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CHAPTER

Poetic Writing

Writing in Prose: Scriptwriting

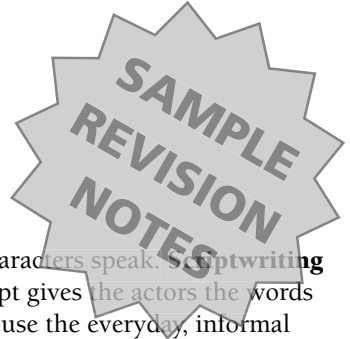
Aims of Chapter

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- write a draft playscript
- workshop a playscript
- write a script for a television soap



Scriptwriting



A **script** of a play, skit or sketch is the words the characters speak. **Scriptwriting** is another way of writing speech or dialogue. A script gives the actors the words to speak and the **stage directions** to follow. Scripts use the everyday, informal language of speech. Sentences are often incomplete and casual, informal words and phrases are used.

A script is just a guideline for actors in a play. In your writing, scripts can be like your first writing drafts. When you **workshop** or trial your scripts with others you can change or delete words or add extra points to improve and revise your script. A script needs to be workshopped by actors who interpret the character's actions and words and make the play come alive. Your play scripts should be working documents that you can rewrite and adapt as you move towards the publication stage – the live performance.



Sample Script

Look at the script below and note the special features.

Names of characters are in capital letters. Start a new line for each character.

Stage directions, what people do and how they act, are in brackets, and often in italics.

Use a colon after each character.

The words that are spoken are written normally. No quotation marks required.

Each speech starts at the same place on the line.

Scene One

The opening scene introduces the characters and sets the scene for the action and conflicts to follow.

Lights focus on MRS NORRISH, her daughter JAMIE and their Chinese exchange billet, ONG. They are seated around the table drinking cans of Coca-Cola.

JAMIE: Mum, you know how you said we could do things when Ong is here... Well ... I have been thinking ... can I ask you something?

MOTHER (looks up and sighs): Yes, Jamie. I'm listening. What is it now? What have you been thinking? Come on. What do you want? Just say it.

JAMIE (looking nervous): Well Mum, everybody, all the girls in our class, even Jocelyn Jameson – and you know how strict her mother is – are going to the Super Sonic Disco on Saturday night. I thought that Ong and I should go. You know, it'd be great for Ong, they don't have that stuff in China. It's all kids ... real safe. Just Years 7 to 10 kids. Please Mum.

(ONG nods her head and smiles.)

MUM: Mmmm ... who would take you? Where is it held? Who can I ring up and ask about it?

JAMIE (searching in her bag under the table): No. You don't need to ring anybody up. Look. Here are the details. It's all here – see. Years 7 to 10, all kids welcome. It sounds neat, Mum, please. Ong's very keen to go, aren't you Ong?

(ONG nods her head in agreement.)

ONG: It sounds good Mrs Norrish. My parents would certainly say yes. And my exchange counsellor said I ought to mix more. I would love it. And we'll be good.

MUM: Oh dear, (hesitating) I just don't know ... Mmmm. I'm not sure Jamie. I'm not sure at all. I think I'll ring Jocelyn's mother and then I'll just think about it.

(JAMIE glares at her mother and moves away from the table.)

JAMIE (angrily): I'm not a baby, Mum! I'm 13 years old! It's time you realised this. I'm growing up. I don't want to be stuck at home with your silly friends. I want out. Come on Ong, let's go! (JAMIE grabs her bag and leaves. ONG looks down and feels embarrassed.)



Activity A: Scriptwriting

Write your own play script to complete the sample script above. Think about the possible **conflicts** in the play. Drama is about conflict and the resolution of conflict.

Conflict 1	person to person	Jamie and her mother
Conflict 2	cultural differences	Jamie's behaviour – Ong's respect for elders
Conflict 3	group to group	teenagers versus parents
Conflict 4	within a person	Jamie's anger and resentment
Conflict 5	person to group	Mrs Norrish to teenage girls

Think about the characters in your playscript and the conflicts they will face.

- How will they resolve them?
- Who will disagree?
- What will they disagree about?
- What is the disco really like?
- Will the girls go to the disco?



Handy Hint

Workshop your script and trial it with a **small group in class**.
Be prepared to work on your script and revise and rewrite it as you go.
Give clear stage directions to your actors.

Glossary/Index

- abbreviation (38):** the shortened form of a word.
- abstract noun (4):** names of things not able to be felt, measured or seen.
- acknowledgements (in a book) (98):** thanks to those who have helped in the writing and publishing process.
- active listening (239):** listening carefully and checking with the speaker to see if you have understood correctly.
- adjective (13):** a word that describes someone or something.
- adverb (27):** a word that tells how, why, when and where.
- adverb of manner (27):** describes how something is done.
- adverb of place (27):** describes where something is done.
- adverb of time (27):** describes when something is done.
- alliteration (143):** several words in the same sentence or phrase which begin with the same consonant sound.
- animation (206):** the process of making something life-like, as in a film.
- antonym (47):** a word that is opposite in meaning to another.
- apostrophe (44):** punctuation ['] used for contractions (it's) or to show possession (John's bike).
- appendix (39, 98):** extra information added to the back of the book. (Plural: appendixes or appendices.)
- appropriate (249):** suitable for the occasion.
- argument (174):** in expository writing, the reason for your viewpoint.
- article (129):** a piece of writing for a newspaper or magazine.
- audience (107, 228):** people with/to whom we are communicating.
- auxiliary verb (24):** a helping verb.
- ballad (110, 140):** a traditional narrative poem, which gives a brief outline of a story, and which often make use of dialogue.
- big close-up (BCU) (207):** also known as extreme close-up; shot that shows the head, usually from the bottom of the chin to the mid-forehead.
- bird's eye view (high-angle shot) (208):** a top-down view.
- blurb (57):** a short piece of writing that tells you something about a book.
- body language (179, 237):** emotions and feelings expressed through body movements, posture, facial expressions and gesture.

