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# FILM CLUB

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## How to make a movie

Scriptwriting notions, filming advices and useful tools

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## Every movie is made 3 times:

### 1. ON PAPER

It's the writing process. The whole film depends on the script, because is where you develop the story you will tell. It works as a guide to the director, who will transform words into images.

**Main responsible:**  
the screenwriter

### 2. ON THE SET

It's the shooting process, when you grab a camera, put a crew together and go to make a movie with the script you've been given. To success, a great planification is needed, because you have to shoot all the shots required to edit the movie.

**Main responsible:**  
the director

### 3. IN THE EDITING ROOM

The editor transforms the raw material into a movie. He follows the script and uses the footage to make the movie as it will be shown to the audience. He needs the director and the screenwriter approval to give the OK to the final cut.

**Main responsible:**  
the editor

# THE SCRIPT

What are you going to talk about?

What happens?  
What's the conflict?  
What do the characters do?

How are you going to tell the story?

## THE THEME

Is the core of the story, the one thing you want to talk about with. It also reflects your vision about something and it's important the statement you make about it.

## THE ARGUMENT

Is the set of actions that the characters perform in the development of the story, arranged in chronological order and without causal relationships. The arguments are the facts that compose the story.

## THE PLOT

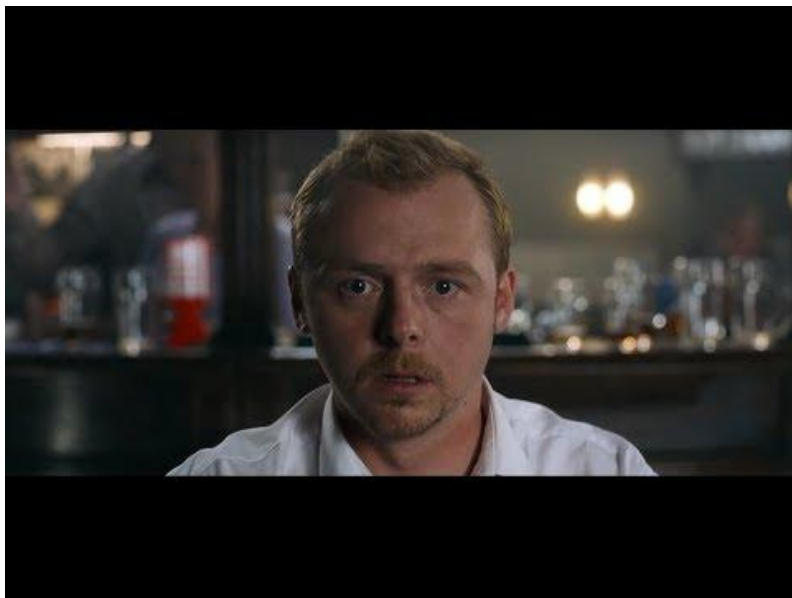
Is the structure you give to the argument. From the argument. Is the way in which you will present the facts, which may or may not coincide with the chronological order of the argument, and their causal relationships.

- ★ Before start to write a story, the first thing you need to choose is **your theme** and **what do you want to say about it**.
- ★ **The most important part of the story is the theme.** You have to make sure that you're true to the theme, to your ideas and to your discourse.
- ★ If you feel that something in your film is wrong, always go back to the theme and ask yourself if it fits in it.
- ★ **The plot makes the argument work.** The same story can be told in many different ways. The same argument, with the same characters, can have different plots.
- ★ As surprising as it seems, the less important thing about a story is **the argument**. The facts are less interesting than emotions and ideas, and the actions are easy to repeat and copy.

Here are some **exercises to work on ideas** for your film:

1. **Brainstorming:** It's about choosing a theme and throw ideas about it. It's important to have the freedom to work on other's ideas and develop on them. Every input has to be positive.
2. **Comic strips:** Start with an image of something (for example: a fallen tree) and start talking about what it suggests to you, what's the story behind the image and what goes next.
3. **Made-up descriptions:** Show a picture of a non famous character, it can be an anonymous person. The others have to describe it: who is her (or him), what does she do for a living, what does she like or dislike, what's her life goal, etc.
4. **Random words:** Someone chooses 3-5 words and the others have to connect them in a short text, telling a little story.
5. **Crazy hypothesis:** Someone makes an hypothesis and the others have to develop ideas about it. For example: *What if all the water in the oceans suddenly disappear?*

## Cinema it's not only about writing, the main expressive language are images



This video of *Every Frame a Painting* is about visual comedy. Comedy is a great example to see the difference between a written joke (essential in stand up comedy, for example), and a joke told through **cinematic tools**:

- Camera movements
- Montage
- Perspective
- Actors
- Scenario composition

The three act structure is the most easy way to tell a story:

### Act 1:

Set up the context, the theme and the characters till you get to the first turning point, where the conflict begins.

### Act 2:

Is the longest part, where you develop the story and the characters evolve and new variables are introduced. It ends with a second turning point, a main revelation.

### Act 3:

It starts with the lowest point, where the heroes are in crisis and they have to make a critical decision to success. The most important part is the climax, the moment when it everything is resolved. After that, there's the closure, the conclusion where the theme and your discourse, values and ethics have to be clear.





Some **tips** about script writing:

- ★ The script in cinema is, essentially, **structure**. Through structure, the information is dosed, you build the story and you get to surprise.
- ★ Each scene has to provide **new information** to develop the story.
- ★ Give every character his **own voice**. To do that, you need to work on the characters: how they think, what they want, how they talk, how they move, what's his background...
- ★ **Break the expectations**, don't fall into **clichés**. A cliché is a good starting point, because everyone is going to understand it, but then you have to be creative and surprise.

# THE MAKING OF A FILM

### THE SCRIPT or SCREENPLAY

Is a more literarian version of the script. It contains the scene distribution of the story, very visual yet synthetic descriptions and the primary dialogue for the actors.

**Who writes it?** The screenwriter

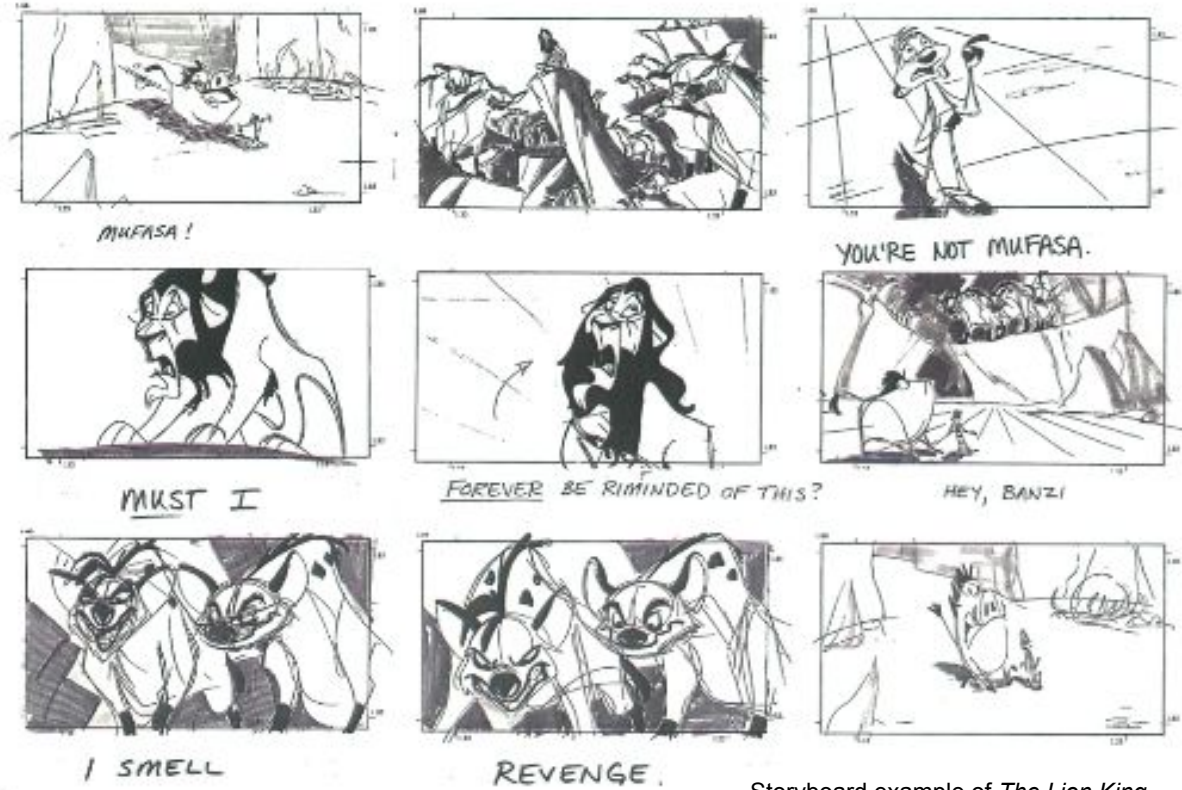
### THE SHOOTING SCRIPT

Is a production and directing tool. Its base is the screenplay, but adding technical details (specific shots, camera movements, arts and light instructions, etc.). It's the guide for the director to shoot the movie and for the producer to know what every scene needs.

**Who writes it?** The director

## The storyboard: a visual guide

- The storyboard is the drawing of every shot you intend to shoot.
- Is an optional tool. A storyboard is the translation of a technical script into images.
- With a storyboard you have a visual representation of the movie.
- It serves as a guide to all the film crew (specially visual department: cinematographer and camera operator), so everyone knows what are they doing and what's the director's intention.
- The drawings can be super schematic.
- You can write the dialogue lines down every strip.



Storyboard example of *The Lion King*.

**The Nines:** Script vs. Storyboard vs. Shot



**ZOOTOPIA:** from storyboard to screen comparison



## Planning the shooting

Now you have the script, the technical script and (maybe) the storyboard, so it's time to shoot the film. But **to shoot any kind of film, you need planning.**

Planning means thinking about the **time**, **crew** and **resources** you need to make the film happen the way you imagine it. The technical script is very useful to plan the shooting, because if you've done it well, everything you're going to need is written there.

These are the most important factors to take into account when planning a shoot:

- A. The **budget**.
- B. The **time** you have (days and hours per day).
- C. Number of **scenes**.
- D. **Number of shots**.
- E. **The order in which the shots are going to be filmed.**

Which depends on:

- **Schedule** of the actors and the crew
- The time you have the **location** at your disposal
- The time you have the **equipment** at your disposal.
- The hours of **daylight** or **night time**, when you're shooting outside a set.

**Who is responsible of the planning? In order of importance:**

The assistant director  
The producer  
The director

# THE CREW

It's important to divide the crew in **different teams**, so everyone can participate actively, be important and focus on an specific line of work. Those are the essential teams for every film production:

1. THE PRODUCTION TEAM
2. THE DIRECTION TEAM + the actors
3. THE CINEMATOGRAPHY TEAM
4. THE SOUND RECORDING TEAM
5. THE ART TEAM
6. THE POST PRODUCTION TEAM

Once the teams are made and everyone knows his role, is very important to respect it. Everyone be responsible for their job, don't interfere with the others and always be collaborative.



# The Production Team

## What do they do?

Their mission is to make sure the movie is done, so they have to acquire all the resources needed for the crew to do it.

## Who is in it?

*Line producers:* They coordinate the whole production team.

*Executive producers:* They are in charge of the money and resources.

*Producers:* They are in charge of the production on the set. That means crew, equipment, schedule, catering and fulfill the needs of every member of the crew.

*Assistant producers:* They coordinate specific departments and help the producers.

# The Direction Team

## What do they do?

With the means given to them by the production team, they make movie. The director is the maximum authority on the set, and makes the decision over the shooting of the film.

## Who is in it?

*Director(s)*: They direct the movie. Most of the time they work with cinematography department (to prepare the camera shots) and with the actors.

*Assistant director(s)*: They help the director. They are the connection between the producers and the director, and they have to be aware of everything that happens on the set to inform the director, if it's necessary.

*Second unit*: They shoot secondary footage, like situation shots or other footage with no actors needed.

*Actors*: They give life to the characters and follow the director's instructions.

# The Cinematography Team



## What do they do?

Their job is to prepare the lighting and record the footage, following the director instructions. Every shot designed on the storyboard, has to come to life.

## Who is in it?

*Cinematographer:* Also known as director of photography. He makes the calls to get the set ready. That means where do the lights go, how is enlightened, where is the camera shot.

*Camera:* Is the one who operates the camera. He has to know the camera movements required and be sure the focus is always right.

*Electricians:* They work with the lights, following the cinematographer's instructions. They set up the focus to make sure the scene is well enlightened.

# The Sound Recording

## Team

What do they do?

If cinematography is all about the images, the sound recording team works on the sound.

### Who is in it?

*Life recorders:* They only work with the recording device and headphones. They have to make sure that every sound and dialogue are well recorded, with the right volume and with no interruptions (for example, a car passing through or a dog barking).

*Microphone operators:* They operate the microphones, like the boom or the wireless microphones. Make sure you have replacement batteries!

*Foley artists:* If some sound has not been recorded, you have to search for it or... create it! That's what the foley artists do. Check [this video](#) to learn more about it!



## The Art Team



### What do they do?

The art team are the ones who make possible that the movie looks the way it's supposed to look. For example, if you make a medieval movie, everything has to look medieval.

### Who is in it?

*Make up and styling:* They work with the actors, to prepare them for the shooting.

*Location managers:* They search for the best locations to become the movie sets.

*Costume designers:* They are in charge of the costumes that the actors will wear in the movie.

*Set artists:* They prepare the set and look for the elements to decorate it, if needed, according to the movie needs.

# The Post Production Team

## What do they do?

Do you remember that movies are made 3 times? Well, this is the third time. The director supervises the process and gives the ok to the final cut of the movie, but others work the post production.

## Who is in it?

*Film Editing:* The film editor is given the script and the footage, and he has to create the final movie with it. He cuts the film and puts it back together. He is in charge to give the film the right pacing.

*Sound Editing and Sound Mixing:* Once the movie is edited, the sound crew synchronizes the dialogues, includes the sound effects, the foleys and the ambiance to create the sound of the movie.

*Music:* The music is an important part of the film, because it creates an atmosphere and delivers emotions. The job is to compose or to find the right music for your movie.

# SOME ADVICES

for different kinds of productions

## For feature film/fiction:

- ★ The screenwriter, director, producer and editor of the film should be **four different people**. Is the best way to promote teamwork and avoid egos.
- ★ Respect the work and the **separation of different teams** and departments. Everyone wants to direct at first, but all the crew is equally important.
- ★ It's usual to film scenes which, at the end, are not used in the final cut. The most important is the film itself, **not to put everything you filmed**.
- ★ **Plan very well** the shooting, because it's easy to run out of time.
- ★ The **aesthetics** are important. The story you tell is as important as the way you tell it.

## For a documentary or a report:

- ★ Do a very good **background research** on the people you are going to interview. Do previous interviews to know the characters, if you can, it's great to break ice before filming.
- ★ How and where are you going to shoot interviews? Is the interviewer going to be on the screen? **The format** is very important!
- ★ In a documentary, the shooting is **more intuitive** and less technical than a fiction film.
- ★ **Keep the camera rolling**, you never know what's going to be used.
- ★ The script of a documentary is more about **structure** and ideas. What message do you want to send? What are you going to talk about? What's the story?
- ★ The final script will be made during the **editing process**, because there is when are you going to see the interesting footage, the one that fits into the story you want to tell.



**For animated films:**

- ★ When you have the script, first of all **choose the kind of animation technique** that fits better to your story. The easiest one is **stop motion**.

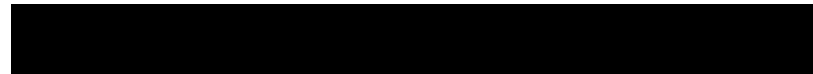
Here is an article with different kind of [stop motion techniques](#): clay, handmade drawings, Lego, inanimate objects, etc.

- ★ **Use the storyboard**, it will make things easier.
- ★ On your storyboard, choose the **key frames**. These are the few most important shots, with key actions or movements.

- ★ **Shoot the film in chronological order**, so you can correct

mistakes without making new ones. Cinema usually works in 24fps (frames per second). Animation, however, and more specifically classic animation, is slower. It can work in different fps: 8, 16 or 24, creating different sensations. When you shoot the stop motion film, you will have to decide how many frames (or shots, or photos) per second are you going to use.

**REMEMBER:** The most important ones are the key frames. For example, the **3 key frames** of this video are: the ball entering the frame (1), the ball hitting the floor (2) and the ball almost leaving the frame (3). Those are the 3 that are always on the video, even if its in 24fps or 8fps.

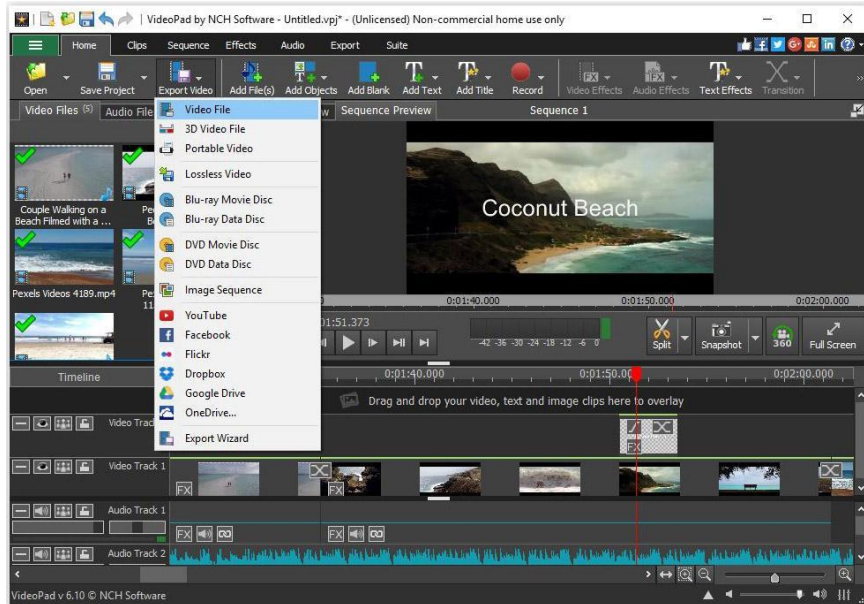


8 FPS 



# SOME TOOLS

# VIDEOPAD



**Use:** Video and sound editing

**Device:** Computer

**Operating system:** Windows and Apple

**Description:** Videopad is an excellent tool to edit video and sound. It's a very intuitive software that looks like a professional video editor, with lots of options for effects and transitions.

[Download link](#)

# PIC PAC STOP MOTION



**Use:** Stop motion and timelapse creator

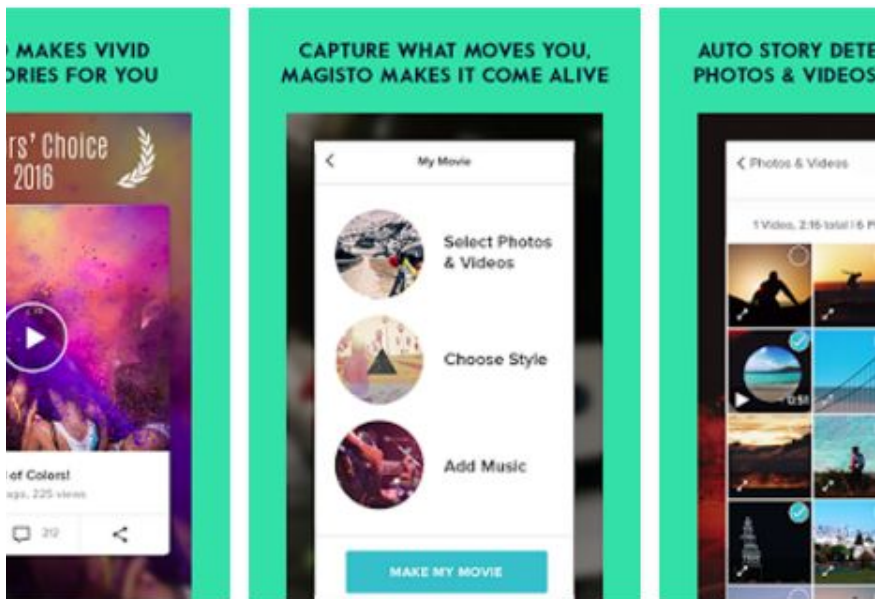
**Device:** Mobile

**Operating system:** Android

**Description:** Video and photo editor that allows you to make videos in stop motion and time lapse. You can upload your pictures,, process them and generate the videos, adding music and other effects..

[Download link](#)

# MAGISTO



**Use:** Video creator

**Device:** Computer and mobile

**Operating system:** iOS, Android, Apple, Windows

**Description:** Is a video creator using previous videos or photos you took. It's very easy to use, yet it has a professional look. Great for videoclips, presentations and corporative videos.

[Download link](#)

# **RECOMMENDED FILMOGRAPHY**

## of environmental films



### Animation

*Happy feet* (George Miller, 2006)

*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2004)

*Princess Mononoke* (Hayao Miyazaki, 1997)

*Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008)

### Documentaries

*Vanishing of the bees* (Maryam Henein, George Langworthy, 2009)

*Food, Inc.* (Robert Kenner, 2008)

*March of the penguins* (Luc Jacquet, 2005)

*An inconvenient truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006)

### Feature films

*Erin Brockovich* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000)

*Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015)

*Into the wild* (Sean Penn, 2007)

*Gorillas in the mist* (Michael Apted, 1988)

*Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009)

Hope you found it useful,  
**thank you very much!**



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