

How To Write A Treatment

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What Is a Treatment?

A treatment is a **two to five page persuasive and descriptive document** that tells the whole film or TV story by focusing on the highlights. The treatment should read like a short story and be written in the present tense. It should present the entire story including important character descriptions, key scenes, and dialogue from the source it is based on.

What Should Be in the Treatment?

1. A **catchy working title**.
2. A one sentence descriptive **logline**.
3. Introduction to key characters and crucial details about them: internal and external.
4. Who, what, when, why and where of the story in a **3-Act Structure**.
5. **Major turning points** between acts.

Develop A Strong Catchy Title

Whether the screenwriter is creating a new story or writing a treatment based on an existing script, the first step is to make sure that the screenplay has a good title. The first contact a prospective producer has with a script is the title. Pick a title that gives a clear idea of what genre the screenplay is written in.

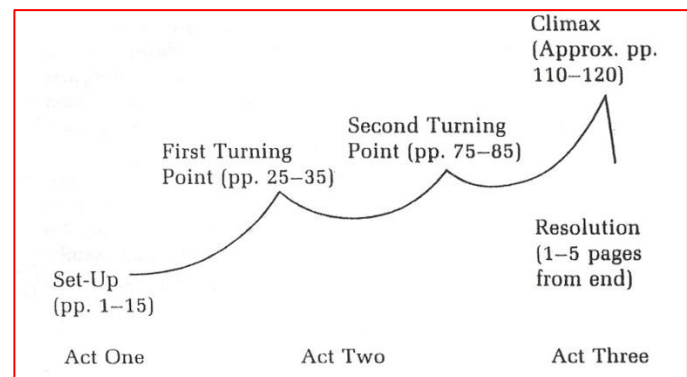
A good title can predispose a producer or reader to like a screenplay because it suggests the kind of experience that is in store and arouses curiosity. Great classic film titles include **It Happened One Night, Psycho and Die Hard**.

The title does not necessarily determine whether or the screenplay is good but it can be a great marketing tool. **HOWEVER**, if you want a producer to read your script, pick a name that creatively and captivatingly matches your story.

Write a logline

The second step is to write a **logline**. Preparing a log line for your screenplay is a basic marketing tool that I have repurposed for developing treatments. It is similar to the summary given in TV Guide. It is a technique for boiling down a plotline to its essence.

Here's an example of a logline: ***And Then Came Love*** is a character-driven romantic comedy about a high-powered Manhattan single mom who opens Pandora's box when she seeks out the anonymous sperm donor father of her young son.



The Three Act Structure

In his seminal book of fragments, *The Poetics*, Aristotle suggested that **all stories** should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Breaking the movement of a story into three parts, gives us a **3- part or act structure**. Think of it as a foundation for story progression that others can easily identify, even if the details are new and original.

Act 1, called the **Set-up**. The situation and **characters** and **DRAMATIC CONFLICTS** are **introduced**. Fundamental questions and issues are raised in the set-up.

Act 2, called **The Conflict**. This is often the longest section, is where the conflict expands in both expected and unexpected ways until it reaches a **DRAMATIC CLIMAX**.

Act 3, called **The Resolution**. The conflict rises to one more crisis and then is resolved.

Major Turning Points

A turning point is a critical moment in a story where the direction of the plot dramatically shifts due to a character's decision, an event, or a revelation, leading to irreversible changes and influencing the story's future. These pivotal points often drive character development, create tension, and propel the narrative forward, forcing characters to confront new conflicts or goals.

Key characteristics of a turning point:

- **Irreversible Change:** Once a turning point occurs, the story cannot return to its previous state; there is no going back.
- **Character-Driven or Event-Driven:** A turning point can stem from a character's choice or action (e.g., volunteering to participate) or from external events (e.g., a loved one being harmed).
- **Informational or Emotional Impact:** It can involve a character gaining new information, realizing a profound truth, or having their feelings about the story's conflict change drastically.
- **Shift in Direction:** The story's trajectory alters significantly, leading to a new narrative direction and purpose for the protagonist.