

Screenplay Scripts Pdf

Outlining Your Script or Story Outline

I continue to be amazed by the number of screenwriters and working, published novelists I meet who do NOT outline. And at the risk (one from which I have rarely shied) of coming off as a smartass -- they are wrong.

I hasten to point out that they are not necessarily bad writers. Some great writers work that way (on a tightrope, without a net). What I am suggesting -- and this is both arguable and unprovable -- is that their work -- their end product -- would probably be even better if they had outlined.

My next argument, however, is almost inarguable: writing a long, complex piece, such as a novel or screenplay from an outline will make the entire process easier, less angst-ridden, and -- except for those of you with masochistic tendencies -- far more pleasurable and satisfying. And, as with the Great Ones, your finished story will be better.

~~ What is a Story Outline and How Does it Differ From a Synopsis or a Treatment?

A synopsis is generally defined as a one-to-four page narrative description of what happens in your story, told with some sizzle, since it will likely be used as a selling tool -- to entice an agent, publisher or producer to take a look at your manuscript.

A film treatment used to consist of 20 to 40 or more pages of narrative. That seems to have changed. In Hollywood, where it is rumored that few people will (or can) read, and even fewer have attention spans longer than five minutes, treatments have become so brief that the line between them and synopses is blurred. I have had producers caution me that anything longer than four pages is death. Even for the purposes of selling the screen rights to a novel.

An outline is a different animal. As mentioned above, it's a scene-by-scene breakdown (continuity) of your story, written (basically) in narrative form. The length and amount of detail can vary, and style need not be a concern unless you plan to show it to others who might not get it. For TV and film scripts that are written on assignment (rather than on spec), the outline will invariably be read by producers and often by nonwriters, such as studio or network executives, and should, therefore, be written with such exposure in mind. But if your outline is for your eyes only, the writing can be sketchier.

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