

## **BASIC SCREENWRITING VOCABULARY**

- \* Screenplays are written in the present tense. When you go back to the past you must indicate it's a Flashback and when you have returned from the past you must state it.
- \* Light is very important to writing a screenplay. You must always know if it is taking place inside or outside - interior or exterior. Light is so important to the making of a film because it determines how much something costs because if it's at night you'll need lighting equipment and therefore it will take more time and cost more money.
- \* Capitalize SOUNDS and CHARACTER names when you first introduce them.
- \* Screenplays written by Writers do not have camera angles only scripts written by Directors. (Establishing shots are OK) If you are directing your screenplay then you may add camera angles.

**If you are not using Final Draft or Screenwriting Software it is good to know these terms:**

**FADE IN:** This usually goes at the very beginning of all screenplays and teleplays.

**INT:** Means Interior - we have to indicate it's inside

**EXT:** Means Exterior - we have to indicate if it's outside

**SCENE HEADING** - We must state the location - start from biggest to small:

EXT. LOS ANGELES ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

An aerial shot of the L.A. Skyline showing the dark smog on a summer day.

EXT. WAREHOUSE ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

A HOMELESS MAN urinates on the corner as a POLICE CAR drives by.

INT. WAREHOUSE, BATHROOM - DAY

A WOMAN, gagged, tries to free her hands from the handcuffs.

**DAY** - indicates it is day

**NIGHT** - indicates it takes place at night'

**MAGIC** - indicates it's right when the sun is about to go down and the light is magical - very expensive to shoot but you can write it in if it adds to the story.

**SAME** - if the scenes are all happening at the same time.

**ACTION** - this is the scene description which must be written in present tense with action verbs written in the most succinct way of conveying as much information as possible.

**CONTINUOUS** - usually put in a scene heading when an action takes place in one room and continues into another room or in a car or elevator or another location but it's a continuous scene

**FLASHBACK** - when you want to tell reader the scene took place in the past.

**RETURN TO THE PRESENT** - when you want to tell the reader we are back to present time.

**INSERT** - when you want to tell reader/editor to pay attention to a small detail that normally will be missed so feature it so audience won't miss this detail

**FADE OUT:** - a transition to end a scene

**DISSOLVE:** - it is a slow fade out that gives audience time to breathe and release some of the tension from the last scene.

**SMASH CUT:** - super fast transition that is usually used to show a contradiction for the sake of comedy or to make a point.

**CUT TO:** basic transition - usually not needed in screenplays anymore because it is implied you have to cut to another scene after each scene.

**P.O.V.** - when you want something to be seen from the “Perspective” of the character - from their Point Of View

Character (**O.S.**) - Off Screen - dialogue is said off screen

Character (**O.C.**) - Off Camera - dialogue is said off camera

Character (**V.O.**) - Voice Over - dialogue is said above or from another source like a radio or phone.

**M.O.S.**- without sound

**(paranthalical)** - goes below character but above dialogue and it is only used to tell actor how to deliver a line not how to act - (sarcastically) (lying) - do not use often - only use sparingly.

**BEAT** - an emotional transition that is happening between characters or some emotional realization or transition - use sparingly.

**ACT** - usually in TV Shows they are written in the script to convey where a commercial break is to happen. In one hour TV Dramas there are usually Five Acts. In Half hours only Three, in two hour TV Stories about eight to nine Acts - depends on the network.