



Basic Playwriting Tips

Start with an Idea – Your play can be about anything you want. It could be about something that really happened to you or someone you know or could be about something that is totally made up.

Think of a problem – Your characters could face a problem which will be central to the plot, to make it more dramatic. A play's plot is usually made of the following timeline;

- (1) the beginning describes the characters and conflict/problem,
- (2) characters try to solve the problem
- (3) their action leads to the best moment in the play, or turning point,
- (4) this then leads to a resolution that sums up how things end.

Setting. The setting of a play is where it takes place. This could be a time in history, a foreign country, a certain building or anywhere you want it to be. Scene changes are a good time for characters to switch locations.

Characters. Your play should have three people in it. Each of these characters need to want something and has a goal or objective. (You could list each character and give detailed descriptions for each one, including their name, age, physical appearance, personality, hobbies and interests, fears, secrets etc)

Dialogue. This is the conversations that the characters have and tells your story. What they each say should show the mood and personality of the character. It is a good idea to practice how the dialogue sounds by reading it out loud.

Format. Using the correct playwriting format helps people to read your play. An example of the correct format is below;

THE SUNNY DAY
By JOHN DOE

Cast of Characters:

MICHELLE, a friendly, 30-something mother

IOLO, her 14 year old son

DEWI, Iolo's best friend, also 14 years old

NICK, Michelle's husband and Iolo's father, worried about work

MENNA, Iolo's 12 year old sister, who sometimes teases him

Setting:

The play takes place in a garden in Cardiff in 2020, on a very sunny day during the lockdown.

ACT I
SCENE 1

Stage Directions are messages to the actors and crew on what to do and how to move around the stage. These stage direction notes are aligned to the right margin. They should be brief and written in the present tense. They describe action and visuals, not inner thoughts.

(Early morning, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping away noisily. IOLO appears in the garden, dressed up for winter weather and wearing a backpack. MICHELLE comes out of the house and runs to catch IOLO.)

MICHELLE

Iolo, wait! Are you really wearing that? You are going to be so hot! You need suntan lotion and a sunhat and you should take off your coat.

IOLO

I'm fine, don't worry about it. If I keep my coat on I won't need suntan lotion.

(DEWI enters, also wearing a coat, and walks over towards IOLO.)

DEWI

Hi Iolo, ready to go? We are going to be late and miss our bus.

Things to note: The character's names are all in CAPS, bolded, and centered just before each character's line of dialogue. Stage directions are at the beginning of a scene and anywhere else where action, props, or descriptions need to be explained for the cast and crew.