<u>THE COMPLEAT SCREENPLAY FORMAT GUIDE</u>

Screenplay formatting isn't rocket surgery. If you follow some simple rules, which are laid out here. Final Draft and Celtx do a lot of this automatically, but it should still look like this:

1. <u>Typeface:</u> Use `COURIER NEW 12.` Why? The 1-page = 1 minute formula is based on this typeface and margin settings. <u>NO</u> **BOLDING** or *ITALICS* EVER! Use <u>underlining</u> for emphasis.

2. <u>Margins:</u>   Left = 1.5 in. (to make room for hole punches for when it's bound)
   Right = 0.75 in.
   Top = 0.5 in. with a header of one line and formatted page number in top right;
   Bottom = 0.75 in.

3. <u>Spacing</u>: Single spacing, ALWAYS. Some elements, such as location slugs, paragraphs (aka ¶s), etc. are followed by an extra line-space.

4. <u>Location slugs</u>: ALL CAPS, full margins, flush left. [For our purposes, we won't use scene numbers; don't worry about them.]

   <u>Example:</u>

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION - DAY`
  {line-space}
           `An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded`
           `by well tended grounds.`
  {line-space}
           `A carriage drawn by two horses pulls into the porte-cochere`
           `and stops.`

5. <u>Screen directions (abbreviated as "S.D.")</u>: Full margins (1.5" left/0.75 right), normal capitalization.

6. <u>Character name before dialogue</u>: ALL CAPS at Left margin + 2.5 in. (equivalent to 5 default tabs to right, basically the middle of the margin)–CENTERING IS WRONG AND HAZARDOUS TO YOUR GRADE!

   <u>Example:</u>

{1.5" Margin} `He faces the fireplace and looks into the dying embers.`
   `{line-space}`
                         `MAJOR AMBERSON`
              `It must be … the sun. The sun was`
              `here before everything and we came`
              `after the sun…`
 {line-space}
           `George looks at his grandfather from the entryway [...]`

7. For Offscreen Dialogue Or Voiceover Cues add (O.S.) or (V.O.)to the name.

   Example:

{1.5" Margin} Major Amberson faces the fireplace and looks deeply into the
              dying embers.
   {line-space}
                                     NARRATOR (V.O.)
                         As he recognized that he was
                         finally, truly an old man, the
                         fire went out of the Major's
                         manner.

8. Parenthetical before dialogue [e.g. (sarcastically) or (to Cinderella)]: Lower case except for first letter of proper nouns at Left margin + 1.5 in. and should not pass Right dialogue margin. If so, break out as an S.D.

   Example 1:

{1.5" L Mar} Major Amberson faces the fireplace and looks deeply into the
              dying embers.
   {line-space}
                                     MAJOR AMBERSON
                              (to no one in particular)
                         It must be … the sun. The sun
                         was here before everything and
                         we came after the sun…
   Example 2:

{1.5" Margin} Major Amberson faces the fireplace and looks deeply into the
              dying embers.
   {line-space}
                                     MAJOR AMBERSON
                              (as if speaking to someone)
                         It must be … the sun. The sun
                         was here before everything …
                         isn't that so?
   {line-space}
              He looks to the painting of his father for a reply.
   {line-space}
                                MAJOR AMBERSON (CONTINUED)
                         And we came after the sun…

9. Dialogue: Increase margins on both sides by + 1.0 in. (aka a L/R indent) See examples above.

10. CAPITALIZATION:
    ALL CAPS is used to indicate anything that needs to be called out for the producer/designer/actor, etc. including:

    a.   FIRST APPEARANCE BY A CHARACTER (this is usually accompanied by a short description) or of a group of EXTRAS.

       Example 1:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
  {line-space}
```
        An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
        by well tended grounds.
```
  {line-space}
```
        GEORGE AMBERSON MINAFER (a young 21, athletic and handsome),
        dressed in the height of 1892 male fashion, paces the entryway
        nervously.
```

       Example 2:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
  {line-space}
```
        An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
        by well tended grounds.
```
  {line-space}
```
        A CREW OF GARDENERS attends to the lawn and hedges as we are
        just able to make out ISOBEL AMBERSON (40s, still-glamorous
        heiress) in a dressing down looking out of a second floor
        window.
```

    b.   SOUND EFX (SFX, i.e., sound cues that will have to be recorded separately from the sync sound).

       Example:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
  {line-space}
```
        An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
        by well tended grounds. The SHARP CRACK OF A PISTOL SHOT is
        heard, followed by a WOMAN'S SCREAM.
```

    c.   UNUSUAL PROPS OR DECOR, i.e., not something that you'll find in any prop shop or interior design outlet that the production designer will have to fabricate or research.

       Example:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
  {line-space}
```
        An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
        by well tended grounds. Rising from the lower roof between the
        two cupolas is a LARGER THAN USUAL WEATHERVANE IN THE SHAPE OF
        A RECLINING NUDE.
```

d. INSERTS, GRFX (GRAPHIC) OR TITLE CARDS

Example 1:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
 {line-space}
```
     An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
     by well tended grounds.
```
 {line-space}
```
     INSERT: GOLD SIGNET ON FRONT DOOR:
                           ONE
                      AMBERSON AVENUE
```
 {line-space}
```
     A carriage drawn by two horses pulls into the porte-cochere
     and stops.
```

Example 2:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
 {line-space}
```
     An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
     by well tended grounds.
```
 {line-space}
```
     GRFX: MEDIAN INCOME IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1892, which shows
     the Amberson Family in the top 1%.
```
 {line-space}
```
     A carriage drawn by two horses pulls into the porte-cochere
     and stops.
```

Example 3:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. AMBERSON MANSION – DAY`
 {line-space}
```
     An imposing Victorian mansion with a mansard roof, surrounded
     by well tended grounds.
```
 {line-space}
```
     TITLE (LOWER THIRD): FROM THE NOVEL BY BOOTH TARKINGTON
```
 {line-space}
```
     A carriage drawn by two horses pulls into the porte-cochere
     and stops.
```

e. Transitions and EFX (EFFECTS): We no longer add lines for "CUT TO:" or place them near the right margin (though Celtx and Final Draft sometimes do). The various types of DISSOLVE TO:, SPLIT SCREEN: or other EFX are done in ALL CAPS either as separate lines or as callouts in the text:

[CONTINUED]

Example 1:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. MONTAGUE VILLA, FLORENCE – DAY`
  {line-space}
        `An imposing white stucco mansion with with a terracotta roof,`
        `surrounded by lush palmy grounds.`
  {line-space}
        `LONG DISSOLVE TO:  {or INTERCUT WITH:, etc.}`
  {line-space}
        `EXT. CAPULET PALAZZO, VENICE – DAY`
  {line-space}
        `A grand marble palace on the Grand Canal; a GONDOLA is moored`
        `by the ornate entryway.`

Example 2:

{1.5" Margin} `EXT. MONTAGUE VILLA, FLORENCE – DAY`
  {line-space}
        `An imposing white stucco mansion with with a terracotta roof,`
        `surrounded by lush palmy grounds. A HORSE-DRAWN COACH waits`
        `outside.`
  {line-space}
        `SPLIT SCREEN TO INCLUDE:`
  {line-space}
        `EXT. CAPULET PALAZZO, VENICE – DAY`
  {line-space}
        `A grand marble palace on the Grand Canal; a GONDOLA is moored`
        `by the ornate entryway.`
  {line-space}
        `At both residences, SERVANTS are loading the conveyances with`
        `wicker hampers and cases [...]`

11. Montages
    A montage can be a useful way to use brief shots/scenes to compress time/reveal backstory/use in a way only you have thought of.

    The simplest way to do this is to label the sequence as a montage and add a numbered list of the actions/shots/scenes.

    The best way is to to label the sequence as a montage and make a numbered list using regular format location slugs with brief descriptions of the actions a single space beneath.   In reverse order:

    Example 1:

{1.5" Margin} `MONTAGE:`
 {line-space}
{1.5" Margin} `1) INT.  STABLE -- DAY`
{1.5" Margin} `The Mule kicks Superman in the butt. Superman doesn't notice.`
  {line-space}

```
{1.5" Margin} 2) EXT. SMALLVILLE H.S. FOOTBALL FIELD -- DAY
{1.5" Margin}A WIDE RECEIVER crashes into Clark, knocking off his glasses.
         Clark  Clark barely registers it.
  {line-space}
{1.5" Margin} 3)  INT.  KENT HOUSE -- CLARK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT
         A MOSQUITO lands on Clark's forehead. Clark slaps it, hard,
         and knocks himself out.
  {line-space}
{1.5" Margin} END MONTAGE
```

Example 2:

```
{1.5" Margin} MONTAGE:
  {line-space}
{1.5" Margin} 1) AT THE STABLE: The Mule kicks Superman in the butt.
         Superman doesn't notice.
  {line-space}
         2) SMALLVILLE H.S. FOOTBALL FIELD: A WIDE RECEIVER crashes
         into Clark, knocking off his glasses.  Clark barely registers
         it.
  {line-space}
         3) CLARK'S BEDROOM: A MOSQUITO lands on Clark's forehead.
         Clark slaps it, hard, and knocks himself out.
  {line-space}
         END MONTAGE
```

12. Title Page: There should always be a title page (even one that says "UNTITLED") and it should contain the following fields:

<div align="center">

TITLE in ALL CAPS;
{double space}
by {lowercase}
{double space}
Author's Name in Initial Caps

</div>

all centered and starting about 2.5 in. from the top margin.

If the work is an adaptation, start higher and add:

<div align="center">

based on a/the {type of work: novel, short story, original story, video game, etc.}
{double space}
by {lowercase}
{double space}
That Author's Name in Initial Caps

</div>

also all centered.

a. Draft number, date, and registration number (if any), single space, flush left, beginning about 9.5 inches from the top of the page;

b. on the opposite side, the last entry on the same line as the lowest line on the left: CONTACT: Contact's name, address, phone and e-mail, single space.

CHINATOWN

by

Robert Towne

{the following is not true; just an example of the format}
Based on an original story

by

Roman Polanski

and

Robert Towne

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