STEPS TO SCREENWRITING SUCCESS
'It's All About Story! – The Art of the Screenplay'

It is not easy to achieve success at anything. It's been said screenwriting is one of the hardest crafts in the world to master. A million people dream of becoming successful screenwriters. Only a few succeed. No matter what you may have heard, if you wish to succeed you must become better that ninety–nine-point nine percent of your competition. It requires a dedication of time and effort at learning the craft of storytelling and developing one's talent.

If you REALLY want to be a successful screenwriter these are the steps needed to give yourself a chance. If they seem too much trouble, then pick another career which is better suited to your natural skills.

THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS!

1. Watch Thousands of Movies:
Watch as many movies in as many genres as possible. Especially newer movies because audience's tastes change with time.

Why: *The more movies you watch, the easier it will be to identify stories that work, characters that fascinate, how story arcs work, and story pacing. Each generation tells stories a little differently. Tastes change, usually with faster pacing and more   subtext in Action and Dialogue. In the past, you'd see a scene of a person getting into car, driving to a destination, walking up to a door, knocking on the door, and waiting until the occupant would answer. Today we'd cut to the door being kicked in, without all the run–up.*

Personal Experience: *Over the years, I've watched thousands of movies. I've seen how they have changed in the way they're presented. From this experience I know what works and what*

doesn't. By observing the different themes and storylines that make compelling stories, I'm better able to duplicate them in my own stories.

2. Read Thousands of Screenplays:

Read as many screenplays in different genres as possible in combination with seeing the movies. Read screenplays that have recently been made into movies.

Why: *Most people have difficulty following a script. It's not a novel. Reading scripts helps to understand screenplay form as well as to understand how the page translates to the screen. You get a sense of different screenwriting styles, voices, whether the writing is clear and concise or muddled and rambling, or if the story pulls together or falls apart. Reading scripts will help you see how white space is maximized.*

Personal Experience: *I've read thousands of screenplays. This has helped me get a better grasp on proper screenwriting structure and the shortcomings in the stories and films that have bored me.*

3. Write a Lot:

Write a lot. Make it a part of your daily routine. Being a writer – paid or not – is a calling.

Why: *It's been said to become good at anything requires ten thousand hours of focused concentrated effort in that area. If you had a full-time job of 40 hours a week, it would take over 5 years to develop your expertise. And that is focused concentration, not just showing up and going through the motions. Since most people don't have eight free hours a day, it means in reality, it'll take over a decade to approach your potential. And that is just to get into the ball game against other skilled screenwriters.*

Personal Experience: *From thousands of hours of writing, I have*

discovered at each stage of development, I reach a point at which my writing no longer improves what I've written. I call it churning. At this point the rewritten words feels no better than the previous words. But as I developed new writing skills and came back to a project, I was surprised at how I could transform my previous work into what I felt was of a higher quality.

4. Develop Lots of Story Ideas:
The more unique original stories you have worked out the better the chances you will be prepared when an opportunity presents itself. As they say, "*Luck Favors the Prepared.*"

Why: *There's a likelihood that when given the opportunity to present your material, they will not be interested in exactly what you're offering. Often, they will ask you what other story ideas you have. If you have none then the conversation will often end, and they will excuse themselves and like Keyser Söze they are gone. An opportunity will have been lost. The longer you can engage people, the greater the chances you and your stories will connect. Like anything, the more you practice creating storylines the better you will become at it. Practicing storytelling will help you develop an ability to create a story on the fly which a potential client might wish to develop.*

Personal Experience: *I've always been interested in different story ideas, 'what if's', which pop into my head. This can be a blessing and a curse. A blessing for I always have another story to present, if asked, 'what else'. A curse because I often find it difficult to finish my current story because of the excitement I have at developing a new idea. Nowadays, when a new story idea comes over me, I create a* **Master Story Document** *in Microsoft Word, which contains the basic story information, such as: title, genre, theme, concept, pictures, characters, taglines, loglines, synopsis, outline, treatment, notes, and research information. I put it away and carry on with my current project. As new ideas on a new story*

arise, I make a quick entry into my master story document. This gives me a catalogue of interesting stories to fall back on.

Samples of My Own Story Ideas

Original Story #1	**'P.E.T.A. - People Eating Tasty Animals'**	(Dark Comedy/Horror)
Original Story #2	**'A Handful of Stardust'**	(Sci-Fi)
Original Story #3	**'Tar'**	(Sci-Fi/Horror/Suspense)
Original Story #4	**'Courage'**	(Drama/Action)
Original Story #5	**'Playing Games'**	(Romantic Comedy)
Original Story #6	**'Between The Lines'**	(Romantic Comedy)
Original Story #7	**'The Awards'**	(Action/Thriller)
Original Story #8	**'Final Call'**	(Action/Suspense/Drama)

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5. Write What Excites You:
You have to get to where you're inspired, because the real magic originates from inside.

Why: *If there is no passion then you will not be able to sustain the focused concentration needed to do the best job you can.*

Personal Experience: *I find that my favorite genres are: Sci–fi, Horror, Comedy, Romance, Action–Adventure, Thriller, and Suspense. Most of my stories are drawn from imaginings of what would I do 'IF' something in this world or a future world changed. How would I react?*

6. Become An Expert:
The reason most stories fail is the writer does not have a good enough grasp and command of his/her story world. They use clichés in place of original thoughts because of their lack of understanding their characters, their motivations, their voices, location, depth of knowledge on the subject they are writing about,

possible story threads, etc. If you don't have a command of your story world then you don't have access to the details needed to create the original ideas required to develop a compelling story. **It's a plague of ignorance that forces a writer to grab at tired actions and dialogue they'd seen or heard countless times.**

Why: *Why does most writers do their best writing when talking about themselves, or their personal experiences, or about an area they are EXPERTS in? It's because they have a commanding grasp of that world. They have DETAILS, they can draw on which gives AUTHORITY and AUTHETICATION to a story.*
Cliché: *Is an action or dialogue that is overused and familiar. It betrays a lack of original thought.*

Never use Clichés. *Every cliché found in your writing is a chance to show the storyteller's brilliance. Replace a overused cliché with an original moment. When a reader/audience runs across a cliché for an instance their brain goes numb, it shuts off. Because for an instance they don't need to think. Too many of these moments and the reader/audience completely disengages as they move onto something more interesting. On the other hand, when a reader/audience runs across original action or dialogue their minds engage at the novelty, pulling them deeper into the story.*

Personal Experience: *I am by profession a software developer and scientist. I program in over a dozen computer languages with an emphasis on website development and pattern recognition. I love exploring cutting edge technology. I am by nature an adventurer. I have participated in a dozen different sports: Rock Climbing, Swimming, Water Polo, Wrestling, Football, Track & Field (Quarter & Half-Mile, Javelin, Shot Put), Distance Running (5K through 100 miler), Kayaking, Archery, Skydiving, and Scuba Diving. I am also a pianist, composer, and song writer. I've served as a Sergeant in the Marine Corps. I've always had a sense of adventure which has found me in many life and death situations.*

I've become intimate with pain, fear and death. I've experienced the ecstasy of love and trauma of love lost. These experiences I bring to my writing. **We each have a plethora of personal experiences we can incorporate into our stories. Use them to create original compelling stories.**

How One Becomes An Expert:

☐ *Life Experience:* understanding firsthand how you or others react in life situations gives one an edge up on believability. There is nothing like the in-depth knowledge and emotional connection one gains from living a real-life adventure which burns a mark into one's soul and allows one to present one's own ORIGINAL interpretation to life. Only under stress is one's TRUE NATURE and CHARACTER revealed. If you haven't lived it, you can only guess at how a character would react. You will not have the DETAILS, which convincingly show AUTHENTICITY.

Why: *Have you ever noticed how a person's best writing comes when they write a personal story about themselves. The reason is as people reach into their memories they see countless details, which help illuminate their story. That's why many young novelists write stories without any depth of understanding of human nature. Their stories often come off as juvenile and unauthentic, without any of life's nuances.*

Personal Experience: *See* **Become An Expert**

☐ *Observation:* carefully observing how others behave in situations and translating their experiences into your own stories help give AUTHORITY to a character and helps validate personal experiences you've never had. Trying to honestly think of how you would react in situations help AUTHENTICATE the reality of the story.

Why: *Every day we see how human nature plays out by observing how those about us behave in situations they encounter in their lives. With careful observation, these experiences can be translated into our stories, giving a greater measure of AUTHENTICITY.*

Personal Experience: *I've collected an eccentric group of friends in different areas of life. I draw on their personal experiences to enrich my own stories.*

☐ *Reading Extensively:* There are countless memoirs and personal stories that include every experience a human can have. A synthesis of these experiences in unique situations can add the authenticity that makes your story believable and compelling.

Why: *Without the authenticity to impart details the audience has never seen or experience before, the audience disconnects from the story because they have heard the dialogue or saw the same action hundreds of times.*

Personal Experience: *I love reading stories that place people at the edge of human experience. A few of my favorite books of human triumph: '**Touching the Void**', '**Into Thin Air**', '**Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage**'. I can extract from their individual experiences to help create credible stories.*

7. Create An Outline: *See **Outline***
An outline is a scene–by–scene breakdown of your story, a blueprint written (basically) in narrative form. It mostly is a short description of the action played out in each scene, what characters are involved, minimum rudimentary dialog, and notes that help you later translate this into the actual screenplay. Writing an outline is more of an analytical process, while writing the screenplay is more emotional and visceral. This is because when you write a

screenplay you are literally giving life to the story and characters. The outline is the document in which you work out the storyline.

Why: *When you are putting together a story, you are mainly interested in seeing if the story makes sense and if the story threads come together into a satisfying climax. Since these are just narrative notes, you are not concerned with the details of dialogue, which when put down on paper in a script become difficult to modify or remove if the story calls for it.*

Personal Experience: *When I first started writing screenplays, I'd open Final Draft and start writing. In my head I had a beginning, several interesting events in the middle, and a satisfying ending. But as I plowed forward, I spent a large amount of time getting action lines just right and creating wonderful dialogue. Moving deeper into the story, I'd often come up with clever story threads which required me to either abandon earlier scenes or try to jimmy them into the new story direction. Rather than chucking previously written scenes that now didn't make sense, I'd write clunky scene bridges. The more time I'd spent on a scene, the less inclined I was to throw it away. This had a negative impact on my creativity because I'd be hesitant to throw away hours or days of work to develop a better story.*

8. **Create a Master Story Document:** See *Master Story Document*

Create a document that contains all the information related to a script. This might include: title, genre, theme, concept, pictures, characters, taglines, loglines, synopsis, outline, treatment, notes, and research information.

Why: *Before you write any script, you should have a document that contains all the useful information related to putting together your story.*

Personal Experience: *When I think up a new movie idea. I immediately go to my computer and create a folder with the working name of the film. Then I open Microsoft Word and create a Master Story Document with these categories: Title, Concept, Header Picture, Genre, Theme, Taglines, Loglines, Synopsis, Character List, Outline/Treatment, and Notes.*

9. Create Unforgettable Characters:

A story is only as good as the characters you create. We have to feel they are real, that they can react to the world around them as we would, that they have flaws like us. We must see some aspect of ourselves in a story's characters.

Why: *If we don't care and have empathy for a character then we do not care what happens to them. And if we don't care then there is no suspense. And we don't develop empathy if characters don't act in a human manner.*

Personal Experience: *Some people's personality seals a bond by making us relate to the person as a kindred spirit. I enjoy witty, charming personalities. People like this make me laugh and want to engage in their adventures and how they react to life. Other people not so much - they are just boring.*

10. Develop Engaging Original Stories:

A good story is about an interesting character, who wants something badly, and is having a great deal of trouble getting it. (Character + Desire) x Obstacles = Story. But there's a lot more to the final execution of the story than just the broad strokes of an equation. You must engage the reader/audience. This is not done by having a story the reader/audience has seen a hundred times, or tired retreaded Dialogue that disengages the reader/audience, or scenes we've seen a hundred times and can predict the outcome. ***DON'T BE BORING!***

Why: *Anything that disengages the reader/audience even for a moment has the chance to completely shut down your story. Stories that we've heard before or that we can predict can become boring and cause the reader/audience to switch off.*

Personal Experience: *I once kayaked from Santa Monica to Catalina Island in a storm. I was personally 100% physically and mentally engaged. Why? Because I didn't know how the story would end. Would I live or die. Their was plenty of suspense and I was fully engaged in what the outcome would be. Make your reader/audience care about your characters as much as they would for themselves.*

11. Know the Theme:

Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning that may be stated directly or indirectly. It aligns and focuses the plot, subplots, characters and dialogue. It is the Rosetta Stone which allows you to translate that great concept you have into a great screenplay. It's the driving intention behind the film. It's the message the writer is trying to get across to the audience which, when effectively communicated, satisfies them, emotionally and analytically, and makes them feel they've just watched a great film. It is, in a single sentence or a single word, what the movie is really all about. It doesn't matter what the theme is – courage, love conquers all, real beauty is on the inside, be careful what you wish for, redemption, betrayal, loyalty, self–worth, ambition, jealousy, hypocrisy, obsession, alienation, life sucks and then you die, etc. If you effectively prove or disprove it, you've succeeded as a writer.

If you've ever been bewildered about what your characters should do or say next, chances are you either didn't know that the theme drives plot and dialogue or you never fully developed your theme. While plot is the action that drives the story forward, theme gives the story events meaning. It is a vital part of a story that resonates with the audience long after they've left the theater.

If plot is what's on the surface of a film, easily visible to the audience, then theme is the subtext, what's under the surface, waiting to be uncovered. Themes are sometimes called a *life lesson* or a *message*, and the best ones are always subtle.

Even with the most fantastic characters in the most amazing situations, if there is no point to the story, there is little point in writing the screenplay. Why tell the story? The central theme of your story is the foundation of everything and the most important motivating factor for writing the script. And since theme and conflict are crucially linked, it is through an exploration of your central character that will guide you into that conflict because theme is always rooted in the protagonist's primary goal. See **Theme**.

Why: *Understanding the theme allows you to bring all the threads of the story together in a meaningful way.*

Personal Experience: *I wrote a screenplay about women empowerment, **‘Courage’**. It portrayed a team of athletically talented women from different sports band together against a patriarchal culture that demands they conform to a tradition that limits their life options. It was a very good story which became even more powerful once I realized the theme was about aspects of COURAGE. Focusing on the theme allowed me to shape the story threads and many of the scenes to reflect the underlying meaning that connected everything.*

12. Writing is Rewriting:
You write, you rewrite, and you rewrite some more. The final product is only good because you busted your butt, draft after draft after draft. All writing is rewriting. Period.

Why: *As you write your screenplay your imagination kicks in and you think of better scenes you can craft as you gain a greater*

command of your story world.

Personal Experience: *When I rewrite a script, I usually take one scene at a time and ask myself how can I make this better? How can I make this more original? Every script I rewrite over a dozen times. Because I don't believe good enough is ever good enough. Also, I'm always embarrassed by the spelling / grammar / dialogue / action / story of every previous version of my script. If you believe you can transform any scene into one more original - you can.*

13. Critical Feedback:
You've finished your screenplay, and now it's the agonizing process of waiting for feedback. Without feedback, you're lost. You need brutally honest feedback… from other writers.

Why: *You cannot evaluate your own writing because what you wrote seemed good when you wrote it. If you put the work away for a period, you will find what at one time seemed brilliant has often lost its luster with time. But a fresh set of eyes from a fellow writer with comparable or better skills and having never seen your work, doesn't see the brilliance you displayed. They see only your faults.*

Personal Experience: *Many times I've written what I thought was a very good script. Yet when I had a friend read it and make a comment on specific shortcomings, I almost always agree with them and wonder why I didn't catch the problem myself. It's true that it's always easier to see problems in someone else's writing.*

14. A Story Must Make Sense:
A screenplay must have scenes that connect, characters that make sense in the genre they are in and have dialogue that supports the story.

Why: *If the reader/audience can't follow the story then they disengage and they stop reading/watching.*

Personal Experience: *I read my scripts to my NOVEL writing group. They are not used to reading screenplays. If they can't follow what's happening in the story, then I try to write my narrative in a more story like fashion.*

15. Don't be a Secret Keeper:

I have found that most writers believe their story idea is precious, the most unique idea any one has ever thought up and if it got out someone would steal it. So, to safeguard their precious story they hide it from the world or make demands on those they do share it with. This informs everyone they are paranoid. ***Being a Secret Keeper Will Keep You Out of the Entertainment Business. PERIOD!***

Why: *1) People can't buy your stuff if they don't know it exists. 2) People don't want to sign any Non-Disclosure Agreement because they will think you will sue them, if they develop a similar idea. 3) The more people you communicate your ideas with the greater your chance that you will be noticed. 4) They perceive you as being difficult to work with. 5) If you only have a few ideas, why are you wasting your time.*

Personal Experience: *'Ideas Are a Dime a Dozen.' It is the details of the execution that is everything. I take the attitude that I can develop any story idea better than anyone else. If someone is foolish enough to take any of my story ideas and turn them into a screenplay, I would always be able to create a better screenplay. By projecting this to people, I convince them I am the best person to write their/my screenplay. This attitude attracts people wanting to work with me on any of my own or their story ideas.*

16. Grit:

Dedication. Determination. Fortitude. Resolve, Perseverance. Pick your word of choice, because if you want to be a screenwriter, it's

the only way you'll survive. Screenwriting is a tough business. Your courage and endurance to fight through the adversity of writing a screenplay will only make you stronger. And then all you have to do is, do it again, and again, and again... and eventually after a decade you will have overnight success.

Why: *Having a thin skin is sure death in writing. You can't learn and grow if you don't eagerly accept criticism, rejection, and being told you and your story ideas and writing is crap. Grit also requires you to write when you don't feel like it. Remember to reach your potential at anything requires those ten thousand hours of focused concentration.*

Personal Experience: *I've stayed up late many nights making changes to a script, so it's the best I can offer at any given moment. I've listened to people's lukewarm reaction to different stories and wondered why they aren't as enthusiastic as I am. So, I go back to writing until I get a consensus of enthusiasm.*

17. Network:
"*It's not what you know, but who you know.*" And when it comes to Hollywood, the cliché is absolutely true: it's all about relationships.

Why: *You will find that successful people at anything knows people who are able to help them achieve their goals. The only way this can happen is if you get out there and advertise yourself, so people know you exist and what your skills are.*

Personal Experience: *All of my writing jobs have come because someone either in the entertainment industry has put me in contact with someone looking for my skills or a person outside the industry knew I was a writer and steered me to someone in the industry.*

What to Do:
a. tell everyone you know that you're a writer

b. offer to read and review anything they have written
c. at your regular job notify everyone that you are
    also a serious writer and offer to help them if they write. You
    never know who you're going to meet, so always be ready to
    pitch your skills
d. create a web presence (website/blog) as a business card that
    shows the world you're serious
e. first sales usually come through your own contacts, even after
    signing with agent/manager
f. ask friends/relatives if they know anyone in the business. Could
    they provide an introduction
g. want to write for television or work in entertainment? Search
    on ***http://showbizjobs.com*** , join screenwriting groups, or start
    one of your own
h. exchange contact information with fellow screenwriters
i. your goal is to get each contact to read your script and/or give
    you a referral
j. ask the contact for advice. This is always flattering and always
    helpful to you
k. remember to ask if they can suggest anyone else to contact
l. attend screenwriting workshops and seminars, save class lists
    and keep in touch
m. chat with the seminar speaker. Send a follow–up letter. Ask the
    speaker to read your script
n. use the Internet
o. join screenwriting newsgroups and mailing lists
p. read the industry trades. Know the market and the players
q. keep in touch with all your contacts at least a few times a year
r. persistence is key!

Why: *The more people that know you are a writer the better your chances of someone noticing your skills.*

Personal Experience: *Before I had any success, I used to critique friend's and stranger's novels and screenplays, often for free. My*

break in writing came when a friend I'd helped (for free) develop a short story. Later, he asked if I'd write a treatment on a person he'd been commissioned to write. He said he was lost in figuring out what to write and since he knew I was a better writer, would I do the assignment. I agreed and when a film company showed interest in the man's story and liked my treatment, they phoned me and asked if I'd like to critique some of the film scripts, they were interested in producing. I agreed. They also were interested in doing a western and wanted to know if I had any. That night, I came up with an outline of an exciting western that interested them and that was the start of my career as a professional screenwriter.

18. Connect:

If the audience isn't invested in the story, if they don't care about the characters, if they're not intimately involved, discovering, anticipating, predicting, and reaching conclusions... well, then you've already lost. Remember, as a screenwriter, you're selling to a reader/audience. You're writing for them – so they can laugh, cry, hope, and fear. But don't force-feed them dribble they've heard or seen a hundred times before. Your reader/audience is smart. Never just tell the story. Show it and let people come to their own conclusions. This will engage your reader/audience.

Why: *If you don't connect with your reader/audience then you have wasted your time and theirs. If this is the case, you must rethink your story and characters until you do connect.*

Personal Experience: *A writing friend wrote a Horror script. I critiqued it (for free) and made several suggestions to make it an original story. When I gave him the suggestions, he thanked me for my suggestions but said he just wanted to make a generic horror movie. He believed investors would want to make such a script and audiences would want to see it. HE WAS WRONG! If you have this mindset, you are wasting your time and truly don't understand film. Since he didn't want to use any of my ideas, I created a totally*

original story from those ideas in a Dark Comedy / Horror / Romance entitled 'P.E.T.A. – People Eating Tasty Animals.'

19. Understand Genre:

When it comes to most genres, people rarely go to the movies to be surprised. They know the action hero will survive, that the girl will get the guy, and the villains will get their just deserts. In reality, however, love's painful and sometimes the bad guys win, but in the movies, love is the holy elixir and the hero saves the day. Screenwriting is almost never about reinventing audience expectations. The key to writing a sellable script is to understand genres (and sub–genres) and exceed audience expectations.

Why: A person searches *out a specific genre when they go to the movies. The audience has expectations for every genre. In a horror movie, an audience would be highly upset to find they're in a Masterpiece Theatre movie, or vice versa. Write to a GENRE.*

Personal Experience: *I love science fiction and when I see a movie in this genre, I expect* fantastic out of this world technology, compelling dangers grounded in understandable concepts of science.

20. Have a Web Presence:

You should have a website and/or blog on the Internet. ***Best Free Blog Creators***

Why: *It shows you're serious. It allows you to put up samples of your work/services. It acts as an extended business card and contact point. **A Web presence separates you from 90% of your competition.***

Personal Experience: *To show those interested in my abilities, I have created websites related to a variety of talents in which I direct interested parties. The greater your presence in the world, the better*

the chances someone will notice you.

A Few of My Personal Websites:
https://thescriptsavant.com *script consulting, screenplay writing, a location to download my book on screenwriting* **'It's All About Story!.'** *On this website, I have samples of my original story ideas.*

http:/TheStoryMaster.com – *where I test out stories and my music/song ideas. (I am a pianist and songwriter and an incurable romantic – I put samples of some of my songs on youtube)*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAYS_skTR9w
'Starlight Lullaby'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AdAeVHLbJk
'Friends Forever More'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqVvEbN4oHc
'Far Away In Dreamland'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXjuNTtGikk
'Dark Late At Night'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAJOJVEuTIQ
'Give Into Your Dreams'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49fNP6dBScI
'A Long Dark Journey'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0So5g4aZbw
'No One Knows'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhbwL9–yBSo
'Just Little O' Me'

http://JayZeeBear.com – *a popular children's website where I test out game and educational ideas for kids 2–8.*

21. Formatting, Grammar, & Punctuation:
With programs like **_Final Draft_**, there is no excuse for formatting errors. With spell-check and the ability to look up grammar and punctuation on the Internet, there is little excuse for these errors

either.

Why: Misspelled words or grammar/punctuation errors almost always screams lazy and/or amateur.

Personal Experience: *When I read a person's script and I spot a misspelled word or poor grammar/punctuation, I start paying more attention to what OTHER mistakes are in the script, so I can send it to the trash. From my own scripts, I find spelling / grammar / punctuation errors virtually every time I reread them, which I immediately correct. This reminds me to never hand out my first few drafts.*

22. Write Powerful Scenes:

The scene is essential to movie making. After all, a film is just a bunch of scenes strung together to create a comprehensive whole. Start scenes at the last possible moment and get out early.

Creative brevity in a screenplay is a necessity, so writing scenes that are clear and concise, while always moving the story forward and/or revealing character while still engaging the reader.

Why: *Every scene counts. They are building blocks to an engaging, satisfying film.*
Don't include a scene unless it advances the story.

Personal Experience: *All the movies I enjoy have scenes I emotionally connect with.*

23. Deliver Dynamic Dialogue:

Screenplay dialogue:
a. *has a rhythm*
b. *is easily spoken*
c. *it's brief*
d. *moves rapidly*

e. verbal exchanges volleying back and forth between characters
f. shifting power from one side to the other, until somebody scores the point.
g. it's full of conflict
h. rarely do characters say exactly what they mean
i. dialogue is all about subtext
j. when faced with the need for exposition, utilize the visual medium
k. avoid the temptation of voice over unless its use compliments the story

Why: *Movies are only 2 hours long, so dialogue must be compact and carry as much meaning to advance the story as possible. People get bored and disengage with On-The-Nose Dialogue and everyday chitchat/small–talk. Movies are not like real life.* ***Leave out everything boring.***

Personal Experience: *Often while listening to people, I desperately want them to get to the point they are trying to make and sometimes, I'll interrupt their ramblings to fill in their thoughts, so we can move on.*

24. Cost of Production:
As you write, your script takes into account the cost of production. If you have special effects, exotic locations, animals, crowds, multiple locations, car chases, period pieces, giant music scores of recognizable songs, famous actors, etc., each contributes to the cost of production. Most movies produced are for less than 5 million dollars. Only a few companies produce 100+ million-dollar movies, and they usually have their own writers.

Why: *The vast majority of movies produced are low budget (less than $5 million). This means, giving a high budget script to most producers is a waste of time. They won't look at it. If you read the reviews on many of the script websites like 'The Black List,' they*

talk of their concern about production costs when they critique the viability of a script. It makes sense that it is easier to have your script recognized in the bigger market of low budget scripts. When you are a famous scriptwriter, then you can dust off that $100 million project you've been working on for a decade.

Personal Experience*: I've been asked many times if I could write an inexpensive script that takes place in a single location, especially horror movies.*

25. You're Writing Only For A Reader:
Your spec script is being written for a reader — not for the director or producer, not the final shooting script.

Why*: In a production-ready screenplay, the director may truncate scenes to the point that words alone wouldn't convey a connected story. The director has words, images, and audio clues to convey the story. On a spec script, if the reader, with only your words to convey the story gets lost or confused, even for a moment, your script could end in the trash.*

26. Tools For The Future:
Embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI). Use the ever growing power of AI to craft stories that augment our creativity.

Why*: Before AI a writer had mostly his own creativity to come up ideas, action, and dialogue. But AI is like having a team of creative people to bounce ideas off of.*

Personal Experience*: I recently critiqued a writer's script who's native language was not English. I took his entire script and put it in ChatGPT and asked AI to clean it up. To my amazement it corrected all the spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Then I told AI to give me a synopsis and a logline. It did both.*

I recently been taking each scene of one of my scripts and seeing if AI can improve them. I often then merge words and phrases that capture my imagination and place improvements into my own script.