Scriptwriting

Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify each of the program formats presented and summarize the unique characteristics of each.
- Identify the expected components of a program proposal.
- Explain the format of a program treatment.
- Recall the elements in each type of script used in television production.

Introduction

Too many students experience anxiety when they hear the word "writing." One of the best things that can be said about television scriptwriting is that it bears little resemblance to the writing style required for academic courses. Although scriptwriting is relatively simple to do, *good* scriptwriting takes talent and skill.

Professional Terms

actors
big talking face (BTF)
concert style music video
documentary
drama
format script
interview
lecture
lecture/demonstration
magazine
montage
music video
newscast
nod shots
outline script
panel discussion
program proposal
public service
   announcement (PSA)
script
story style music video
storyboards
talking head
treatment
visualization
word-for-word script

Program Formats

script: An entire program committed to paper, including dialog, music, camera angles, stage direction, camera direction, and computer graphics (CG) notations.

lecture: A program format in which the talent speaks and the camera shoots almost entirely in a medium close-up. Also known as *big talking face (BTF)* and *talking head*.

lecture/demonstration: A program format that provides action and makes use of props in addition to lecture. Examples of this format include cooking shows, how-to shows, and infomercials.

A *script* is an entire program committed to paper. It includes dialog, music, camera angles, stage direction, camera direction, computer graphics (CG) notations, and all other items that the director or scriptwriter feels should be noted. There are many different kinds of television programs, each with unique requirements of the script. Most programs fit into one of the following categories: lecture, lecture/demonstration, panel discussion, interview, documentary, newscast, magazine, drama, public service announcement/ad, and music video.

Lecture

The *lecture* program format is the easiest format to shoot—the talent speaks and the camera shoots almost entirely in a medium close-up. All that is needed for this format is the talent, a camera, and perhaps a desk or podium for the talent to sit or stand behind, **Figure 8-1**. Other names for the lecture format are *BTF (big talking face)* or *talking head*. The lack of either camera movement or talent action creates a very dull and uninteresting program. This format has the lowest viewer retention of information and is often the mark of an amateur production team.

Lecture/Demonstration

The *lecture/demonstration* format lends itself to the numerous cooking shows, how-to shows, and infomercials seen on television today. This format is more interesting to watch than a lecture alone because of the action and many props used by the performers, **Figure 8-2**.

Figure 8-1. A single individual speaking from behind a podium provides little visual interest or action. Because of this, the lecture format has the lowest viewer retention rate of all the programming formats.

Figure 8-2. The lecture/demonstration format adds action that corresponds to the lecture and is more interesting for viewers to watch.

Panel Discussion

The many Sunday morning network programs that bring a group of professionals together to discuss current news and political topics are examples of the *panel discussion* format. Also included are the popular daytime talk shows. These programs are not difficult to produce, as long as there are a limited number of people on the panel, **Figure 8-3**. Panel discussions are driven by the program's content, not action. As more people

panel discussion: A program format that presents a group of people gathered to discuss topics of interest. Daytime talk shows are an example of this format.

Figure 8-3. The panel discussion format is relatively easy to shoot and provides viewers with interesting information, depending on the talent and the topic.

are added to a panel discussion, the group shot to include all members gets rather wide. A wide shot is also a tall shot, which increases the risk of shooting off the top of the set. To keep the top of the set in the shot, the camera may need to tilt down and inadvertently make the studio floor the most prominent item in the picture. As the industry moves more and more to shooting in 16:9 screen format, one or two people can be added to the ends of the panel. The 16:9 screen shape provides more width and less height than the 4:3 screen format.

Interview

On location or in the studio, the two-person interview can be electrifying. People like Barbara Walters and Oprah Winfrey have built entire careers on making a simple conversation a compelling program for the audience. The *interview* format is often shot with only one camera. To get various camera angle cuts between the interviewer and the interviewee, the interviewee is shot for the entire duration of the interview. The audio picks up the questions asked by the interviewer, but the camera only shoots the interviewee's face. After the interviewee has left the set, the camera shoots the interviewer asking the same questions a second time and records some *nod shots*. Nod shots are a special kind of cutaway (discussed in Chapter 19, *Production Staging and Interacting with Talent*). The interviewer does not say anything, but simply "nods" naturally as if listening to the answer to a question. When collecting nod shots, the interviewer faces the direction where the interviewee was positioned during the interview. Nod shots are critical to the editing process when an interview, which may have originally taken 30 minutes, must be cut to 12 minutes in order to fit into a time slot between spots. In the editing room, the angles and nod shots are cut together to create what looks like a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee.

Documentary

A *documentary* program is essentially a research paper for television. The program topic is researched, the information is outlined, and the script is written. See **Figure 8-4**. The audio in a documentary may be either off-camera narration, on-camera narration, or a combination of both. A documentary may also contain interviews. The audio portion of the script should be roughly written out before any shooting begins. In the process of writing, a shot sheet is developed. For a documentary program, a shot sheet is like a grocery list of shots needed to support the audio portion of the script. In addition to capturing the shots on the list while shooting, the director watches for other shots that include specific items, people, or anything that adds to the program's content and would be interesting to the viewers. Shot sheets are only a guide and are rarely long enough to provide enough footage to assemble an entire program. Always shoot more footage than is listed on the shot sheet.

Newscast

By definition, a *newscast* program is a collection of individual news stories. Each story within the program may be developed with a different

interview: A program format that involves a conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee.

nod shots: A cutaway shot often used in interview programs and usually recorded after the interviewee has left the set. In a nod shot, the interviewer does not say anything, but simply "nods" naturally as if listening to the answer to a question.

documentary: A program format that is essentially a research paper for television. The audio in the program may include both on-camera and off-camera narration. The video footage used in the program is determined by the topic research and should support the audio of the program.

newscast: A program format that is a collection of individual news stories.

Figure 8-4. A documentary script combines research information on a topic and shots that support the information presented.

Documentary Script	
Video	**Audio**
592a Channel 9 sign	Television
592b Channel 7 sign	Production trains
592c Channel 4 sign	students for
593 DW TV studio sign on door. Door opens on studio in production	entry-level positions in television studios as production assistants.
594 Shot of SEG, tilt up to monitors	It also provides students with a greater
595 Waveform adjustment	hands-on background than most colleges
596 Shoot studio camera viewfinder. ZO rack focus to interview in studio set	offer. Students write, direct, shoot, edit,
597 Operate editors	and deliver their own programs.
598 Focal Point title on CG, run title program	A 30-minute program is produced by students
599 Music video clip	each week for the Fox Cable
600 Passive switcher	System.
601 Dark studio, switch on lights, light board in foreground	We produced the program you are watching right now.
602 A crew shooting a program on location	Location shooting with portable equipment is
603 Loading a car with equipment	a favorite of the students.
604 Drum solo tape	So are music videos.
605 Rayburn music video	Students may work for
606 Channel 10 control room	Channel 10 while taking the class.
607 Wedding	We frequently accept jobs working for the
608 Floor manager gives cue	community as fund-raisers. The students
609 Open barn doors	even earn a salary.
610 Operate audio mixer	The class is run like a real video production
611 Director talks into headset. Shot from studio into control room. ZO to see studio camera perform pan to aim at "us"	company, so student responsibility and dependability are strongly emphasized.
613 AFI book	Students in this class are considered to be college-bound.
614 College survey form	The instructor provides considerable help
615 Place lapel mic on student	in matching student interest
616 Move platform	with schools of communications.
617 Hall of fame plaque	If you are interested in the lucrative,
618 "Digital Wave Productions" rolls up on screen. Student stops tape.	glamorous, and demanding field of
619 CU hands taking tape out of machine. Slow ZO. Hands place into case. MS of person smiling at camera and walking out of control room	Television Production, check us out.

Shot number — *(labels "592a" row)*

Camera direction — *(labels "ZO to see studio camera perform pan to aim at 'us'")*

script style, but the overall program has its own script. As a script style, news is practically in a category all of its own. News scripts are discussed in Chapter 9, *Broadcast Journalism*.

Magazine

magazine: A program format comprised of feature packages, each addressing a different story for seven to eleven minutes.

The *magazine* format originated from programs like "60 Minutes," but has become more than news-oriented programming. A regular news broadcast presents each story in two minutes or less. A magazine format program is comprised of feature packages and each package addresses a different topic. This allows more interesting detail to be included about each story, but fewer stories to be included in each program.

Drama

drama: A program format that includes both dramas and comedies and requires actors to portray someone or something other than themselves.

This term includes both drama and comedy programming, **Figure 8-5**. The *drama* format requires a different kind of talent—actors. *Actors* take on a role in a program and perform as someone or something other than themselves.

actors: Individuals who participate in a drama or comedy program, performing as someone or something other than themselves.

Public Service Announcement (PSA)/Ad

public service announcement (PSA): A program that is 30 or 60 seconds in length and aims to inform the public or to convince the public to do (or not to do) something in the interest of common good.

Generally, *public service announcements*/ads are 30 or 60 seconds in length. The purpose of a PSA is to inform the public or to convince the public to do (or not to do) something in the interest of common good, **Figure 8-6**. A typical television ad, on the other hand, attempts to convince the public to purchase goods or services. Examples of some PSA themes include "Just Say No" (anti-drug), "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk," "Keep America Beautiful" (litter prevention and waste reduction), "Rock the Vote" (voter registration), "Get Caught Reading," "Buckle Up

Figure 8-5. A drama requires that talent with acting ability be used in the program.

America," and "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery" (changing batteries in smoke alarms).

Music Video

The *music video* has become a common and influential force in our culture. Items such as clothing, shoes, fashion accessories, and hairstyles gain popularity when seen in a music video. Music videos also serve to promote a band or a new song or album, in the hopes of increasing sales of CDs and concert tickets. Most music videos are one of three types:

- *Concert Style Music Video.* The audience sees the band perform the music that is heard. A concert style music video may include a compilation of different concerts the band has performed, a studio performance, or various locations.
- *Story Style Music Video.* The audience hears the music, but never sees the band. Instead, actors act out a story line that is supported by the lyrics of the song.
- A hybrid of a concert style and a story style music video.

music video: A program format in which all or most of the audio is a song.

concert style music video: A type of music video in which the audience sees the band perform the music that is heard.

story style music video: A type of music video in which the audience hears the music, but does not see the band perform. Instead, actors act out a story line that is supported by the lyrics of the song.

PRODUCTION NOTE

When producing a music video, copyright permission is the first and foremost consideration. Do not break the law! More information about music copyright is presented in Chapter 12, *Legalities: Releases, Copyright, and Forums* and Chapter 13, *Music.*

Visualization

visualization: The ability to mentally picture the finished program.

Visualization is the ability to mentally picture the finished program. Visualizing a program is similar to daydreaming. The visualized details of a program should be put on paper, so that others can share the vision. Only when everyone—the crew and cast included—shares the vision for the program can it become a reality. George Lucas waited to make *The Phantom Menace*, the fourth *Star Wars* film, until computer graphics technology was sophisticated enough to realistically reproduce onto the screen the creatures and worlds he visualized in his mind.

The Program Proposal

program proposal: A document created by the scriptwriter that contains general information about the program, including the basic idea, applicable format, message to be imparted to the audience, intended audience, budget considerations, shooting location considerations, and rough shooting schedule used to present the program to the executive producer to obtain permission and funding for the production.

The *program proposal* is created by the scriptwriter and provides general information about the program, including:

- The basic idea of the program.
- The applicable program format.
- The message to be imparted to the audience.
- The program's intended audience.
- Budget considerations.
- Shooting location considerations.
- A rough program shooting schedule.

The program proposal is presented to an executive producer for approval, either in written form or orally in a meeting. A program proposal is presented before writing a full script, to avoid wasting time and expense on a script that may be completely rejected by the executive producer. The program proposal allows for an initial "green light" on the project.

It is important to think through a script idea during the initial proposal stage. Using visualization, the scriptwriter can get a feel for the program and determine the direction of the script. The executive producer may reject the proposal, make suggestions, ask for further details, or accept it. Depending on the selected program format, the next step may vary.

Research

Both documentaries and interviews require that the program topic be researched. When interviewing someone, it is important to be proficient enough on the topic to hold a conversation that is interesting and informative. When developing a research paper, the research information is often organized on note cards. The notes are then turned into individual paragraphs of the paper. In television, the individual paragraphs become scenes.

Storyboards

storyboards: Sketches that portray the way the image on television should look in the finished program.

Some professionals use storyboards to help with visualization, **Figure 8-7**. *Storyboards* resemble comic books, in that they present a sketch of the way the image on television should look. Storyboards aid a director in communicating his vision to everyone on the production staff who sees them. They also help the director and camera operators to plan intricate camera moves. The disadvantage in using storyboards is the considerable

Figure 8-7. Storyboards assist the crew in creating the director's vision of the program. *(Courtesy PowerProduction Software)*

time and talent required to hand draw each scene. However, storyboarding computer software is also available, which draws storyboards using templates and "click and drag" elements. Several storyboarding software products are now available at prices that are reasonable for both professional and academic environments.

The Outline

If a program proposal is accepted, creating an outline is usually the next step. All dramas, lectures, lecture/demonstrations, and documentaries use the same kind of basic outline. The outline is very brief, not like the outline written for a research paper. An outline for a program includes comments that note the direction of the program.

Assistant Activity

Find the last research paper you wrote. Reduce the major theme of each paragraph to a single, brief sentence. In doing this, you would create something very similar to the outline for a documentary on the topic of that research paper.

Basic Outline

A basic outline breaks each major event in a program into the fewest number of words possible, and places each on a different line. Each line begins with one or two words that identify the shooting location. **Figure 8-8** is an example of an outline for a drama called "Little Red Riding Hood." It is a brief, chronological listing of the program's progression. The dialog is either nonexistent or minimal—just enough to relay the main point of each scene. The normal progression for lecture, lecture/demonstration, and documentary program outlines follows the outline of most research papers—introduction, body, conclusion. A standard way of starting is with the "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em" type of introduction. Then, "Tell 'em" in the body of the program outline. Complete the outline with a "Tell 'em what you told 'em" conclusion.

Panel Discussion or Interview Outline

The outline for either an interview or panel discussion does not list major events or show progression. In these outlines, the only necessity is a list of at least twenty questions to ask the interviewee. "Who," "what," "where," "when," "how" (not "how long"), and "why" are the best kinds of question-starters to use. Think of questions that will get the talent to start talking, instead of just answering a question. The questions should spark and guide the conversation. Any questions that can be answered in ten words or less, with a number, or with a "yes/no" response should not be counted in the twenty question minimum. Short answers make for an uninteresting program. For example, the question "How long have you been…?" is widely overused in student-produced programming, but is almost unheard of in professional programming. Unless the answer to "How long have you been…" is unusual and sparks interest, viewers often do not pay attention to the answer.

Figure 8-8. The outline script for a drama is a brief, chronological presentation of a program.

House: Mom gives basket to LRR.
Warns not to stray from path.
Doorstep: Kiss goodbye, wave.
Path: LRR walking.
Path: Wolf sees LRR.
Path: LRR walking.
Path: Wolf running ahead to GM's house.
Path: LRR walking.
GM's house: Wolf breaks in and eats GM.
GM's house: LRR arrives and goes into bedroom.
Bedroom: LRR and Wolf conversation "what big...."
Bedroom: Wolf jumps up and chases LRR.
Bedroom: Woodsman bursts in and kills wolf.
Bedroom: Out pops GM.
The end.

PRODUCTION NOTE

A 7-year-old child who has just played a piano concerto at a major concert hall is asked how long he has been playing the piano. If the answer is "5 years," the question is worthwhile. However, if a 50-year-old man is asked the same question and responds "30 years," it is not particularly interesting.

Every question listed may not be asked in the course of the interview or panel discussion program. A particularly interesting answer to a question may lead to one or more impromptu follow-up questions. However, if the conversation lags, standby questions can jump-start the conversation.

Music Video Outline

Concert style music videos do not require an outline. However, story style music videos do require an outline. The second step in producing a music video may be to obtain copyright permissions, then begin outlining and scripting. (Permissions are discussed in Chapter 12, *Legalities: Releases, Copyrights, and Forums* and Chapter 13, *Music*.) By this point, the executive producer should have approved the quality and suitability of the lyrics and music. The lyrics of some songs are wholly inappropriate for broadcasting to the general public. The Federal Communications Commission has some detailed regulations regarding obscenity and decency on the public airwaves. Moreover, the school administration probably has regulations governing acceptable language for broadcasting student produced programming over in-house cable systems.

Expanding an Outline

Once completed, it may be necessary to expand your outline to include more detail about the program. To do this, review each line of the outline and list details related to that line. Much like the outline created for a research paper, list sub-topics and supporting details for each main topic line of the outline, **Figure 8-9**. Provide five to seven lines of detail for each main topic. When the outline has been sufficiently expanded, it is ready to be developed into a script.

Treatment

A *treatment* must be created for some types of programs, particularly dramas and long documentaries, before going to a full script. A treatment is, essentially, a narrative written from the outline that tells the story in paragraph form, **Figure 8-10**. Dialog is not included in a treatment. Each scene listed in the outline is expanded to an entire paragraph that details what happens in the scene. Creating a well thought out treatment makes script development much easier.

treatment: A narrative written from a program outline that tells the program's story in paragraph form.

Writing the Script

It is recommended that all scripts be written using a computer word processing program. If written with a word processing program and saved,

Figure 8-9. Use Roman Numerals, letters, and numbers to create an expanded outline.

I. **Topic**
    A. **Sub-topic**
        1. **Supporting detail**
    B. **Sub-topic**
        1. **Supporting detail**
        2. **Supporting detail**
        3. **Supporting detail**
II. **Topic**
    A. **Sub-topic**
    B. **Sub-topic**
        1. **Supporting detail**
        2. **Supporting detail**
    C. **Sub-topic**
        1. **Supporting detail**

Figure 8-10. This is a treatment for scene 22 in the drama script featured in Figure 8-13.

Scene 22—Interior apartment, late night:
Lenny and Christine are snuggled on the couch, watching a movie on TV. Evan comes home from the theatre. Greetings and small talk. Evan asks how the day went. Not understanding the question, Lenny and Christine launch into a litany of the frivolous things they did all day until they mention lunch. Evan interrupts. They didn't mention something Lenny was supposed to do. It becomes apparent that Lenny forgot to go to an audition Evan set up for him. Lenny and Christine sit in stunned embarrassed silence. There is a long pause as the camera lingers on Evan's face, which is full of fury. Composing himself, Evan asks Christine to leave. She does. Evan and Lenny are alone. Evan switches the TV to the channel of the security camera feed from the lobby of their apartment building. Lenny tries to apologize several times. Evan will not listen.

any alterations and changes requested by the executive producer or client are easily made without rewriting multiple pages of script.

PRODUCTION NOTE

Make sure to keep a copy of each revised version of scripts. After your revisions are complete, do not simply press "Save." Choose "Save As" and rename the file to reflect the revision sequence, such as "Scene 4 revision 3." Otherwise, the previous version cannot be retrieved for future review or if a previous version is preferred later in the process.

Unlike film scripts, television scripts are always written in two columns. The left column is reserved for the video and technical information. The right column holds the audio and stage direction. The information in the right-hand column of a television script is exactly what is contained in a "play-style" script for a theatrical performance.

The right and left columns are not the same size. The video column is narrower than the audio column, taking only 1/3 of the page width, **Figure 8-11**. The audio column (right column) occupies 2/3 of the page, because there is always more audio detail to include than video information.

Each line of the video column lines up horizontally with the corresponding line in the audio column. The result may appear to be a lot of wasted space on a page, but the empty space makes the page very easy and clear to read. When video and audio events occur simultaneously, they line up together on the script page.

The video portion of the script can make use of many abbreviations, as long as the director and crew all understand the meanings. All camera movements on the script should be abbreviated. There is not enough time to speak full-sentence directions over the headsets. For example, "ZO-2S Brian/Mike" is the equivalent of "zoom out to a two shot of Brian and Mike."

Types of Scripts

In television production, there are three types of scripts:
- Word-for-Word
- Outline
- Format

Word-for-Word Script

In a *word-for-word script*, every word spoken by the talent is written out, **Figure 8-12** and **Figure 8-13**. This type of script is used in dramas, music videos, lectures, and documentaries.

When writing a word-for-word script, write the right-hand column material first (audio and stage direction for performers). While writing the audio, visualize how the program will look. When you imagine a camera angle switch, move to the left column of the next line in the script and note "switch" in the video box. A change in camera angle can even occur in the

word-for-word script: A program script in which every word spoken by the talent is written out.

Figure 8-11. A television script is always written in two columns, with the video in the left column and the audio and stage direction in the right column.

PSA Word-for-Word Script	
Stay In School!	
Video	Audio
	Music Note: Rowdy rock instrumental at significant volume in beginning. Slowly lower the volume of the music track to zero when the narrative indicates the band broke up.
WS amateur band performing	**I WAS GONNA BE A ROCK STAR.**
CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt. It's ok if the audience is not quite sure what the image is.	
CU of Neil (lead singer) performing	**I HAD MY ACT DOWN.**
CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt	**I WROTE A LOT OF STUFF.**
CU Neil writing at a keyboard	**ME AND MY BUDDIES WERE NEGOTIATING A RECORD DEAL.**
CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt	**WE HAD A LOT OF IDEAS OF WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO AND WHO WE'RE GONNA BE.**
LS Neil walking out of a school directly toward the camera, ending with a MCU of his smiling face.	(Neil walking out of school in direction of camera) **AND I FIGURED, "HOW IS HISTORY OR SCIENCE GONNA HELP ME IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?" SO, I DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.** (Tosses notebook in trash can, looks at camera and gives "thumbs up" sign)
CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt. Cut music.	**THEN THE RECORD DEAL FELL THROUGH AND THE BAND BROKE UP** (Music ends)
MLS as Neil watches fellow band member drive off	**CAUSE EVERYONE WENT OFF TO COLLEGE.**
CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt.	**THAT'S OKAY, WHAT'S RIGHT FOR THEM ISN'T NECESSARILY WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME.**
Continue CU wall of beige tile. Very slow pan/tilt bringing ECU of 3/4 side view of Neil's face into the picture. He speaks to the camera	(Music Note: Bring in "elevator music" noticeable) **THAT WAS FOUR YEARS AGO, EVERYONE HAS A JOB NOW. ME, I FINALLY FOUND ONE, TOO.** (Audio: loud Beep)
ZO to MS as Neil turns profile to face a computer screen revealing that he is wearing an intercom headset on the previously hidden side of his face	(startled by the beep) (To camera) **OH!** (Neil turns to computer screen and speaks to the microphone of the headset) **I'M SORRY, DID YOU WANT FRIES WITH THAT? OKAY, PULL UP TO THE SECOND WINDOW.**
Graphic	**STAY IN SCHOOL. GIVE YOURSELF SOME CHOICES.**

Figure 8-12. A word-for-word music video script with time code.

Word-for-Word Music Video Script		
Empire of the Sun		
Seconds	Video	Audio
1. 0.00-0.05	Intro shot beats 1, 2, 3, 4 PC Walking beats 5, 6 Blaine walking beats 7, 8	Opening music
2. 0.05-0.10	Andy walking beats 9, 10 Phil walking beats 11, 12 PC MCU pose beat 13 Blaine MCU pose beat 14 Andy MCU pose beat 15 Phil MCU pose beat 16	Music
3. 0.11-0.16	Phil hits cymbal-beat 17 shot starts zoomed in on cymbal and zooms out for the rest of bar ends in a LS of whole band	Music
4. 0.16-0.21	New LS of whole band	Music
5. 0.22-0.26	MLS of Chapin and Rachel on bench from front	Now you've left me to die in this forgotten cell
6. 0.26-0.31	LS of Austin and Matt throwing football	You've left me a bitter man or can't you tell
7. 0.31-0.36	LS of Matt throwing ball too high over Austin's hands	Well I'm here now girl and from grace I have fell
8. 0.36-0.41	LS of Chapin and Rachel as ball lands next to them	To you I'd have given up my soul to sell
9. 0.42-0.46	LS of Rachel getting off bench to grab ball	But you rejected my love, told me to stay away
10. 0.47-0.51	Quick shot of Austin walking toward her as she picks ball up and turns into a subjective shot	Well I'm back to offer my love for just one day
11. 0.51-0.55	CU of Rachel's eyes, and then Austin's eyes	So you got this last chance, think about it please
12. 0.56-1.00	MLS Rachel walks over to Austin and they hold hands, quick CU of Chapin looking mad	Don't waste your time on that guy, besides I've heard he's a tease.
13. 1.01-1.04	LS of whole band from front	Music
14. 1.05-1.09	MS of Blaine	Music
15. 1.10-1.14	MS of Andy	Music
16. 1.15-1.18	MS of Phil	Music

Figure 8-13. A word-for-word drama script based on the treatment in Figure 8-10.

Word-for-Word Drama Script	
Scene 22	
Video	Audio
Fade in Cam 2, 2S, ZO for 3S	*(We are inside the apartment. Christine is snuggled up against Lenny. They are watching a movie on TV. A Christmas tree is in the background. Evan comes into the apartment from the theater.)*
	Evan: *(singing)* Hello young lovers, wherever you
Cam 1, 2S Christine and Lenny	Evan: are. Lenny and Christine: Hi, Evan! Lenny: How'd it go tonight?
Cam 3, MS of Evan	Evan: Knocked'em dead. Watcha watchin'?
Cam 1, 2S C & L	Christine: A Summer Place Lenny: At Christmas! Can you believe it?
Cam 3, MS of Evan	Evan: *(laughs)* Easter Parade would be worse. Hey, *(interrupting as they turn back to watch the movie)* tell me about today.
Cam 2, 2S of C & L Cam 1, move to CU of Lenny	Lenny: Well, we started out by pretending we were rich. Christine: Yeah, dressed up in our finest and walked into Saks. You should have seen the saleslady when Lenny told her he didn't like the $25,000 fur coat I had been fawning over. Lenny: I thought she was going to have heart failure. *(laughs)* Then we came back to the apartment for lunch and --
Cam 3, MS Evan	Evan: *(interrupting)* Lunch!
Cam 1, CU Lenny	Lenny: Yeah. And then we --
Cam 3, Begin ZI to MCU Evan	Evan: You didn't do anything else this morning?
Cam 2, 2S L & C	Lenny and Christine: No.
Cam 3, MCU Evan	Evan: Do you know what day this is?
Cam 2, 2S L & C	Lenny: Sure, it's Tuesday.
Cam 3, MCU Evan	Evan: *(evenly)* The audition.
Cam 2, 2S L & C	*(Lenny freezes. Christine slowly looks from Evan to Lenny. Silence. Lenny looks frightened.)*
Cam 3, MCU Evan	*(Evan looks from one to the other.)* Evan: Well, what happened at the audition?
Cam 1, CU Lenny	Lenny: Evan, I...it was an accident. I mean --
Cam 3, CU Evan	Evan: You mean what? What about the audition I set up for you?
Cam 1, CU Lenny	Lenny: *(Unable to face Evan)* I forgot about it. *(silence)*
Cam 3, CU of Evan	Evan: *(Calmly enraged)* Christine, would you excuse us please?
Cam 2, 2S L & C Cam 3, Move to 2S of L & E	Christine: Well, it is getting kinda late. Call me tomorrow? *(Lenny nods and helps her on with her coat.)* *(In a whisper to Lenny)* Are you sure I should leave? *(Lenny nods; Christine exits.)*
Cam 3, 2S L & E	Lenny: Evan, I– Evan: I don't want to hear it, Lenny.
Cam 1, CU Lenny	Lenny: But, I–
Cam 2, CU of Evan	Evan: Lenny, I don't want to hear it now.
Cam 3, 2S E & L	Lenny: But Evan, I want to ex–
	Evan *(With quiet fury. Turning to Lenny)* Lenny, no.
Fade out	

middle of a sentence. Be sure to make a quick note of the visualized switch before moving on with the audio column.

Once the entire right column is complete, allow the content specialist to review the script, if applicable. With the content verified, begin determining the shots needed for each audio box in the script. In the left column, describe each shot needed including the size of the shot, subject of the shot, the camera movements, and all other information pertinent to the video. Remember that a box in the script only contains the video or audio for a single shot. For example, one sentence of audio may include five shots. Therefore, that one sentence should span five boxes in both the audio and video columns.

Outline Script

The *outline script* usually has a word-for-word introduction and conclusion, but an outline for the body of the script. For example, some interviews may not be news-oriented and may be completely pre-planned. For a pre-planned interview, the questions may all be scripted, **Figure 8-14**. In the initial draft, the scriptwriter does not know how the interviewee will respond and the answers cannot be scripted. The interviewee's response is noted in the audio column of the script as "the talent answers," "talent response," or a similar phrase.

For an interview program, consider holding an informal rehearsal of the questions with the interviewee. Record the audio of the conversation to use as a reference when writing the script. Keep in mind that the interviewee probably will not give exactly the same responses during the actual interview. But, this prepares you for the type of responses to expect and helps you to better understand how the program will flow. It may also prompt some additional follow-up questions, or may lead to an entirely new direction for questions. This information is important in developing the video column of the script. Plan to cut to a different image about every seven seconds. This requires a variety of shots planned in the video column of the script to obtain many cutaways.

A cooking show is another program that uses an outline script. When writing the script for a cooking show, each step involved in the preparation of a dish is detailed, including the exact measurement of each ingredient, in the right-hand column of the script. Each step should be placed in a separate box of the audio column. When the script is complete, the chef should review it to ensure every step is included and is accurate. After the audio is verified, determine the shots needed for each step. The credit roll for cooking programs should include the recipe(s) featured and corresponding ingredients for each dish prepared.

Format Script

The *format script* is very brief and is used for panel discussions, talk shows, game shows, and other programs where the format does not change from episode to episode. See **Figure 8-15**. The on-screen talent and lines may change, but the shots are predictable from a production point of view. The order of events in programs of this type is predetermined and the sequence of every episode is consistent.

outline script: A program script that usually has a word-for-word introduction and conclusion, but an outline for the body of the script.

format script: A program script that is very brief and used for programs in which the order of events is predetermined and the sequence of each episode is consistent.

Outline Format Television Interview Script	
Ttile: Movie Theaters in the 21st Century	
Scene 23	
Video	Audio
Host walks past the camera. Pan right as he walks into the stairwell and up the stairs.	Host: **Now that you've had some insight on running a theater, I'm going to show you where all the magic happens,**
Host walking from the stairwell into the projection room.	**the projection room. We'll talk to the projectionist.**
Pan right and zoom to MS of Host walking up to the projectionist.	Host: **Hello,** (projectionist's name). **Can we hang with you for a while and see how you do your job?**
Cut ELS left side angle shot of projectionist and host.	Projectionist: **Sure.**
Cut between host and interviewee every time a question is asked.	Host: **What kind of training does a projectionist need?**
	Projectionist answers.
Get many cutaways for editing variety.	Host: **What kind of training does a projectionist get?**
	Answer.
	Host: **How long is the film for most movies?**
	Answer.
	Host: **Do you need to clean the film before loading it?**
	Answer.
	Host: **What can you do if the film is damaged?**
	Answer.

Assistant Activity

Write a format script as you are watching a late night talk show. If everyone in the class writes one for a different episode this week, you will discover that all the scripts are nearly identical. The only variations are the faces on the screen and the dialog. The format/order of events remains constant from episode to episode.

Format Script	
Late Night Talk Show	
Video	Audio
Segment 1	*Intro*
LS Walk on MS Host during monologue Cutways of audience reactions	Host welcomes audience to show Lists guests Opening monologue
Segment 2	*Guest 1*
Intercuts between MCU of host, MCU of guest, 2S of both, and cutaways of audience	Host and guest chat/interview
Segment 3	*Guest 2*
Intercuts between MCU of host, MCU of guest, 2S of both, and cutaways of audience	Host and guest chat/interview
Segment 4	*Musical Group*
Variety of MLS, MS, MCU, and CU of performers	Band plays
Segment 4	*Guest 3*
Intercuts between MCU of host, MCU of guest, 2S of both, and cutaways of audience	Host and guest chat/interview
Segment 5	*Wrap-up*
MCU host then WS to include all guests	Host thanks guests and audience all guests

Figure 8-15. A format script for a late night talk show program.

Writing Style

In most academic writing situations, students are encouraged to carefully choose their words, be mindful of the rules of sentence structure, and abide by the rules of composition. In general, students are expected to follow the commonly accepted grammar and usage rules. This type of writing is called "formal." Formal writing is difficult for some people. Nearly all school textbooks are written with a formal writing style. Formal writing is not used in script writing. Scripts are written the way people talk, using contractions and slang. Sometimes scripts do not even contain complete sentences.

The television script is written in an informal style to aid in easy understanding. For example, if you are reading a book and find a passage that you do not understand, you go back and reread it. This cannot happen on television. On television, if a concept or sentence is missed, it is gone. Therefore, on television, sentences are short, simple, and easily understood.

Those who have anxiety about writing can try dictating scripts into a voice recorder. After dictation is complete, the recording can be transcribed.

Another option is "voice-to-text" computer programs, which automatically types what is spoken into a microphone connected to the computer.

PRODUCTION NOTE

Do not waste words! The audience only sees what you show them. If showing a close-up of a rose, do not waste words by having a narrator state the obvious: "As you can see, here we have a rose." It is not necessary to describe what the audience is seeing, unless providing information they may not be able to acquire with their own eyes. With complex visuals, on the other hand, some explanation may be necessary for the audience to understand what they are seeing.

Montages

montage: A production device that allows a gradual change in a relationship or a lengthy time passage to occur in a very short amount of screen time by showing a series of silent shots accompanied by music.

A *montage* is a script/production device that establishes a setting, allows a gradual change in a relationship, or depicts a lengthy time passage in a very short amount of screen time. Montages are usually set to music and do not include any dialogue. The following is an example of shots in a montage, presented in shot sheet format:

Shots of:

A couple having dinner.

The couple going to a museum.

The couple playing in the park.

The couple coming out of a movie theater.

The couple swimming at a public pool.

The couple raking leaves.

The couple at a Halloween costume party.

The couple shoveling snow.

The couple decorating their home for the winter holidays.

The couple assembling kites in the park for their children.

A love song accompanies the series of shots. As a result, two minutes of real time shows that a year has passed in the couple's lives and depicts how their relationship has grown.

Wrapping Up

Organizing your ideas and developing a script, however brief, helps to focus your thoughts. Never shoot a program without a script of some kind. When this rule is broken, the crew inevitably ends up reshooting on location because the first shoot lacked a plan. Few people would attempt a cross-country auto trip without planning the trip on a map ahead of time. At the same time, people don't often strictly adhere to the original plan. Traffic backups, taking side trips on a whim, and road construction are just some of the things that may sidetrack a journey. The same is true for a script. Few scripts are shot exactly the way they are written. They do, however, provide the backbone structure to hold the director's creative vision together. Deviations from the script are common during the shooting process, but the basic structure of the program is constant because a script exists.

Review Questions

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Do not write in this book.

1. What are *nod shots*? How are they used?
2. What items are included in a program proposal?
3. What is a script outline?
4. How is a program treatment developed?
5. List the three types of scripts used in television production and the unique characteristics of each.
6. Why are television scripts written using informal language?
7. What is a *montage*?

Activities

1. For each of the program formats listed below, name a television show currently on the air that serves as a format example:

   - Lecture
   - Lecture/Demonstration
   - Panel Discussion
   - Interview
   - Newscast
   - Magazine
   - Drama
   - Music Video
   - PSA

   Be prepared to explain the characteristics of the selected television show that qualify it as an example of the corresponding program format.

2. Record an episode of your favorite sitcom and create an outline for the program. Remember that an outline for this type of program breaks each major event in the story into the fewest number of words possible and progresses chronologically.
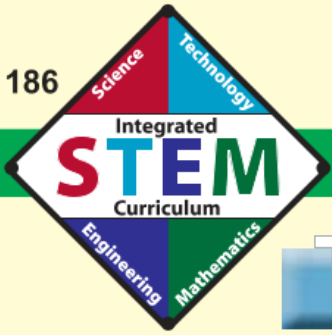
STEM and Academic Activities

Technology

1. Explain how word processing programs have impacted the process of writing scripts.

Mathematics

2. When expanding an outline for a program, you should provide five to seven lines of detail for each main topic. For an outline with 15 main topics, how many lines of detail will you need to provide?

3. Choose a 12-hour block of programming for a network or cable channel. On the programming schedule, categorize each program as lecture, lecture/demonstration, panel discussion, interview, documentary, newscast, magazine, drama, or public service announcement/ad. What is the overall percentage of programs in each category?

Language Arts

4. Watch a 30-minute television program and record it for reference. Write a treatment for the program that lists each scene and tells the story of the program in paragraph form.

Social Science

5. Choose a current event topic and select a person to interview who is involved in or related to the topic. Write relevant and interesting "who," "what," "where," "when," "how," and "why" questions for the interview.