



# Writing a 10-minute play

# Brief overview of types of plays:

1. **One act** -- a play that typically lasts between 40 minutes to 70 minutes. This play is done without an intermission and is viewed in one sitting. The play can contain multiple characters and multiple scenes, including multiple locations.
2. **Full Length** -- a play that lasts more than 70 minutes. Some full length plays have been up to 3 hours long. This full length play is divided up into “ACTS” and it is common for a 15-minute intermission to take place between ACT 1 and ACT 2. Each ACT can contain multiple scenes with multiple locations change. Some contemporary plays can be divided into 3 ACTS, but this is rare.
3. **The 5-ACT play**. This is Shakespeare’s preferred play format. The length of the play is actually no different than a full length, but is divided up into five ACTS. Each act represents the basic narrative structure, with ACT I being exposition & point of attack, ACT II rising action, ACT III climatic moment, ACT IV falling (reactionary) actions, ACT V conclusion. The intermission takes place at the director’s discretion.

# 10 minute play structure

- Play is 10-minutes long
- Play takes place in one location (one setting)
- Play has an average of 3 characters, no less than 2, no more than 4.
- Exposition is typically interwoven throughout the play as necessary; it is typically not how the 10 minute play starts.
- The play starts right away with the conflict/issue of the story.
- The conflict/issue focuses on one (no more than two) theme(s).
- The play is 10-15 pages long in playwriting format.

# 10 minute play PAGE 1 - TITLE PAGE

PUT THE TITLE OF YOUR PLAY IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS AT THE CENTER OF THE PAGE:

By

FIRST NAME LAST NAME

# 10 Minute play PAGE 2 -- character list

(review the look below to create the character list)

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHARACTER NAME (in all caps, followed by description).

Example:

MICKY MOUSE-- energetic, very smart, always happy, acts like a mouse

DONALD DUCK--irritable, sensitive, always feels second best

# 10 minute play STAGE DIRECTIONS

(use your outline to guide how you will write your dialogue and stage directions)

- Stage directions is information the playwright puts down in the play to help the director know the setting, environment, when & where the characters move, what the characters do, etc... You can have as many or as few stage directions as you need for your play.
- All stage directions must be in *italics*.
- All character names written in stage directions must be CAPITALIZED.

Example:

*It is evening in the forest. Smoke from the chimney of a small cabin is seen. The OLD MAN walks out of the cabin door, crosses downstage left, grabs his axe, and begins to chop wood.*

# 10 minute play -- DIALOGUE

- The character's name is typed in CAPITALS on the far left of the page, followed by a colon. The dialogue is then typed.
- If a character says another character's name in the dialogue, then that does not need to be capitalized.
- Always skip a line between characters speaking.
- If you want a character to say a line in a specific way, right the interjection in parenthesis and italicized before the line is spoken. This will tell the actor how to say the line.

EXAMPLE:

MIKE: How are you today, Sarah?

SARAH: (*frustrated*) I've been better.

# Putting it all together...

(Review the example provided of the playformat. Again, everything on the page starts on the left side like writing a paper.)

*(AT RISE:It is about 8:00 pm. We see a vacant street corner downstage right. A lamp post is lit, but the light is fading. BOB enters from stage left and walks to the street corner. BOB takes out his phone and checks his messages. ETHAN enters from upstage left and runs to BOB. He seems very worried.)*

ETHAN: *(frantically)* Did you get the message?

BOB: What message?

ETHAN: The message I sent you a second ago!

*(BOB holds phone up towards the lamp post in hopes of seeing better.)*

BOB: I don't see any message from you.

# Some other things to know...

- How to write when a character interrupts another character. Look at the dialogue example here to see how you can create an interruption:

Mary: (*angry*) I'm tired of you walking into my room all the time and taking my---

Louise: (*interrupts*) ---I'm never in your room! I swear it's Sarah who's taking your stuff!

- Writing dialects into your script is very hard, and you need to be careful not to fall into the stereotype of the dialect.
  - Good Example: "Y'all want some coffee this mornin'?"
  - Bad Example: "Y'all done get coffee from da ol' pot in de kitch--ee-yan, or I'll sick de chickn's on ya."

## One final look at the format:

### Jack and Jill: Play Script

Cast: Jack, Jill, Narrator

#### Scene 1

**Narrator:** Brother and sister, Jack and Jill have been sent by their mother to go and fetch water from the well.

*(Jack and Jill are walking along the lane holding empty buckets)*

**Jack:** *(Grumpily)* Can't believe mum is making us fetch water again.

**Jill:** Yeah I know. I wanted to play with my skipping rope. Oh look there is the hill and the well. Race you?

*(Jill starts running and Jack follows)*

**Jack:** *(Sounding out of breath)* Wew this hill is really steep. Be careful you don't fall.

**Jill:** You be careful you know how clumsy you are.  
*(Pulls a funny face)*

**Narrator:** Suddenly, as Jack and Jill are running up the hill.

*(Jack trips up over a rock and falls over)*

**Jack:** *(Screaming)* Ahr, it hurts.... *(Starting to cry)*  
My head is bleeding. Mummmeeeeeyy!

**Narrator:** Jill hears Jack screaming and turns back to go and help Jack.

**Jill:** *(Looking worried)* Are you ok? I'll stop the bleeding.

**Narrator:** As Jill is coming back down the hill to help she....

*(Jill trips too and comes tumbling down after Jack)*

**Jill:** Oh no!

**Jack:** Are you alright Jill?

**Jill:** I'm ok, just a scratch. Has your head stopped bleeding? You really are clumsy Jack.

*(Jack looks up in disbelief)*

**Jack:** I'm clumsy? You fell down too you fool. Sisters, who needs them?

# Final thoughts

- Make your play original!
- Write about things you know. Don't write about things that will require extensive amounts of research. Pull from personal/life experiences as templates for your work.
- Don't give up! Just start writing and see where the story takes you.
- Only write a story that you would watch yourself. You would find your story boring, then don't write it.
- Consider your audience--who are you writing for? Children? Teens? Adults? Families? Make sure you're clear who your audience is that will watch your play.
- For my advanced writers in the room, try and stay clear of tropes and cliché happenings. Search for the unique and unexplored ways to address the objectives and wants for your characters. There is so much we haven't explored about what it means to be human.

# Good Luck! Enjoy your playwriting experience!

- Don't worry if the play is good. At the end of the day, you will have accomplished writing your first 10-minute play.
- Remember, your play is due by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 13. Remember that it is 10% off your total grade every day it is late, starting with 5:01 PM on Friday, December 13.
- Send the play via email [jgorski@wcpss.net](mailto:jgorski@wcpss.net) or share it with me on google docs.