The Screenplay Format

Originally prepared by

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Cover Page and Title

Please create a cover page for each draft of your script. On the cover page, please be sure to include the following information:

```
                    Title
                  Your Name
              FLM151(section)
            Instructor's name
              Semester/Year
```

Pieces of Time

by

Student's name

FLM151(section)
Instructor's name
Semester/Year

Cover Page and Title

- Do not number the cover page. Numbers start on the first page of your script.

- Please do not handwrite page numbers. Find the key functions that allow the proper placement of page numbers in whatever program you're using.

FADE IN/OUT

```
                                        FADE IN
```

A script always begins and ends with the words FADE IN and FADE OUT written in CAPITAL LETTERS. These go in the right-hand side of the page.

While scenes in a professional script are numbered, you do not need to number your scenes.

```
                                        FADE

OUT
```

Slug Lines

Each scene begins with a slug line:

`INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM--DAY`

- Slug lines are in CAPITAL LETTERS. No exceptions.
- Slug lines are broken down into 3 parts:

Slug Lines

1) INT. / EXT. which indicates whether a scene is an interior or exterior scene. The abbreviation is followed by a period—<u>not</u> a comma or any other punctuation.

Slug Lines

2) The location of the scene: The location must be noted as clearly and succinctly as possible. Interior scenes often require more detailed information. For example:

```
        INT. SCHOOL, HALLWAY--DAY
INT. SCHOOL, SECOND FLOOR, HALLWAY--DAY
```

- Start with the primary location; break it down from there.
- Use a comma to separate each piece of information.

Slug Lines

3) DAY/NIGHT: Each slug line ends with DAY/NIGHT or equivalent information and is preceded by a double dash.

Possible alternatives include: `DAWN, AFTERNOON, LATER THAT AFTERNOON, EVENING, LATER THAT DAY, DUSK, LATE EVENING.`

- Do not include specific times in the slug times such as 2:00pm—such information goes into the scene description.

Slug Lines

4) CONTINUOUS SCENES: A slug line will sometimes end with the word CONTINUOUS instead of DAY/NIGHT and is also preceded with a double dash.

- CONTINUOUS indicates a scene, which is, literally speaking, the continuation of the previous one, with no significant passage of time. The new slug line is usually needed because the setting has changed.

- For example, a scene may start inside a house in the hallway and continue outside in the garden. It is the same scene; there is no time lapse; but the setting has changed.

Scene Descriptions

- Scene descriptions are written in small caps except for the name of a character if you are introducing it for the first time (more on this later).

- The purpose of a scene description is to do at least one of the following:

Scene Descriptions

1. To let us know what we see on screen as the scene opens.

2. To describe key features of the action.

3. To include important camera shots such as CU or POV.

4. To let us know who is in the scene and introduce new characters.

5. To let us know what we hear if particular sounds need emphasis.

Scene Descriptions

- They must be to the point (no verbosity) and are often written in abbreviated sentences. They are meant to inform—not to narrate.

- All scene descriptions are in the present tense.

- When describing something that "we see" on screen, avoid saying "we see"; instead describe what is seen.

Scene Descriptions

Example #1: *Scene 14 from The King's Speech.*

INT. ELEVATOR—CONTINUOUS

    Elizabeth surveys the cramped elevator.

    She surveys the buttons. The bottom one reads "Basement: L.
    Logue, Speech Defects."

    She closes the inner gate of the elevator and presses the
    bottom button.

    Nothing.

    Confused, she opens the inner gate, closes the outer gate then
    the inner gate and presses the button again. The elevator
    jumps downwards.

Scene Descriptions

```
INT. WAITING ROOM, LOGUE'S CHAMBERS—CONTINUOUS

   Umbrella stand, coat rack, wooden waiting bench: that's all.

   She looks about. The area is devoid of life. Coughs. No
   response. Calls imperiously:

                        [Dialogue starts]
```

Scene Descriptions

Example #3: Scene 17 from The King's Speech.

```
INT. DINING AREA OF LIVING ROOM, LOGUE FLAT—EVENING

    Lionel and MYRTLE are finishing up at the table with their
    three sons. As well as Laurie and ANTONY, there's their
    studious middle son VALENTINE, 17, his nose buried in a stack
    of science books.

    Lionel is bursting to tell Myrtle something.

                        [Dialogue starts]
```

Scene Descriptions

Example #4: _Scene 8 from The King's Speech_.

```
EXT. ROYAL PODIUM—DAY

    Bertie is frozen at the microphone. His neck and jaw muscles
    contract and quiver.

                              BERTIE
                    I have received from his Majesty
                    the K-K-K

    The stammer careens back at him, amplified and distorted by
    the stadium PA system.

    CU huge metal speakers.

    CU soldiers at rigid attention.

    CU Wood, he shuts his eyes.

    CU Cosmo Lang, expressionless.

    CU Elizabeth, dying.
```
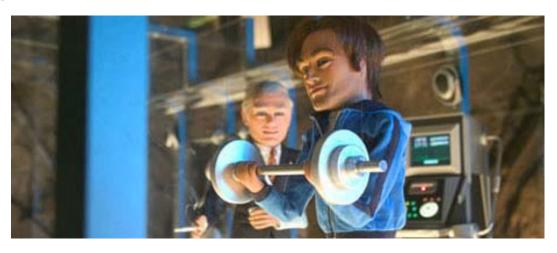
The Montage

- A montage is a technique in film editing in which a series of short shots is edited into a sequence to condense space, time, and information. It is usually used to suggest the passage of time.

The Montage

- A montage can be its own scene or it can be part of a scene.

- Each part of what the montage consists of must be carefully fleshed out. It is not enough to provide a summary of what is in the montage.

The Montage

- A montage is structured like any other scene with scene descriptions and dialogues.

- The transition from one segment of the montage to the next is marked by a `CUT TO:` which indicates an abrupt transition.

The Montage

```
MONTAGE:

Many different sessions, many different days, all in the
consultation room.

Segment #1:
   Scene Description


                              [DIALOGUE]


                                                    CUT TO:
Segment #2:
   Scene Description


                              [DIALOGUE]


                                                    CUT TO:
Segment #3:
   Scene Description


                              [DIALOGUE]

                                                    CUT TO:
END OF MONTAGE
```

Transitions

- Transitions are special camera directions in between scenes.

- Note that most of the time, no special camera directions are needed.

- When required, transitional notations go to the right-hand side of the screen and are CAPITALIZED.

- They include:

Transitions

- `FADE IN / FADE OUT`
- `CUT TO:` indicates an abrupt transition from one scene to the scene. This is used especially when a scene ends abruptly or is interrupted. When the scene is interrupted for a brief moment and we cut back to the scene that was going on, this is often marked by a `CUT BACK TO:`
- `DISSOLVE TO:` is a method of making a transition from one shot to another by briefly superimposing one image upon another and then allowing the first image to disappear.
- `FADE TO BLACK`

Dialogue

CHARACTER NAME (notation)

(commentary)

The dialogue itself. (commentary in line) More of the dialogue itself.

Dialogue

- The name of the character is centered and capitalized.
- Before a character speaks, make sure he/she has been properly introduced in the scene descriptions.

Dialogue

There are several parenthetical notations (also capitalized) that can go next to the character's name in the character's line:

`CONT'D` (not to be confused with "Continuous. `CONT'D` (always abbreviated) means that the character who is about to speak is the same character that spoke last within the same scene.

Dialogue

```
                    LIONEL
        He's a good lad, Willy. He could hardly
        make a sound, you know, when he first
        came to me.

Lionel catches Bertie staring at the airplanes.

                 LIONEL (CONT'D)
        My boys made those. Good, aren't they.
        Please, make yourself comfortable.
```

Dialogue

`V.O.` indicates that we can hear someone speaking or singing who is not in the scene as opposed to `O.S.` when a character says something while they are off screen.

Ex: O.S.: Logue when he says, "I'm in the loo" to 'Mrs. Johnson' who's in the waiting room.

Ex: V.O.: Bertie right after his brother David makes fun of him. Scene transitions to Logue's office as we hear Bertie talking to Logue.

Dialogue

- Parenthetical commentaries about the dialogues are most often found right under the character's name.

```
            ELIZABETH
             (loudly)
        The Johnsons.
```

- At other times, they are inserted into the dialogues for emphasis.

```
             WILLY
    You can go in now, "Mr. Johnson."
          (then to Elizabeth)
    Dr. Logue says . . .
```

- Sometimes they appear in italics depending on the software or program you are using.

Dialogue

- Regardless of their placement, parenthetical comments must have direct bearing on the dialogue. Other comments relating to what's going on while a character is talking must be included in the scene descriptions - either before or after the character speaks.

- Use parentheticals very sparingly, and only for clarification. Strong character development and subtext of dialog work better.

Dialogue

- For example, you want to indicate that two characters are walking to the door as they speak. This is what you would write:

```
They walk to the door:
          [Dialogue]
```

- You do <u>not</u> write:

```
          CHARACTER NAME
(walking to the door with so and so)
```

Dialogue

- Parenthetical commentaries should always be short—typically no more than 2 or 3 words—and very much to the point.

- They are not capitalized.

Dialogue

- In the dialogue itself, do not use quotation marks. They are not necessary. The formatting itself lets us know that characters are speaking.

- Only use quotes if a character is quoting something ("To be or not to be").

Dialogue

- Avoid overusing dots, dots, and more dots for emphasis. If emphasis is needed, consider using a parenthetical note or describing the overall mood or tone of a scene in the scene descriptions.

- Or, let the dialogue itself do the job: "Strictly business. No personal nonsense." The actors will know how they speak if your character is well developed.

Dialogue

- The same applies to exclamation points and question marks. Avoid overusing them. There is no need. If a situation is tense, a conflict brewing, the context of the action itself should be clear enough.

THE END