



Playwriting: Where Do I Begin?



Sometimes our heads are full of wonderful ideas and yet being able to write them down on paper seems like an impossible challenge! Here is a handy guide for starting the playwriting process, courtesy of the MED Theatre team.

Step 1: Decide on your idea.

We all have incredible imaginations, but while some of us find it difficult to feel creative at times, others sometimes have so many ideas that our minds can get into a bit of a muddle! Before you start plotting your play, you should think carefully about what story you want to tell, because if you include too many ideas it might be confusing for your audience.

The script example you will find at the end of this document is based on a Dartmoor myth; perhaps rather than an original story, you might have a myth or folktale that you would like to dramatise?

Step 2: Plot your play.

Every good story needs a beginning, middle and an end. Have a good think about what might take place in your play – is there a big event? Most good stories begin by introducing us to the world they are taking place in, climax at a point of crisis or conflict and then end with a resolution, whether it is a ‘happy’ or ‘sad’ ending!

Step 3: Create your characters.

Does your story have a hero? Does it have a villain? What do your characters want and why? Make sure that all of your characters have a reason for being in the play, they should all have a role in moving the plot along and making sure your audience feels connected to the story.

Step 4: Structuring your page.

There are lots of different elements of a script that are important to remember, so that actors and directors who are handling the play know what they need to do. Remember that this isn't just words on the paper for them to learn, the script is also a sort of instruction manual, showing them how to piece together the play as the writer imagined it.

There are a few vital elements to think about: stage directions, character names, the dialogue, scene titles or settings and any sound or lighting effects that might be important to the story. On the next pages, you will see an example page of a script; look closely at the colour-coded helpful hints to understand all of the different elements and how they work together.

TITLES
The play itself
needs a title, and so
do the scenes

JAN REYNOLDS AND THE GREAT STORM OF WIDECOMBE

SCENE 1

Outside on the moor at dusk, in October 1638

Set the scene!

STAGE DIRECTIONS
These are important,
as they let the actor
know what they
should be doing

In JAN, with a hood pulled up over his head

The sound of horse hooves against the dry ground grows closer and then stops

In DEWER

DEWER: I was half expecting you not to show up, Jan Reynolds.

SOUND AND LIGHTING EFFECTS
These can help to set the
scene or build tension

JAN: I know better than to try and avoid you, Dewer.

DEWER: Very wise. Do you have my money?

JAN lowers his head and then shakes it, subtly

CHARACTER NAMES
Who is speaking?

DEWER: Answer me.

JAN: *(Frightened)* N-n-no, I don't.

DEWER: You were warned of the consequences, were you not? I demand repayment...

DIALOGUE
What the actors
need to say

JAN: If I could have one more week, I –

DEWER: *(Growing impatient)* Jan Reynolds, you are a man who will never learn, and I have no faith that given even another ten years you would ever produce the money.

JAN: Please, there must be another way? Just one more day, then. I can ask my cousin Lucille...

DEWER looks at JAN, contemplating what he should do

DEWER: Very well, one more day. But you must meet me here again tomorrow, or I shall come looking for you. There will be nowhere that you can hide...

Out DEWER

JAN breathes a big sigh of relief

JAN: How on Earth will I explain all of this to Lucille?

Out JAN

TOP TIP:
ENTRANCES AND EXITS
Notice that the stage directions also state
when a character comes on or goes off
stage – imagine the chaos if nobody knew
when to enter or exit!

Here's how it
looks without the
colours!

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