

PAGE TO STAGE TIPS & FORMATING

Page to Stage (A Guide to Writing Winning Plays) Contributions from Neil Zoladkiewicz and David Bromley.

Neil and David have success with writing plays, and have kindly shared some tips with us:

Your play must run to a maximum of five minutes (this is around 1,000 to 1,100 words, usually). You might get away with half a minute over but no more – don't assume that you will!

1. It is better to make cuts before rehearsals begin, as later changes can ruin the balance of your play. Read through and time your play before you submit, making sure you allow time for any pauses, business or movement you have written.

2. Even in five minutes your play should have a beginning, middle and end. In other words, tell a story.

3. We recommend only two to four characters (although that's not mandated). It's hard to develop more than three characters in five minutes.

4. Elaborate scenery takes time to put up and take down; avoid it and stick to one simple set.

5. Be aware that you as author are responsible for providing any props, costumes or set (we can help with tables and chairs but not much more). If you didn't bring it with you, you will have to source it yourself whilst you are at the School.

6. During the rehearsal time your director and actors may well have ideas, they are looking at it through fresh eyes. And if they stumble over a word or phrase allow them to change it.

7. Avoid too much business. Your actors will be carrying scripts so they are limited in what they can do on stage. Even a simple task can be difficult when holding a script.

8. The hall is flat floored and the stage is quite low, so the audience who sat over halfway back will have some difficulty seeing action if your actors are all seated or (even worse) lying down.

These are a few ideas that we hope will encourage you to have a go and write a play. The rules for P2S are on the Swanwick website. The decision of the judges for the selection of plays to be performed is final.

What Happens Next?

- If your play is chosen, it will be performed as a rehearsed reading (so scripts will be used)
- After the briefing, the organisers will allocate a director and actors for your play from those who sign up to direct or act. We try and match age and gender but this may not be possible!

- After a director and cast are assigned to your play you will be able to liaise with them ahead of the scheduled rehearsals.
Please note: this activity is intended to be a learning opportunity; authors must be open to changes by the director. The director is responsible for the play in both rehearsal and performance and will be encouraged to discuss their ideas with the writer and cast before making positive suggestions.

FORMATTING SCRIPT GUIDELINES:

Point 12 or 14 - in Times New Roman (or similar) with double spacing;

Title Page: Title of Play in Bold and List of Characters with brief description

(eg) SARAH, aged 19, a student

EILEEN, her grandmother

Character Names /Stage Directions/Speech Directions in Bold.

Stage Directions in bold and indented.

Name of Author to appear nowhere in the Script only on the accompanying email.

FORMATTING EXAMPLE

A Living room.

Evening

SYLVIA stands at the window peering out (into the Audience).

BILL is seated at a table tapping away at a laptop.

SYLVIA: There's a man on the other side of the street eating a scotch egg.

Pause.

Did you hear me?

BILL: Sorry?

SYLVIA turns to BILL.

SYLVIA: (annoyed) There is a man standing in our street - Delphinium Close - and he is eating a scotch egg. Disgusting it is.

SYLVIA turns back to the window.

BILL looks up from the laptop.

BILL: Come away from the window, Sylvia. You've been standing there for ages.

SYLVIA: It's only because you've got your head stuck in that laptop of yours as usual.

She takes a step forward.

SYLVIA: He's finished now. I hope he doesn't leave the wrapper on the pavement.

(angry) He's taken out another one! Another scotch egg!