

https://youtu.be/5rR_kFsjeR4

When screenwriters finally get around to writing the story they've had in their head for so long they often want to hurry and get that first draft on the page without planning it out. Getting those 90 to 100 pages for that first draft often really is the hardest part but if you sit down and just start writing when you finish it's really not a first draft.

Instead, it's a rough first draft. Now I have no objection to doing this but the problem is some of the scenes that just get thrown onto the page to get that rough first draft completed stay in the screenplay when they really don't fit, once you start developing it and really crafting your script.

I've read and analyzed literally thousands of screenplays in depth from top Hollywood directors down to writers who didn't know how to format a screenplay, and across the board the most common problem I see is writers leaving irrelevant or boring scenes in the script.

Actually, most professionals know to take those out but aspiring writers too often write scenes to fill the pages to get to that magical number of 85 or 90 page minimum and the minimum keeps changing, so they keep writing to get to that magic number.

But when a scene is plopped into just add to the page count, it can really mess things up. When it comes to the plot every scene in your script needs to be crafted so it arises organically and the next scene just comes naturally.

Of course, it takes a lot of work to make it seem so organic and natural but that's the work you need to do to write a great script. Every scene in your script needs to be purposeful and meet at least two of the three key objectives.

If it doesn't, then it either needs to be cut or rewritten so that it does meet at least two of the following three objectives. Now here are the three objectives:

amplify the theme

move the plot forward

develop the character arc

Now let's take a look at each of these. Number one amplify the theme. Your theme is basically the whole point of the story. What's your story really about on a universal level? Your story needs to offer some kind of insight into the human experience.

We become riveted, or I should say, audiences become riveted when we see characters confronting real-life situation. A movie script should show an amplified version of what we normally deal with. The lesson your character learns is the theme of your story.

Your scenes and sequences need to always have an eye toward your theme. Your images, your dialogue - they need to reference a theme throughout your screenplay and each scene should amplify the theme in some manner.

Number two objective is move the plot forward ... In the film *The Wolf of Wall Street* for example, Leonardo DiCaprio plays Jordan Belfort, the real-life wolf and DiCaprio does this amazing thematic speech about money. It's inspiring to the employees while he gives the speech and then at the end he gives them a call to action which sets up the next point.

Having that speech turned into action for the plot is critical. He's not just merely pontificating when he gives this speech to the employees. He actually has a very specific intention and in that scene all three objectives are met.

The theme is amplified, it moves the story forward and then that brings us to the third objective which - is number three, develop the character arc. The scene from the film that I just mentioned shows us Jordan Belfort's character and it intensifies what we've already seen.

It builds tension around the question of 'how long he can push things?' Watching it, you can feel DiCaprio's strong personal intention behind what he's saying. It looks like he's just motivating his employees but you can sense that he's on a mission.

So that's why it's developing his character arc or revealing his character, also because this scene accomplishes all three things. It makes that scene one of the most memorable scenes in recent movie history in my view. Even if you hate the principal he speaks of, which is all about the money.

So those are your three objectives and you should try to fulfill at least two of them in each and every scene, if not all three. Now for a quick summary - to dramatically improve your script go scene by scene and see which of the three objectives or purposes above that it meets.

If it doesn't mean at least two of them, then rewrite it or take it out. Feel free to also add whatever one is missing if it only meets two, but most importantly make sure it meets at least two of the three objectives.

I hope you have found this helpful. If you'd like to have a professional assessment on your screenplay check out the types of script analysis that I offer. Again, this is Melody Jackson. Let me know if you want any of my help and either way, whether you have me review your script or you do it on your own, keep these three key objectives in mind. Learn them inside and out and you will be well on your way to excellence in your screenwriting.