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## How to write the script for a short film

Let's talk about short films and how to write a script for one. We will list some creative tips and ideas that you can use in your filmmaking career. Today we will find out how to write a short horror film, how to write a screenplay for a short film, list some short film script examples, identify the characteristics of a short film format, and give you some short film script ideas. What are the key purposes of short films in the film industry? Here are five reasons why you should take a closer look at short films and perhaps fall in love with the art of brevity altogether. The vision of a director It is in short films that the director's authorial style is born, which he continues to develop in his full meters. Short films were shot by such universally recognized masters as Andrei Tarkovsky, Pedro Almodovar, David Lynch, Gaspar Noe, Quentin Tarantino. Despite the fact that their early works lasted not for two hours but for 10-20 minutes, and a unique author's style is already guessed in these paintings. Compressed format In the age of social networks, we are used to consuming information very quickly and in huge quantities. In less than one second, a person understands whether they want to like a photo on Instagram, fluently forms an opinion about the situation in the world according to news headlines, eagerly scrolls the video clip to just catch the general idea. The format of the short film perfectly suits the spirit of the times. Such works last no more than half an hour, although they contain all the necessary elements of a full story: the plot, development, climax, and spectacular finale. In half an hour, you get the maximum experience. This is not 2.5 hours of illegible action about superheroes. The role of the producer The main viewers of short films are producers. They come to film festivals, where they are engaged in the search for young talents. If a producer liked a short meter, they make an appointment with the beginning director and start talking with them about possible filming of a full-length movie. That is how the career of many famous authors began. When viewing short movies, you can feel like a producer and evaluate the potential of each work. Among a dozen mediocre films, you will definitely find one diamond and exclaim, "This is who I would give my money to! If I had them, of course." The role of film critic Since short films are not intended for wide distribution in movie theaters, their directors often allow themselves more daring artistic decisions than their counterparts in full-length films. That is why short films are traditionally considered a stronghold of author and experimental cinema. Among them, you can find works worthy of the attention of the most demanding cinephiles. After a session at the nearest bar, you can compete in eloquence with friends and argue about the strongest movie in the selection. The atmosphere of a festival Short film programs are a necessary attribute of the most authoritative world festivals in Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and other major movie screenings. Entries find a way to these contests after a careful selection of program directors. For example, in 2018, only 17 films out of the claimed 2,500 works were selected for the Cinéfondation program of the Cannes Film Festival. When attending short film sessions, you get involved in the world culture of watching movies, become a member of the international community of moviegoers, prepare to relish every short film as an exquisite treat. Before we find out how to make a short film script, here are some reasons why these films are great for beginner filmmakers. 3 Reasons why short films are important for beginners Here are the most important reasons why short films are important for beginner film directors. 1. Practicing filmmaking gradually You will get the necessary experience by working on short films, and this will allow you to move on to full-scale movies; you will get acquainted with the industry, know how the process of shooting a movie goes, and generally become a lot more comfortable. 2. Developing of your own style and vision With experience come little nuances and tricks that you will be able to use in the future. You will form your own way of telling a story, find the things you like and dislike, and thus, you will feel more comfortable and confident when shooting a feature-length movie. You will learn to create your own short film script template. 3. Getting a chance to be noticed By shooting a short film, you will be able to condense your creative ideas into a short video format, and thus, it can end up being appealing to some big wealthy guys in Hollywood who can invite you to shoot a full movie for them. Well, this is a dream scenario, which is quite rare, but you can only become famous by actually making films, and short films are a great way to get noticed. How to write a good short film: step by step guide How long should a script be for a short film? What should you know about writing a script for a short film? There are 5 rules for writing a short script: 1. The shorter the better How to write a short film? A short film is everything that lasts from 15 seconds to 45 minutes. Make your movie shorter to minimize production costs. It's clear that digital technology gives movie makers freedom, but time is still worth the money, as well as food for the crew. If the rush begins, the film will look amateurish. The film should be cheap, but it should not look cheap! In addition, if you want to send the film to the festival, then try to meet the deadline of 10 minutes or even 7-8 minutes tops. Why? If your film is longer, it will eat more time in the general display, and festivals usually prefer to show as many short films as possible in the required time frame! You can evoke emotions in a couple of minutes. 2. Do not forget about the practical aspects of scripting Are you interested in short film scripts? There is a good thing about writing short scenarios: you can write anything you want because you don't have any studio standing behind your back or any obligations. Nevertheless, do not forget about practical issues in this matter. Scripts with scenes of chases, car accidents, and so on are quite common, but many screenwriters do not seem to understand how long such scenes take. It's better to take the script for a short film as an opportunity to evaluate and calculate how much time and money will be spent on each line you write on paper. Of course, you can picture a magnificent scene with white horses galloping on a moonlit night, but think about whether you have many cowboys or computer graphics specialists you know. If you have modest resources, think less. 3. Visualize How to write a short film script? "A film is a visual medium." "Show, don't tell." These are the golden rules of scriptwriting, which scriptwriters do not stop repeating. And still, you have to read scripts that are overflowing with dialogs. Cinema is the storytelling in pictures; it is the most economical way to convey information. And when you shoot a short film, it is all about saving time. Create a visual backstory for your characters. Try to reveal their temperament, profession, status, and everything else through visual images. 4. Find individual moments How to write a script for a short film? The best shorts are often a separate moment that happens to the hero, but this moment inside hides the real story. What do we mean by hiding a story? We are talking about a conflict that must be resolved, a dilemma that has stood in the way of the hero, a decision that the protagonist must make. Try to add deadlines, the clock is ticking. This is not necessary, but it will add some tension to your plot. 5. Tell a story How to write a good short film? It is always necessary to tell a fascinating story. Beware of ideas based only on a general concept or aimed at breaking all the rules only to break these rules. A short film is a great opportunity to expand the boundaries of what the film narrative is capable of, but it should still have something that emotionally captivates the viewer. In short, if this is not a super-short story, then there must be a hero in the film who is achieving his goal, and an antagonist who has become an obstacle for him. 5 Examples of great movies that originated from short films Now that we know how to write a script for a short film, let's move on. When a novice director has a good idea, but there is no money for a big movie, they put their idea on the shelf until better times or packs it into an inexpensive short film - not to be lost in the product! 1. Saw The details of the legend vary in different sources, but in general, the story is as follows: in the early 2000s, students of the Australian film school Janne Wang and Lee Whannell wrote and shot the 10-minute horror film Saw. The short film, which became their term paper, was highly appreciated by the teacher, who advised friends to try their hand in Hollywood. That's where they immediately sent their achievements, especially since Wang and Lee Whannell already had a full script in their hands (the course project contained only a piece of it that they managed to remove for their own money). After watching the demo and reading the script, the management of the Twisted Pictures film company immediately got inspired by the idea of cheap horror for direct-to-video production and allocated \$1.2 million to partners to implement their ideas. 2. Mama In 2008, Argentinean director Andres Musketi released the short film Mama. The film, which consisted of a single three-minute scene (two girls escaping from a nightmarish creature wandering around their house, which they call Mama), caught the eye of producer Guillermo del Toro and became, in his confession, "the worst thing that he has ever seen." The creepy, without any understatement, scene looked as if it was taken straight from some equally creepy full-length film, and when del Toro found out that there was no such film, he immediately invited Musketi to do it. 3. Pixels In 2010, a video by French director Patrick Jean appeared on YouTube, showing a fresh look at the apocalypse: characters of 8-bit computer games escaping from an old TV thrown into the trash can devour the planet in a few minutes. It was fun, it was fresh, and Hollywood immediately wanted to shoot a full-length film about the adventures of old-school pixels in the modern world. Screenwriters Tim Herlihy and Timothy Dowling composed a story about space aliens using old video games to enslave the Earth, Chris Columbus was recruited for directing, Adam Sandler played the main role, and the budget was no less than \$8 million. 4. Hobo with a Shotgun The young director Jason Eisener was not on the list of directors invited to shoot fake trailers for Grindhouse - only venerable authors like Eli Roth or Edgar Wright worked on this project, but he managed to make himself known anyway. When the competition for the best amateur trailer in the Grindhouse style was held at the South by Southwest festival, Eisener took first place with the trailer for Hobo with a Shotgun and received an offer to make a full-fledged movie. 5. Frankenweenie Trying to make a career at Disney Studios, young Tim Burton directed the black-and-white short film Frankenweenie in 1984, in which he transformed the story of Frankenstein into a "childish" way. The half-hour tape about the boy, who collected in pieces and revived his beloved dog by a car was not appreciated by the studio management (according to the results of the test viewing, the authorities considered the film "too scary"). As a result, Burton was accused of wasting production money and fired. Frankenweenie, on the other hand, remained on a shelf as "unfit for display to children." Last but not least, watch as many short films as possible. The knowledge of what people are watching cannot be replaced with anything, and you, as a viewer (as well as an author), should think and feel this. Writing a script for your short film might seem like a daunting task, but it really just boils down to four simple steps: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and rewriting. Step one: brainstorm. Every great script starts with an idea. Brainstorm a list of several ideas. You can find inspiration from personal memories and feelings, other films you enjoy, or online writing prompts. Once you have a list of ideas, pick the one you like the best. Step two: outline. The goal of your outline should be to create a map of the entire film. Write down brief descriptions of every scene to make sure it flows nicely and fits in the allotted time. Most short films are under 50 minutes long. Keep that in mind as you outline your story. Step three: write a first draft. Now that you know the basic outline of your short film, it's time to write. Since it's a short film, limit your writing to only the essentials. Don't waste time on unnecessary exchanges, backstory, or moments that don't move the plot forward. A good rule of thumb is about one page of script per minute on screen. Since you're aiming for under 50 minutes, try to keep the script under 50 pages. Many filmmakers like to aim for around 15 pages originally and see where the story takes them from there. Step four: rewrite and repeat. Your first draft isn't going to be perfect. Share it with your friends, family, and mentors for notes. Armed with their feedback, you can rewrite your short film script to make it even better. You might even need to start over completely. Once you've made your rewrites, repeat the steps until you have the perfect script for your short film. When you're ready to shoot, don't forget to check out these helpful video tips and tricks. Learn more about how to take your short film script from page to screen with Adobe Premiere Pro. Editor's Note: This article is presented in partnership with the Wyoming Film Office and the Wyoming Short Film Contest, which is currently accepting submissions for 2016 and offering a \$25,000 Grand Prize for the winner's next shot-in-Wyoming project. Click here to learn more. There's an irony to short filmmaking. Most aspiring filmmakers come to screenwriting having grown up inspired by feature films, therefore, when it comes time make their first films, short filmmakers are often forced to work in a storytelling mode and structure that's quite different from the films they studied. This leads to the question every film student at one point or another ends up asking themselves: What exactly makes for a good short script? Indiewire asked that question of the shorts screenwriters whose films are playing at SXSW 2016, and we got some inspiring answers that are as varied as the films playing at the fest. Remy Dunagan, "Lucid": The key to a good short film script is only writing what explicitly needs to be known. Everything else, tell it visually. Leave the audience guessing and talking, it's always good to leave a couple unanswered questions by the end of your film, just remember to cover the important stuff. Geoffrey S. Glenn & Dominique Coleman, "Memories Upon Memories": Two heads. I (Geoffrey) don't usually write my own scripts because I feel that having someone else on board to help translate the story you had written adds more to the film. In writing the story, you're able to get across your ideas, your vision, but you can get so caught up in the thoughts and philosophies that you don't realize some of it may not make complete sense, or that it may not be succinct enough for a short film. That's where my screenwriter (Dominique) came in. She sifted through and completed the thought process, and took out what was unnecessary. She stayed true to the story I wrote, but still added her own mind to it, which I believe made the film stronger. Brian Lonano, Victoria Cook and Kevin Lonano, "Gwilliam": My ideas are very succinct and I never want to burden them with too much dialogue. I'm also very conscious of the audience's attention so I never want to drag my story on for too long. For me, the key is show more, say less and get out before you overstay your welcome. Jim Cummings, "Thunder Road": Insist that the DNA of the film contain the goal of compelling an audience to say at least one of these three sentences: "I've never seen that before," or "I've never thought about it like that before," or "How did they do that?" It's as easy as that. Lizzy Sanford, Anna Cordell, "Hip Hip Hooray": First, stop seeking a formula and get in touch with what makes you excited to write anything at all. When you've written something that feels solid, read it out loud with someone else to find the weak points. I find the most powerful stories communicate a sense of mutual recognition; they expose something that resonates with a wide audience. There can be universality in even the most peculiar circumstances. A story that achieves this can exist in a completely imagined and even absurd world - but at its core it examines something quite simple. Shant Hamassian, "Night of the Slasher": Don't make it a full story. Make it a taste of a story leaving the audience wanting more. Make it feel like we are thrown in the middle of a much larger story and investors will want to meet with you and possibly [give] funds to see the rest of the story on screen. My film is based off a feature idea. Here's the structure of a feature film script: Beginning, middle, end. Here's the short film structure: Beginning, middle, end? Remember, your short is a sample, a taste of things to come. Don't cram a full feature story in a 15 minutes. Also, keep it between 10-15 minutes. Festivals like that. James Cunningham, "Accidents, Blunders and Calamities": A unique problem efficiently explored. Jonah Goldberg, "Icarian": Keep things specific. Writing a short isn't the same as writing a feature where you can leave some holes and openings for room for interpretation and spontaneity. You have a limited amount of time so you have to be specific of the actions and happenings of the story. Kevin Botelle, "Crooked 180": For me, the most important thing is to avoid the feeling of the movie being a 10 minute joke. A lot of short films feel like a simple set-up joke with a twist or punchline at the end. Most of the time, watching these films feels like wasting 10 minutes of my life. Jay Rondot, "Barry": I remember hearing a quote from Paul Stanley of the rock band, KISS, that went something like, "We were going to concerts and not seeing the kind of live show that we wanted to see, so we made up the band that could put on the show we wanted to see." That's always stuck with me. In terms of a short film script, write the short that you would want to see. Janicza Bravo, "Woman in Deep": Having a sense of what your characters want and where they would like to be. Becky James, "Vocabulary 1": I make animation about bugs, snakes, and bats and my scripts are mostly silent. I still struggle with the scripts though, and it's challenging to create clarity and depth without language. I have found that the most interesting movies result when I paint myself into a corner, when I have a set of characters and situations that I genuinely don't know how to resolve. I end up adding and subtracting elements and weaving them together so that the ending feels both inevitable and surprising, even to me. A.J. Briones, "The Smiling Man": The short films that have always stuck with me long after I've seen them are ones that challenge me emotionally; they don't spell things out neatly and while perfectly enjoyable on the surface level, I love films where I can work to find some deeper meaning, metaphor, or closure. I write with that in mind. I want to give the reader something they can't get out of their heads for awhile. I know screenwriting books and blogs about shorts are all about the "twists" but I try not to think about them as much as I think about injecting setups and payoffs that support the main through-line.Gilberto Giles-Sosa, "DoubleDVE - "Endeavor"": The key to writing a good short film script is authenticity, this is because the story must come from within. Lots of times, amateur writers overlook the fact that your story must be real to you, so that the audience can feel something. Gabriel Miller, "A Reasonable Request": For me the key to writing a good short film script is restraint. Telling the story of a moment, rather than attempting to cram a feature into 15 minutes. If you can find a compelling moment or scenario in a character's life and tell it authentically then you should be onto a winner. And the more interesting or surprising that moment is the better. Isabelle Hodge, "Mischief and Mayhem": You never have enough time to tell your entire story, and in short films your time restrictions are especially relevant. Finding which aspects of your film will be most engaging and impactful to your audience is the best way to hone in on what is important in the short time you have. Javian Ashton Lo, "Dastaar": Establish rules for your storytelling approach. There is no right or wrong way to go about this, but whatever you choose to do, stick with it and don't look back. This could be as simple as restricting dialogue to the bare minimum, only giving the viewer access to what the central character subjectively experiences, or designing scenes with a particular visual language in mind. An engaging film is built on specificity and what you decide to withhold is just as important as the information you choose to reveal. Frankie Shaw, "Too Legit": Enter late, leave early. Make sure the women you write are real people. Max Weiland, "An Arm's Length": For me the key was to create intrigue from the opening shot. In today's world we are bombarded with so much content that if you don't grab the viewer's attention in the first 15 seconds you are probably going to lose them. Kayla Lorette, Zack Russell, "She Stoops To Conquer": Even though it's a short, the world of the film can be as full and complex as any feature. My favorite short films feel like glimpses into something much bigger and more complicated. Start big and then distill- once you've got something worth distilling.Benjamin Kegan, "The First Men": Don't just read the script aloud again and again, role play with a partner. My cinematographer and I would pick roles and read them out loud. I'd read my role as written, but whenever something felt false or too convenient he would go off the script and respond how he would respond in real life, and I'd have to adjust. Then we'd switch parts. Sometimes it made me want to smack him, but then it forced me to go back and look at the script and ask questions like, are the character's actions really driving the scene and responses here, or is the writing? It's not always about what you as a writer want the characters to do or where you want them to go. Yen Tan, "1985": Make it about a moment. Something small. Something specific that a character does. It doesn't need to be a three-act structure. Not going over 10 pages (approximately 10 minutes) is highly recommended. Alexia Salngaros, "Lady of Paint Creek": The characters need to invite you into the space in which they are living. Details about their body language, mannerisms, and speech must create a living person through which the audience comes to care and immerse themselves in the story. Jocelyn DeBoer and Dawn Luebke, "Greener Grass": Start with an idea you have a strong reaction to. It's easy for us, as writing partners, because we know we're on to something when all of a sudden we start talking over each other or can't stop laughing, creep each other out, etc. But even as an individual, if an idea instantly causes a spark with you, makes you actually feel something - whether you are laughing or pissed off or whatever - it's worth pursuing. It's just like with sketchy dudes, trust your gut. Ben Petrie, "Her Friend Adam": If there's one, I think that it's got to be speaking your own voice. Just speaking your own voice, with no regard for what you surmise might be a popular or trendy thing to do. Forget about anybody else and just entertain yourself. Maybe that sounds like artistic masturbation, but plenty of people masturbate on a daily basis, so that can't be such a bad thing. Really though, even in this situation, I've written that answer, and right away in creep the thoughts of, "Oh, God, what will some people think of that answer? They might think that's a bit inappropriate..." But if that's the way I approached writing all the time, I'd lose my mind. You've really got no instincts to trust but your own, so you best listen to them with both ears. Sign Up: Stay on top of the latest breaking film and TV news! Sign up for our Email Newsletters here.







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