HORROR



MUSICALS /DANCE



**SCIENCE
FICTION**



WAR



WESTERNS

Elements of a screenplay

Title

Scene Headings

Stage Directions also referred to as **Prose** or **Action**

Character

Personal Direction (parentheticals)

Dialogue

Scene
Heading

Title

KEBACLE

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN STREET CORNER - DAY

It's lunchtime. A small clean food cart stands near the corner of a busy midtown intersection. Smoke from the grill envelopes the small crowd gathered around.

AAMIR, an Egyptian food vendor in his mid-thirties stands under the cart's umbrella taking orders, turning kebabs on the grill and making change. It is organized chaos.

Stage
Directions

AAMIR
(handing over an order)
Two beef, two soda. Who's next?

A NEW YORKER speaks up from behind two TOURISTS.

Dialogue

NEW YORKER

Can I get a-

TOURIST HUSBAND

Excuse me. We've been waiting here.

Personal
Directions

TOURIST WIFE

(to Aamir)

We were here first.

AAMIR
Yes, I know, what can I get you?

TOURIST HUSBAND
(slowly)
Let's see, a soft pretzel, two waters and... how much is a kebab?

AAMIR

Four dollars.

Character
Cue

The tourist hesitates.

TOURIST HUSBAND

What do you think, honey?

NEW YORKER
Give me a kebab. I don't care how much it is...

TOURIST HUSBAND
Okay, we'll take two, please.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)
Shawarma here! No onions.

NEW YORKER
...and a Coke.

AAMIR
Coming right up my friends.

Aamir goes to work, filling three orders at the same time.

A SIREN blips and an NYPD van pulls up to the curb beside the food cart. A POLICE OFFICER rolls down his window.

AAMIR
Hello officer. What can I get you?

OFFICER
Your permit?

Aamir points to faded paperwork taped to the side of his cart, while he hands the tourists their order. The officer shoots him a look and Aamir shrugs.

As the officer writes out a ticket, Aamir tosses pita bread on the grill.

OFFICER
C'mon now, pack it up. Show's over.
(hands Aamir the ticket)
You know you're not supposed to be here.

Aamir nods and lowers his umbrella. The police van slowly pulls into traffic and the customers shuffle in place.

Aamir watches as the van drives around the corner and out of sight. Then he opens the umbrella back up.

AAMIR
Alright, who had the Shawarma?

CUSTOMER (O.S.)
That's me.

Aamir tosses lamb on the grill and wraps up the New Yorker's order

AAMIR
Five dollars my friend. Who's next?

FADE OUT

2
Page #'s
upper right

Off-screen
indication

Scene
Ending

Final Draft

Short Films

Spider

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyhs8dKMTN4>

The Good Priest

<https://vimeo.com/55589635>

password : robert