

<https://youtu.be/z5GzoCbpOwY>

Hello and welcome to the debut episode of the screenwriters show. I'm your host Mark Hertzler. Now seeing as this is the very first episode, let me tell you a little bit about the show. Like you probably are yourself, I'm an aspiring screenwriter and I've written dozens of screenplays from shorts, feature-length, TV and everything in between.

I'm also a film major at a CSU university. I've always been a fan of the film shows around YouTube and while some of these cover segments on screenwriting. There's no one definitive channel for all your screenwriting needs and that is what I'm trying to set out to remedy.

We'll be doing regular episodes with screenwriting tutorials like the one today, as well as vlogs and script reviews. Now that we got that out the way, let's jump into the very first episode and it's my 10 tips on 'How to write a no budget short film script'.

Number one is working with what you got and whether that's a location that you have access to that someone might not have access to or a prop or a special costume. You're gonna want to take advantage of what you already have.

Somehow write it in your script, whether it's for scene or you can even base your entire script around a location or property you have access to. Not only is this a very good prompt and basis to start your screenplay but it's also gonna add a lot of production value for zero cost to you. For example, I used to work on a movie theater that was allowed to film apps so I worked that into four of my scripts.

Number two is find your budget. I would define a no budget film anywhere from zero to about a thousand dollars and you might think that kind of sounds like a lot, but the reality is that you're at least gonna have to pay for food for every single person on set per day.

Knowing your budget is essential because if you have a little extra dough you can have a little more leeway and maybe write in a couple props that you wouldn't normally write in. For a true zero budget film, if you have no budget at all, you're not gonna want to write in anything extra at all. Everything needs to be something you already have access to. So what this will do is, it will set the parameters of

what you can and cannot write.

Number three is write to your skills. Just like you might have access to a special location, you also might have a certain skill set that can aid in the production process. For example, if your visual effects, by all means you should write that into your script, because that way you're gonna add a lot of production value to the end product with zero costs to the production.

Number four is use screenwriting software. And this might seem like a no-brainer to some of you more experienced screenwriters out there, but for directors and other filmmakers who are kind of just dipping into the screenwriting process to make an end product I found that this is actually kind of a problem among beginning directors.

People don't want the hassle of formatting a script because it's a little bit alien to them and it seems like a lot of work but in reality there are free software's you can get like Celtx which I'll leave a link in the info box below. They can do all the work for you.

What this will do is, it will help you break down your script and see how long production is going to be how, many characters you have, how many scenes you have, etc, etc and it'll just help you a lot in the production process as well as the writing process.

Number five is hook the viewer within 30 seconds or half a page or so. Now this might seem like something that's really hard to do but all you need to do is set up some sort of conflict or mystery within the first half a page or so.

This can be something as simple as an argument between two characters, some sort of mystery item or situation or setting that the character is within, or can be just any old hook that's gonna get your audience or readers interested within the first page.

Number six is keep it as short as literally possible. This is really important for the no-budget screenplay because every minute or page of screenplay is gonna run you more production costs, so keeping it 5 pages or under is gonna give you your best bet to keep that budget down closer to zero.

Number seven is, unless you're writing comedy, try to keep dialogue to a minimum. I say this because action-oriented screenwriting is going to be a lot more effective and communicate something to your audience in a fraction amount of the time that dialogue would.

Let's say for example, guy likes a girl and he talks to his friend for about a page of dialogue explaining why he likes this girl, how they met, what he knows about her. You can do all of this in a fraction about the time if you use an action oriented scene by having this guy maybe make extended eye contact with the girl.

He gets nervous around her when she walks by or comes talks to him. A lot of people struggle with this and think that you absolutely need dialogue in your screenplay in order for it to work good. Good practice for this - if you're one of those people - is to write a 1 to 3 page screenplay with absolutely zero dialogue and that will help you practice storytelling techniques without dialogue and also prove to you that you can tell a story without dialogue.

Number eight is limit your characters and locations. You want as few characters as possible to keep the cast low and to keep that food money cost bound. And as little locations as you can have because that will also run you more gas and production days, etc.

For example, I just wrote a no budget or low budget film for a production company and I was given the rules that the cast has to be three to four characters max, and use locations around a certain part of a city. Combine characters when possible, cut locations when possible.

Number nine is avoid cliches, and by cliches I'm talking about themes like characters getting ready for their day at work or just their general day by getting breakfast and showering etc. And also certain genres like the zombie genre, the drug deal gone bad cliché, Tarantino kind of copy.

I say this because this is pretty much a go-to for any beginning filmmaker and people in the industry are really wary of these types of films. Now I'm not trying to bash anyone here with this because I can say from personal experience three out of five of my first screenplays were actually one of these cliches I just mentioned.

But while I'd say if you have to write one of these genres, just because you have a calling for it, either one, make sure it's a fresh and original take on this or cliché. Write the screenplay, get it out of your

system then do another screenplay and then film that second screenplay.

Number 10 is avoid sci-fi and fantasy. I say this because generally these two genres are gonna have a much larger budget than other genres would. It'd cost you a lot of props, costumes, set-piece and other sort of costs to your productions.

Alright, that's a wrap on the debut episode of the Screenwriter Show. Remember to like and subscribe and keep updated for more videos coming soon. I also have some suggested watching of my favorite no budget short films - I'll leave them in the info box below, as well as one of my scripts and a book on no budget filmmaking.