

FOR A FEW DAYS MORE

Written by

April Rider

[NOTE: A typical title page may look like this. For the Academy Nicholl Fellowships competition, you should eliminate all instances of your name, address, phone number and email address from the title page and all other pages of the screenplay. Only the title of the screenplay is needed. It is also permissible to include a U.S. Copyright Office or WGA registration number on the title page (though registration is not a requirement).]

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[This format guide was originally written by Greg Beal in 1996 and has been revised several times by him since then, most recently in February, 2014.]

FADE IN:

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

JOE and APRIL burst through the doors into a clean, well-lit seminar room.

JOE
Are we in time?

APRIL
How could they start without us?
We're the main attraction.

Joe catches his breath as he leans against the podium at the front of the room.

JOE
(looking about
the room)
We are?

APRIL
Don't be an idiot. You know we've
been invited to Austin to discuss
script format.

JOE
But why is the room empty?

April and Joe look out across the room - rows of empty chairs and nary a person in sight.

APRIL
Okay, okay. Don't panic.

She takes three deep breaths. Then April looks at her watch and smiles.

APRIL (CONT'D)
We're an hour early. . . . We
should rehearse.

JOE
Okay, you start. Margins?

APRIL
Left, 1.5 inches. Right, 1.0
inches. Top, 1.0 inches to the
body, 0.5 inches to the number.
Bottom, 0.5 to 1.5 inches,
depending upon where the page break
comes.

JOE

Page break?

APRIL

Right above you. There are rules for breaking a page. Scene headers remain attached to description. A single line of dialogue is pushed to the following page. A long dialogue passage would be split - but I'll get to that later.

JOE

What about fonts?

APRIL

Courier, 12-point, 10-pitch. Make sure it's a non-proportional version of Courier and avoid Courier New unless you want your script to be about 10% longer.

JOE

What about bold-face or italics? Or a cool font like Garamond? I love to jazz up my scripts.

APRIL

Mostly, you should steer clear of bold and italics. Definitely no Garamond, no Helvetica, no Times Roman. Stick with Courier. That's the industry standard.

JOE

Ah . . . we're talking about industry standards.

Suddenly, Joe bolts from behind the podium and runs out into:

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Joe glances up and down the hallway, then reaches back to open the door.

JOE

(calling)

April - come on! There's no one here.

APRIL
(walking through
the door)

A scene heading. Or a slug line, as I was taught in film school. Always CAPPED. Usually begins with INT. or EXT. What happens if we --

EXT. TEXAS CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Joe looks startled as he stands with April before the seat of Texas politics.

JOE
How'd you do that?

APRIL
There was a cut - from the hallway to the capitol. What'd you want to do - ride in a cab?

JOE
Dialogue margins.

APRIL
Left, 2.5 inches. Right, 2.5 inches. Of course, you can cheat those a tad.

JOE
So, you have about 3.5 inches for each line of dialogue?

APRIL
You've got it. And you can sneak out another character or two to the right and no one will hold it against you.

Joe jots down notes on a 3 x 5 card, studies the card for a moment, then scribbles another note.

JOE
(looking up)
And the position of the character's name?

APRIL
ALL CAPS, and tabbed to about 4.0 to 4.2 inches, depending upon the look you like. Some writers center all characters' names in dialogue. Personally, I don't think it matters too much.

(MORE)

APRIL (CONT'D)

The appearance of the script pages is slightly different in each case, but all are within the norm.

JOE

Hey! What happened?

APRIL

A page break appeared in the middle of my dialogue. You use (MORE) at the bottom of the page to show that the character's dialogue continues onto the next page. Then add (CONT'D) after the character's name to show that the lines have roots in the previous page.

JOE

But not everyone uses MOREs and CONT'Ds, do they?

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Joe stares up into the dome. April examines the portraits of Texas governors on the nearby walls.

APRIL

Some writers just plan their page breaks so as to avoid them.

JOE

(considering)
What about parentheticals?

APRIL

Start them about 0.5 inches to the left of the character name tab mark. In our case, that would be at 3.0 inches.

JOE

And what are they for?

APRIL

For years, parentheticals were used to express emotion, the manner in which a character spoke her lines. Loudly, passionately, sadly, and so on. That's frowned upon these days, but some writers still use them for bits of action.

JOE
 (going up a
 stairway)
 Something like this?

APRIL
 (following him)
 Exactly.

JOE
 How wide are parentheses?

APRIL
 Not very - about 1.5 inches. And
 they should wrap to the following
 line when they extend beyond that
 point.
 (pointing to the
 top of the page)
 If you place a parenthesis in the
 middle of a dialogue passage, it
 should remain distinct from the
 dialogue.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVERBOAT - NIGHT

A gambling boat is docked along the riverfront. April and Joe
 wander about its upper deck.

JOE
 I have to ask. What happened to CUT
 TO:s between scenes.

APRIL
 Some writers still use transitions
 such as CUT TO: and DISSOLVE TO:
 between scenes.

JOE
 Those would introduce a new scene
 header?

APRIL
 And typically a different place
 and/or time. But many writers have
 dispensed with such transitions,
 feeling that a new scene header
 clearly signifies a cut without the
 need of any additional indicator.

Joe gazes out at the river.

JOE

How did we reach the Mississippi
and when did the sun set?

APRIL

If you'd rather . . .

EXT. AIRPLANE - SUNSET

A jet liner cruises across Texas towards the setting sun.

INT. AIRPLANE

A customized interior, outfitted with leather chairs and
sofas. April and Joe sip salt-encrusted margaritas.

JOE

Is this a flashback?

APRIL

Or it could be tomorrow or next
month?

TITLE OVER:

October 25, 2014

APRIL (CONT'D)

You see, a whole year has passed.

JOE

Okay, I didn't notice. But I
thought only DAY and NIGHT were
allowed in scene headers.

APRIL

Production managers might prefer it
that way, but many writers use
headers as a means of depicting a
particular time of day. For
instance, SUNRISE, DAWN, LATE
AFTERNOON and SUNSET.

JOE

That's allowed?

APRIL

On a writer's draft, without a
doubt.

JOE

A writer's draft?

APRIL

Essentially, any draft that hasn't been paid for. A draft to be submitted to agents, managers, producers, development execs. Or even to a screenplay competition. Those are writer's drafts. And they should all be FIRST DRAFTS, no matter how many versions the writer has actually written.

JOE

You really think so?

APRIL

That's my recommendation.

INT. BLUE CAMARO - DAY

April drives along Austin's Congress Avenue as Joe rides shotgun.

JOE

You speak any foreign languages?

APRIL

(in French)

Of course, I do. Why do you ask?

JOE

What about action sequences?

SUDDENLY, A BLACK MUSTANG

Whips around a corner, racing quickly towards them.

APRIL

Punches the accelerator and --

THE BLUE CAMARO

Leaps forward, laying a trail of rubber. The Camaro takes a screeching left, then a quick right to accelerate into --

AN ALLEY BURIED IN DEEP SHADOWS

Where the Camaro all too quickly runs into a dead end, just as --

THE BLACK MUSTANG

Roars into the alley, sealing it shut.

APRIL

Looks to Joe, fear filling his eyes.

EXT. DRISKILL HOTEL PORTICO - DAY

April guides a dazed and confused Joe from the Camaro towards the front doors held open by a smiling VALET.

APRIL

That's one way to write an action scene. It's a variation on the Bill Goldman style used by many pros.

JOE

(coming to)

But other writers just use standard scene headers and description for action scenes, don't they?

APRIL

Many do.

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

A confused Joe speaks into a house phone.

JOE

I thought we were walking together.

APRIL (O.S.)

(filtered)

Well, we were, but I realized a phone call was needed.

JOE

You're filtered?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STATE CAPITOL - DAY

With the capitol dome looming large behind her, April speaks on her mobile phone.

APRIL

Only when you hear my voice over the phone. Radio voices and phone calls can be filtered, though it's a convention that isn't used as much these days.

JOE

Let's try something easy. What about page numbers?

APRIL

Number each and every page, though you can start with page two. The numbers should appear in the upper right-hand corner, about 0.5 inches down and 0.75 inches from the right page edge. Those dimensions are not set in stone, but the page numbers should always be placed in the upper right-hand corner.

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Joe strolls slowly towards the seminar room.

JOE

You know, that pronouncement almost seemed godlike.

APRIL (V.O.)

If it were, I probably would have spoken in a voice-over and not on the phone.

Joe searches the hallway, trying to decide just where this disembodied voice is emanating from.

JOE

What's a V.O. used for?

APRIL (V.O.)

Often for narration, for a narrator's voice. In film noir, the protagonists often filled the audience in on their thoughts or story details. Scorsese films are often filled with voice-over, as are many documentaries.

INT. DRISKILL HOTEL SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

Joe races past April to reach the podium first. April walks casually past the still-empty chairs.

At the podium Joe gestures with his hands as if he were delivering a major political speech.

April sneaks up behind him and mimics his gestures - until he notices. Joe spins to confront her.

JOE

Why I ought'a . . .

APRIL

I was simply demonstrating the way many writers break descriptions into shorter paragraphs. As opposed to allowing description to fill dense blocks running on for lines.

JOE

That makes for tougher reading, doesn't it?

APRIL

I know studio readers who claim they skip long description passages and only read dialogue.

JOE

But there are pros who write scripts with extended description.

APRIL

They do - but that doesn't mean you should too. When you're paid to write a screenplay, you just have to satisfy the people writing your checks.

Joe balances on one leg atop the podium.

JOE

But when you're like me, you should stick to format. Is that what you're trying to say?

APRIL

You just want to make your script as easy a read as possible.

Joe jumps down from the podium and hustles out the door just as conference ATTENDEES begin to enter.

APRIL (CONT'D)

By the way, the first time you introduce a character in description, you CAP his name. And when you break a dialogue passage with description, the standard is to place (CONT'D) next to the speaking character's name.

April watches as a number of people find chairs in front of her.

APRIL (CONT'D)

Of course, many writers have dropped (CONT'D) from their repertoire. I mean, it's obvious that I'm still speaking, isn't it? And that I never stopped speaking.

JOE (O.S.)

(shouting from
beyond the door)

Hey, April! C'mon! There's a barbeque at the Governor's Mansion and a shuttle leaving in two minutes.

APRIL

(shouting)

We haven't mentioned master scenes.

A sheepish Joe slides back into the seminar room, slowly walking to the podium.

JOE

That one I know. No CLOSE UPS, no WIDE SHOTS, mostly no shots of any kind. Just scene headers, description and dialogue. And no scene numbers. Those only belong on shooting scripts.

APRIL

It's okay to sneak in a shot here and there when it's necessary to highlight a moment or move the action along.

JOE

Okay. I can get behind that.

APRIL

And don't worry. I would never let you miss a meal.

FADE OUT.

THE END

A FEW ADDITIONAL NOTES:

How closely should the format presented on the above pages be followed?

Close enough so that your script at least resembles these pages. That said, there is no absolute standard format within the U.S. film industry. The format used by professional screenwriters can vary considerably from writer to writer - but overall the format used by one professional writer generally resembles that used by another professional writer. Nuances may vary - margins slightly different, a dash here or there, parentheticals used this way or that or not at all - but overall, professional screenplays fit within or near these guidelines.

Clarity is the goal. If your script's format can be easily read by anyone working in the film industry, then it falls within acceptable standards.

Do realize that "shooting scripts," the form in which scripts are most often available online, in books and at libraries, are not the form in which most professional writers submit their scripts. Submission scripts, sales scripts, first draft scripts - all usually share certain characteristics: no scene numbers, few designated camera shots and sequences generally written in master scenes.

If you're confused about which nuances are acceptable and which would push your script into an "out-of-format" category, you would do well to follow these guidelines and eliminate those questionable nuances.