

Write A Picture!

It can take quite a leap to get from the written word to a movie screen.

A screenplay, for all its clear descriptions of where characters are and what they say, has to work hard to meet the dramatic immediacy that we expect from films.

1. Stick To The Present Tense

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1. Stick To The Present Tense

Writing in the present tense helps, keeping the text direct and different from the prose you'll find in most novels or short stories.

2. Add Sound Effects

Sound effects can be effectively replicated on the page, using onomatopoeia such as BANGS for gunshots and SCREAMS of characters in danger.

3. Keep It Tight

Keeping the whole script tight is one of the best ways to capture the in-your-face nature of a modern movie. Concise dialogue and snappy scene descriptions will help you to avoid a novel's tone.

4. Write Pictures

Thinking visually is the most important part of the process. Writers are not always inclined to "talk in pictures", creating images on the page.

By cultivating a visual eye, you can create a script that's written to be SEEN, not just read.

Just as in any form of writing, those images will jump out at the readers and stay in their minds. Screenplays just happen to be the most image-driven of all forms of writing.

Start looking, recording dreams, taking notes.

Get hold of a camera - still, video, film, whatever you can get your hands on - and look through the viewfinder.

You don't have to stop loving words to start thinking in pictures, so get in the habit of finding appropriate pictures.

When you're writing your script, take every opportunity you can to tell your story using those kinds of images, ones that resonate with you and your characters. If they're relevant and contain an element that hasn't been seen before, they'll resonate with your readers.

After all, movies aren't referred to as "Pictures" for nothing.

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About the Author

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