

SCREENSTYLE

Written by

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1/10/03 DRAFT

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"SCREENSTYLE"

FADE IN:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS

What if properly formatting a screenplay required no more thought than a simple letter -- and page numbering, page breaks, and capitalization were handled automatically?

Why not let your computer keep house, keeping you free to write?

CUT TO:

WHAT IT IS

"ScreenStyle" is a template and style sheet created specifically for the needs of screenwriters.

The template conforms to the specifications outlined in The Complete Guide to Standard Script Formats -- Part I: The Screenplay written by Hillis Cole, Jr. and Judith H. Haag. These specifications include margins, tab settings, and capitalization requirements. Certain flourishes have been added to the template that can be easily altered or eliminated by the user at his or her discretion.

FADE TO:

"SCREENSTYLE" IS SHAREWARE

"ScreenStyle" is shareware. The author is a working writer who developed it for his own use over a period of four years. If you find it useful, please send a check for US\$15.00, or whatever you think it's worth, to:

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The author regrets that he cannot provide technical support over the telephone, but is happy to answer inquiries via regular or electronic mail. His America Online address is "ECLoverde".

DISSOLVE TO:

WORD FOR WINDOWS VERSIONS 1, 2, AND 6

ScreenStyle is a Word For Windows 2.0 document. Therefore, all of its features are available under versions 2.0 and 6.0. If compatibility with version 1.0 is needed, contact the author and he will provide a copy.

SMASH CUT TO:

SCREENSTYLE VERSUS DEDICATED PROGRAMS

ScreenStyle is an alternative to the dedicated screenplay word processors on the market (i.e., "Scriptor"). Its advantages are that it allows the user to work in a familiar environment -- Word For Windows is one of the most versatile word processors ever written -- and that the user can easily translate from one of the Microsoft Word formats to any other should the need ever arise.

The disadvantage of ScreenStyle in regard to programs like "Scriptor" is that the latter contains many screenplay-specific features such as inserting "CONTINUED's" and "MORE's" where necessary, keeping track of additions and deletions, and automatically numbering scenes.

However, it must be remembered that few, if any, of those screenplay-specific features are appropriate for use by the aspiring or "spec" screenwriter: "CONTINUED's", "MORE's", page addition/deletion control, and scene numbering are only to be employed when a screenplay is actually in production. To use these features in a spec script looks amateurish.

ScreenStyle does contain a provision for scene numbering and renumbering, should the need ever arise. This feature is described herein.

MATCH CUT TO:

PROPER USE OF SCREENSTYLE

If ScreenStyle is to be used under Word For Windows, a working knowledge of the program is necessary to make full use of the template's features and automation.

THE SCREENSTYLE DOCUMENT

ScreenStyle itself is an ordinary Word document divided into two sections (see the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of a "section"). The document is called "ScrenSty.Doc".

Section 1 contains the title page and all appropriate information. The title of the screenplay and the author's name are visible upon opening the template. The author's address, phone number, and the version date and/or number are contained in the First Footer (see the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of how to access headers and footers). Placing this information in the footer ensures that it will remain in the proper place relative to the bottom margin -- and that it will always appear on the first page.

If appropriate, the user may alter the contact information in the First Footer so that it contains only his or her phone number or the contact information for the author's agent or production company.

Section 1 should be no longer than one page.

Section 2 contains the actual screenplay itself. It is necessary that it be in a separate section so that the first page of screenplay text will be Page 1.

The margins of the ScreenStyle document are wide enough to accommodate three-hole-punch paper as well as scene numbering. It is very important not to alter the margins, as doing so will cause the document to not conform to proper screenplay format.

The proper font for screenplay use is Courier 12 point. No other typeface should be used. If this font is unavailable on your system, obtain and install it.

The proper size paper for screenplay use is 8 1/2 inches by 11 inches. No other size paper should be used.

THE STYLE SHEET

ScreenStyle's style sheet is the source of its automation (see the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of style sheets). The styles employed have been carefully defined, named, and tested over a period of several years.

The user may wish to rename some of the styles to suit his or her own work methods. The author advises against this, however. Certain style names, such as "Heading 1" or "Normal", have special properties or are the basis for other style definitions. Renaming styles may interfere with the automation.

Often-used styles have been assigned special keystrokes to make their application fast and easy. These keystrokes can be changed, and changing them will not interfere with their function, so users are free to customize.

The keystrokes assigned to specific styles are listed below, in the section "The Styles".

The style definitions contain margin and tab settings, line spacing, line justification, typeface specifications (capitalization, underlining, etc.), inter-paragraph spacing -- even controls over page breaks. It is very important not to alter these settings, as they conform to standard screenplay format.

PAGINATION

Proper page breaking within the screenplay body is handled by the software. For example, the software will not allow page breaks to occur between a character's name and his or her dialogue, or between a scene description (i.e., "INT. BAR - DAY") and the paragraph immediately following.

Because of this automation, it is not recommended that the user insert "hard" page breaks to paginate their screenplay.

If the user notices, upon printing, that the page lengths are uneven (i.e., some pages contain dialogue reaching near the bottom margin, while on other pages the dialogue ends halfway down), it is because the screenplay contains huge paragraphs of dialogue or scenic description. It is strongly suggested that the user break up or cut these unwieldy passages -- particularly since many film professionals have admitted skipping such monstrosities altogether when reading a script.

CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization is automatic in several of the ScreenStyle template styles. Therefore, use of the "Caps Lock" key is seldom necessary. It is always preferable to type in upper- and lower-case -- even when the resulting text will appear in all capitals -- because if the screenplay is ever translated into another form in which such capitalization is not appropriate, little, if any, retyping will be necessary.

LINE SPACING

Proper line and paragraph spacing is handled by the styles themselves. The author admonishes the user to not use the RETURN key to insert extra space between paragraphs, as this will likely result in uneven top margins.

Several of the styles were created specifically to end scenes (i.e., "Last Paragraph", "Lst Actions", or "Sries Last"). These insert the extra space with which it is proper to end a scene. Use them.

THE STYLES

What follows is the name of each style and a brief description of its use.

ACTIONS

This style is used for paragraphs containing action and scenic descriptions. It is automatically followed by the style "Character". Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+A.

BY

This style is for the line containing the author's name on the title page. It is automatically followed by the style "Normal".

CHARACTER

This style is for a character's name. It is automatically followed by the style "Dialogue". Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+C.

COLUMN 1 DIALOGUE

This style is used for dialogue in Column 1 of a sequence of two-column dialogue. It is rarely used. It is automatically followed by the style "Column Character".

COLUMN 2 DIALOGUE

This style is used for dialogue in Column 2 of a sequence of two-column dialogue. It, too, is rarely used. It is automatically followed by the style "Column Character".

COLUMN CHARACTER

This style is used for the characters' names in a sequence of two-column dialogue. Rarely used. It is automatically followed by the style "Column 1 Dialogue".

DIALOGUE

This style is used for dialogue. It is automatically followed by the style "Character" to better facilitate writing conversations. Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+D.

DISSOLVE

This style is used for all scene transitions (i.e., "CUT TO:", "DISSOLVE TO:", etc.) It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 1".

END

This style is used for "The End". It appears, of course, only once per screenplay.

FIRST FOOTER

This style is used for the footer on the title page of the screenplay.

FOCUS ON

This style is used to indicate that a person or object is to be highlighted on camera. See the ScreenStyle template for an example. This style is automatically followed by the style "Actions". Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+F.

FOOTER

This style is used for the footer of every page save the title page. However, since standard screenplay format does not call for any footers, the style is seldom used.

HEADER

This style is used for the header that runs throughout the screenplay.

HEADING 1

This style is used for scene headings. A tab should always be inserted at the left margin in order to accommodate scene numbering that may be inserted into the screenplay later. The style is so named to allow it to be more easily manipulated in Microsoft Word's Outline View, as will be explained later in this document. It is automatically followed by the style "Actions". Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+H.

HEADING 2

This style is used for such headings as "FADE IN:", "FADE OUT", "BEGIN CREDITS", "ROLL CREDITS", etc. It differs from Heading 1 in that it does not require that a tab be inserted at the left margin, and in the line spacing above and below it. The style is so named to allow it to be manipulated in Microsoft Word's Outline View. It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 1" because such headings tend to be followed by scene headings.

LAST DIALOGUE

This style is used when a paragraph of dialogue ends a scene. It contains the extra spacing appropriate in such situations. It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 1" to facilitate beginning a new scene. Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+L.

LINE ACTIONS

This style is used when a dialogue modifier (i.e., "angrily") or an action (i.e., "rises and opens window") is inserted into a line of dialogue. It is automatically followed by the style "Dialogue". Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+I.

LST ACTIONS

This style is used when a paragraph of action or scenic description ends a scene. It contains the appropriate extra spacing. It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 1" to begin a new scene. The awkward spelling of the style name is to accommodate keyboard shortcuts as will be explained further in this documentation. Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+T.

NORMAL

The Normal style is the base for all the others. It is very important that the user not alter this style in any way, as changes to it will likely be reflected throughout the document, in every style.

PAGE 1 TITLE

This style is used on the first page of the text of the screenplay (not the title page) where the title of the screenplay appears in quotation marks. It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 2" in order to ease insertion of "FADE IN:".

PRE FOCUS ON

This is a variation on the "Actions" style that prevents a page break from appearing between it and the paragraph that follows. This style is automatically followed by "Focus On" (see the ScreenStyle template for an example of this in use). Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+R.

PRE LINE ACTIONS

This is a variation on the "Dialogue" style that removes the space between it and the paragraph that follows. This style is automatically followed by "Line Actions" to accommodate situations in which actions are inserted in the midst of a character's dialogue. Its keyboard shortcut is CTRL+SHIFT+P.

SERIES OF SHOTS

This style is used in the preparation of a "Montage" or a "Series of Shots" sequence. See the description that follows and the example of its use in the ScreenStyle template.

SRIES LAST

This style is used at the end of a "Series of Shots" sequence. It contains the appropriate extra spacing. It is automatically followed by the style "Heading 1" to begin a new scene. The awkward spelling of the style name is to accommodate keyboard shortcuts.

TITLE PAGE

This style is used for the title on the title page of the screenplay. It is automatically followed by the style "By".

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

As stated earlier, the user can change the keyboard shortcuts that have been assigned to the various styles -- or assign shortcuts to styles that don't already have them -- as they wish. See the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of how to do this.

WORKING IN OUTLINE VIEW

The Outline view allows the user to view the screenplay in a "collapsed" view for easier editing. See the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of the Outline feature.

Since all scene headings use the style "Heading 1", if, in Outline view, the user chooses the number "1" in the bar that appears across the top of the window, only the scene headings themselves will be visible (the rest of the text is "collapsed" under the "headings"). The user can then quickly and easily rearrange scenes as he or she wishes.

HEADERS AND FOOTERS

The header and footer in Section 1 have been discussed previously under "The ScreenStyle Document".

The header in Section 2 of the ScreenStyle template contains automatic page numbering and an automatic dating system ("Last Revision: 01/10/03January 10, 2003").

Page numbering is, of course, standard, but some users may wish to remove the dating system. Simply select it the text and delete it. If the tab that places the page number on the right is accidentally deleted as well, simply retype it.

There is no footer used in Section 2 of the ScreenStyle template. Proper screenplay format does not call for the use of footers.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A "Montage" or "Series of Shots" sequence can be created through the use of the appropriate styles ("Series of Shots" and "Sries Last").

"Heading 1" is used to label the heading of a sequence. "Series of Shots" contains the proper indentation specifications -- including a first line that sticks out a half-inch farther to the left than the other lines of the paragraph -- for the shot descriptions themselves. "Sries Last" contains the extra space that the last paragraph of the sequence should have following it.

TWO-COLUMN DIALOGUE

On occasion, the user may wish to indicate that two characters are speaking simultaneously to each other, resulting in two columns, each of which contains dialogue spoken by a separate character.

Word For Windows contains multi-column features. The author does not recommend their use, as they often require dividing the document into more sections, which may interfere with page numbering, pagination, and header/footer modifications.

Word For Windows supports tables; therein lies the best method for creating two-column dialogue (see the Microsoft Word documentation for an explanation of tables).

The easiest and quickest way to create a two-column dialogue sequence is to select the two-column dialogue table in the ScreenStyle template, copy it to wherever it's needed, and replace the sample dialogue and character names with the appropriate material.

To delete a table, select the table and a bit of other text either preceding or following it, then hit DELETE.

It is recommended that two-column dialogue not run longer than a short paragraph. Tables can quickly get unwieldy, and such sequences are difficult to watch in a film.

SCENE NUMBERING

As mentioned previously, scene numbering should only be used when a script is in production. However, since students and other entrepreneurs produce films daily, the ability to number and renumber scenes semi-automatically is included in ScreenStyle.

Every scene heading (all of which should use the style "Heading 1") is preceded by a tab, as can be seen upon examination of the ScreenStyle template itself. The scene number should be at the beginning of each scene heading line -- to the left of the tab.

The quickest method of numbering scenes is to perform a Search-and-Replace (see the Microsoft Word documentation for instructions), searching for every instance in which a tab appears at the beginning of a line (search for "^p^t" -- the "^" character is SHIFT+6) and replacing it with generic number, such as "1".

This operation will result in a "1" being placed at the beginning of every scene head.

To order the scenes properly, the "Bullets and Numbering" command should be used (see the Microsoft Word documentation for instructions). Place the cursor at the first page of the screenplay body, before the first scene heading, execute the "Bullets and Numbering" command, indicate for it to start at "1", and that it perform the operation on paragraphs "Only If Already Numbered" (the program will assume the "1's" inserted earlier are a form of paragraph numbering). Do not have the program insert periods after the numbers -- properly formatted scene numbers do not include periods.

Note that if there are any "Series of Shots" sequences, their lettering ("A)", "B)", "C)", etc.) will interfere with proper scene numbering -- the program will assume these paragraphs are to be renumbered as well. Therefore, before performing the "Bullets and Numbering" command, select the entire screenplay body up to the "Series of Shots" sequence, perform the renumbering operation, then select the screenplay body following the "Series of Shots" through to the end (or up to the next "Series of Shots"), perform the renumbering operation (but indicate that the renumbering begin with the correct scene number), and lather, rinse, and repeat.

Unfortunately, the user is only half done. Proper scene numbering requires that the numbers appear in the right margin as well.

There is a tab stop at the right margin of the scene headings for insertion of numbers, but putting the tab and the correct number in will need to be performed manually. Word For Windows allows the user to create a macro to automate this process.

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR SHAREWARE PAYMENT.

FADE OUT.

THE END