

## HOW TO WRITE IN PLAYSRIPT FORMAT

by

Someone U. Know

Someone U. Know's  
Address as well as  
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## ACT ONE

## Scene 1

A stage in a small edgy big city theater. There are two chairs CS [center stage]. The THEATER DIRECTOR, a young, edgy, big city guy is sitting in one of them. The PLAYWRIGHT enters. Like all playwrights, this character is so charismatic some of the spotlights implode trying so hard to compete with intense light as PLAYWRIGHT walks toward other chair.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Do you know how to write dialogue in format?

PLAYWRIGHT

Haven't a clue.

THEATER DIRECTOR

You center the name of the character talking and put the name in caps....that's short for capital letters.

PLAYWRIGHT

Is that right.

THEATER DIRECTOR

Then you write the dialogue without quotation marks. Then you space and do the same thing with the character talking back.

PLAYWRIGHT

And being confrontational? Talking back and giving the first character a hard time? I mean if I were to start arguing with you? If I were to get loud? (Shouts) If I were to be a very

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D) [continued]  
misunderstood kind of character who won't...BEHAVE!

THEATER DIRECTOR  
That would make for conflict and interest and good theater.

PLAYWRIGHT  
So if I just have people saying nothing much about anything...? If they just talk about what interests me and nothing much happens, it's not so good?

THEATER DIRECTOR  
(Snoring. Wakes up)  
...huh? Right! Yes. You'll put everyone to sleep if your characters have no conflict.

PLAYWRIGHT  
What if I want to write some action that happens without any dialogue going on?

Then you describe it over here as succinctly as possible. You also have to put any characters you refer to in caps. In other words, if the PLAYWRIGHT is going to walk DS or US [downstage – toward the audience – or upstage – toward the back] or SL or SR [stage left which is the actor's left or stage right, the actor's right] you describe it over here. It should be significant. Don't write a novel here. And don't direct the play's dialogue. The directors like to do that and can get kind of huffy if you do their job for them. And don't have a character doing what that character wouldn't be caught dead doing. The actors like to become real people and if you make their characters into jerks they can get pretty steamed.

PLAYWRIGHT  
(Leaning toward DIRECTOR)  
What if, like, my friends? They all like talk like this? Can I, like, write dialogue like...you know...like they really talk?

(Beat) [This means you want the actors to wait a second as though they are thinking or need a little time to react. If you want them to wait a longer time, use (Pause).]

DIRECTOR

Please do. Although with only a few lines of dialogue, you could make your friends sound intelligent. You could also place them in the last century or a thousand years in the future and you can also set them down in any kind of place you'd like.

PLAYWRIGHT

Like a cave? Or a racetrack? Or a funeral? Or the middle of the ocean?

DIRECTOR

Assuming they can swim.  
(Pause.)

PLAYWRIGHT

I can do anything.

DIRECTOR

Exactly. Just put it in the right format and we'll believe every word.