

# Writing A Great Script Fast In A Nutshell Workbook

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Welcome to the workbook for “Writing A Great Script Fast In A Nutshell.” You can print this file out to do the exercises or type directly into it while editing for your needs. You can also use a notebook, some paper or the online step-by-step process with this workbook information for each step at <http://www.MindsEyeMedia.com> or [MyFlik.com](http://MyFlik.com).

## Step 1: Introduction

### Questions To Consider:

Do you want to write a script, make a film and/or write a blueprint for a novel using this online step-by-step story engine process?

If you want to write a script or make a film do you want to do a short, feature or series?

What is your goal in finishing this story project? To get a job, to win an award, to make money or raise awareness about an issue?

If you are planning on making the film yourself which digital filmmaking tools are you planning to use DV, 2D, 3D or combinations?

## Step 2.2: Story Structure Sentence

It is a story about a protagonist (lead character) who wants something (plot goal) that forces him/her to take action. He/she meets with an escalating array of conflicts (obstacles) leading to a climax and resolution.

Protagonist: Lead character and focus of the plot

Antagonist: Character or thing standing in the way of the protagonist accomplishing his or her goals

**Any quick ideas** for a great original lead protagonist and/or antagonist placed into the above story sentence?

### Step 3: Favorite Main Characters

List 5 main character ideas for a story you would love to see or create.

Attach a few adjectives, an age, sex, location, occupation, visual style and dreamcast with a favorite actor.

Use the brainstorming lists below to get more ideas to fill into this chart:

Age/Sex/Body Type	Occupation	Location	Visual Style	Dream Cast With Famous Actor
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

**Occupational Ideas:** Circle the ones that seem fun visually or match ones to characters you might want to develop. Feel free to combine occupations such as a Circus Clown Professional Surfer, Matchmaker Wizard or a Tour Guide Shaman.

Astronaut	Musician	Professional soccer player	Computer programmer	Game designer
Butler	Astrologer	Advertising executive	Astronomer	Accountant
Car thief	Knight	King/Queen	Retired	Archeologist
Cartoonist	Veterinarian	Model	Fireman	Hit man
Chemist	Clerk	Mailman	Congressman	Priest
Clown	Comedian	Wrestler	Witch	Detective
Dentist	Doctor	Lawyer	Artist	Plumber
DJ/VJ	Student	Mortician	Vagabond	Warrior
Editor	Explorer	Fisherman	Fortune teller	Politician
Engineer	Landscaper	Actor	Racecar driver	Painter

Hands-on healer	Lifeguard	Policeman	Pirate	Novelist
Investment banker	Government employee	Stockbroker	Burglar	Construction worker
Magician	Witchdoctor	Hairdresser	Guru	Gangster
Poet	Spaceship commander	Psychiatrist	Teacher	Reporter
Soldier	Sheriff	Belly dancer	Slave	Shaman
Tour guide	Researcher	Wizard	Matchmaker	Cook
Circus clown	Professional surfer	Dictator	Cowboy	Talk-show host
Student	Bum	Fashion designer	Housewife	Hunter

**Visual Styles/Attitude:** What one or two words would best describe the appearance of this character style wise?

Punk	Goth	Yuppie	Hippie	Biker
Cocktail Hour	Country Town	Beachy	Student	Trucker
Techno	New Age	Four Seasons	French Chic	Native Indian
Nerd	Hot	Nervous	Dad	Servant

**Dreamcasting Ideas:** Attach a famous actor to dreamcast your main character idea. Feel free to change their real ages or even use dead ones to get to the essence.

<b>Female Actors</b>		<b>Male Actors</b>	
Drew Barrymore	Cameron Diaz	Jack Nicholson	Samuel L. Jackson
Sissy Spacek	Halle Berry	Jeff Goldblum	Ben Affleck
Reese Witherspoon	Angelica Huston	Val Kilmer	Anthony Hopkins
Kate Winslet	Jennifer Lopez	Christopher Walken	Harrison Ford
Reese Witherspoon	Diane Lane	Bruce Lee	Sean Penn
Gwyneth Paltrow	Catherine Zeta Jones	Jackie Chan	Billy Bob Thornton
Jodie Foster	Julia Roberts	Nicholas Cage	Richard Gere
Shirley MacLaine	Sandra Bullock	Clint Eastwood	Ed Harris
Uma Thurman	Claire Danes	Robin Williams	Kevin Costner
Whoopie Goldberg	Oprah Winfrey	Keanu Reeves	Tom Cruise
Meryl Streep	Lucille Ball	Bruce Willis	Billy Crystal
Elizabeth Taylor	Angela Lansbury	Arnold Schwarzenegger	Michael Douglas
Marilyn Monroe	Dolly Parton	Leonardo DeCaprio	Matthew McConaughey

Nicole Kidman	Kathy Bates	Tom Hanks	Denzel Washington
Goldie Hawn	Sigourney Weaver	James Woods	Edward Norton
Kate Hudson	Angelina Jolie	Brad Pitt	Owen Wilson
Parker Posey		John Travolta	

### Step 6: Film World Settings

What film worlds or settings have you always wanted to see in a film or story?

List your Top 5 Favorite Film World Settings with dates, visual styles and a few adjectives to really see these locations.

Think of places you have always wanted to see in film. These sets do not have to relate to the characters you just did but may be places some of them would live too.

If you are making the film yourself, think also of local settings you could shoot or existing footage you already have such as DV and photos.

For example:

- NYC 3012 as a green hippie Utopia city with a gold beehive looking visual style”
- Mars surface during an expedition
- Ancient Egypt at it’s height

### List Your Top 5 Favorite Film World Settings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Step 5: Favorite Subjects

What are your top 5 Favorite Subjects or areas of interest?

- Hobbies
- Subjects you like to study or research
- Mystical creatures

- Favorite subjects in books, movies, comic books
- Favorite myths or cultures
- Things you like to do for fun
- Places or historical events
- Urban Legends

**List Your Top 5 Favorite Subjects:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Step 6: Story Flavors/Genres**

List your Top 5 Favorite Story Flavors using the list below to help you come up with ideas.

Think also of combining Story Flavors such an animated supernatural comedy or a romantic crime thriller.

**Action/adventure.** Big adventures, hero survival, daring stunts, and action sequences.

**Animation.** Far-out or surreal visual elements with objects that can turn into other things. These stories usually show us something real actors or sets cannot do as easily, such as talking animals or living toys.

**Ensemble.** Stories about groups of characters unified by same theme.

**Experimental.** Avant-garde rule breakers. Creating films that audiences may not even understand.

**Biography.** Find meaning of the person's life (theme), and make the person the hero (or anti-hero) in his or her own tale.

**Buddy.** Friendship or nonromantic close relationships developed over a series of events.

**City symphony.** Films about a single location with different perspectives, characters, events, and time frames.

**Comedy.** Show how characters in the best situations still manage to mess up or create fish out of water tales. These stories are often used to showcase the brutality of social life.

**Crime.** Murder mystery, detectives solving cases, reporters investigating crimes, prison stories, heists, spy stories, criminals/victims getting revenge, courtroom dramas, organized crime.

**Disillusionment.** Protagonist's view of life changes from positive to negative.

**Documentary.** True story about event, people, or place.

**Drama.** Passion, madness, dreams of human heart.  
**Education.** Protagonist changes worldview from negative to positive by learning something new.  
**Fantasy.** New-world rules playing with time, space, and laws of nature.  
**Historical.** Stories from the past often work great to show us some themes of our present situations at a comfortable distance.  
**Horror.** Bad, evil, scary, creepy things.  
**Journey.** Trip, road trip, or travel tale.  
**Love story.** What gets in the way of romantic love?  
**Maturation.** Coming-of-age story.  
**Mockumentary.** Fiction that looks like a real documentary.  
**Music video.** Short film for a song and hopefully some story, theme, or context.  
**Musical.** Songs used to tell stories from any genre. What are the new digitally enhanced musicals going to look like?  
**Myth.** Hero journeys, ancestral memories, prehistory moral conduct, or urban legends.  
**Obsession/addiction/temptation.** Willpower versus obsessions/addictions/temptations.  
**Personal anthology.** Video diaries, personal events.  
**Postmodern.** No single lead protagonist with distortion of time and space.  
**Punishment.** Good protagonist turns bad and is >punished.  
**Psychodrama.** Madmen, serial killers, crazy people, nuthouses.  
**Reality shows.** Real-life, voyeuristic-style stories. TV shows such as The Osbournes or Survivor.  
**Redemption.** Protagonist goes from morally bad to good.  
**Science fiction.** Possible future, unknown past.  
**Societal problems.** Political, racial, medical, educational, business, environmental, family.  
**Sports.** Big character change in relationship to sporting event.  
**Supernatural.** Spiritual or freaky occurrence in unseen realms.  
**Tragedy.** Cautionary tales, somber themes, catastrophic characters.  
**War.** Combat, prowar/antiwar.  
**Western.** Wild West. Good versus evil. Gunfights, cowboys, bank robberies, cattle drives, Indians, ranches, horses and saloons.

**List Your Top 5 Favorite Story Flavors or Genres:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Step 7: Digital Filmmaking Techniques**

If you are making the film what types of software or digital filmmaking tools do you want to use?

<b>Digital Video</b>	<b>2D Animation</b>	<b>3D Animation</b>
Photo collage virtual sets	2D <i>Southpark</i> -style hand-drawn characters.	3D sets such as fantasy settings, prehistoric places, or anything else
Bluescreen characters	Hand made and painted hand puppets	3D characters – anything goes!
DV actors on DV sets	Old hand held stop motion dolls	3D FX such as tornados, fire, tidal waves, smoke
DV actors on 2D photo sets	Cut up paper doll parts	3D particles

**List Your Top 5 Favorite Digital Filmmaking Techniques:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Step 8: Story Concept Brainstorming Chart & Sentences**

Fill in the following chart with the Top 5 Lists you just created:

<b>Characters</b>	<b>Settings/Worlds</b>	<b>Story Flavors</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Software</b>


**Create 3 Story Concept Sentences using the above chart to fill in these spaces:**

It is a story about a Top 5 character who lives in a Top 5 film world/setting. This story explores the subject of Top 5 Subject in a Top 5 Story Flavor using Top 5 Software.

1. It is a story about a \_\_\_\_\_ who lives in a \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . This story explores the subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ using \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. It is a story about a \_\_\_\_\_ who lives in a \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . This story explores the subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ using \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. It is a story about a \_\_\_\_\_ who lives in a \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . This story explores the subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ using \_\_\_\_\_ .

Pick your favorite Story Sentence to develop for the rest of this Writing A Great Script Fast Nutshell Sample Workshop:



**Final Story Idea:** It is a story about a \_\_\_\_\_ who lives in a \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . This story explores the subject of \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ using \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Step 9: Adding Plot Goals**

**Choose 1-2 main plot goals** for your Final Story Idea Sentence:

**Plot Goal #1:**

**Plot Goal #2:**

Make sure the goals sound fun visually and see how you can use favorite subjects or goals. Be specific about the goal such as what type of race they want to win.

To slay monster	To win the race	To rule the world
To stop a bomb	To defeat an enemy	To win political office
To become king/queen	To get revenge	To save the world/land
To cure disease	To stop natural disaster	To fall in love
To get the girl/guy	To solve a crime	To solve a mystery
To steal something	To win war	To stop war
To get rich	To advance spiritually	To become famous
To become successful	To blackmail someone	To get someone to do something
To trick someone	To find meaning in life	To solve murder
To catch a killer	To solve/fix a problem	To understand something
To learn a new skill	To become a top warrior	To become a leader
To fight for a just cause	To do what is right	To help people
To find treasure	To get around the system	To overthrow government
To stop a bad thing from happening	To become a better person	To evolve to a higher state of being
To survive a dangerous vision quest	To travel to distant lands	To prove a theory
To get a promotion	To get a date	To explore new territory
To fix broken transportation	To invent a new device	To make something new
To have a successful art show/event	To save a current relationship	To destroy someone
To defeat evil	To help someone die	To help another group of people improve their lives
To uncover a conspiracy	To win a bet	To rob a bank or place
To escape from	To nurse something back to	To create a work of art

prison/situation	life	
To break an enemy code	To find inspiration	To start a business
To throw a party/event	To get a job	To find inner peace
To become a professional something	To become a champion something	To survive deadly situation
To find/rescue someone	To communicate with another	To defeat evil aliens
To right a wrong	To sell/buy something	To let go of someone

### Step 10: Antagonists

Who or what is standing in the way of you character accomplishing the plot goal you just chose?

This antagonist could be a madman, boss, family member, teacher, enemy, competitor or organization.

You want to create a great original antagonist - think back to the antagonists in your favorite films or stories to get ideas.

Competitor	Corporation or head of corporation	Madman	Pirate	Outlaw
Monster	Natural disaster	Family member	Authority figure	Boss
Commander	Lawyer	Evil person	Protagonist himself/herself	Bad alien
Someone blackmailing someone	Robot	Cursed object	Social pressure	Criminal
Spirit	Leader	The system	The police	Enemy
The government	Local bully	A teacher or mentor	Organization or head of organization	Wealthy respected person
Dangerous animal	Thug or gang	Characters with different viewpoints	disease	Character seeking revenge

### Antagonist Idea For Your Story:

**How is the plot goal for this antagonist in opposition with the protagonist's plot goal?**

## Step 11: Plot, Character & Theme

Choose a **one word theme** for your story then explain how you are going to make it original and specific (desire leads to suffering):

Themes from Feature Films to study and get ideas:

- *Alien*: Fear of the unknown.
- *Alien 2*: The strength of motherhood.
- *American Beauty*: Desire leads to suffering.
- *Antz*: *Think for yourself*
- *Apocalypse Now*: There is a fine line between insanity and sanity.
- *Bad Lieutenant*: Redemption of a lost corrupt man.
- *Brazil*: Consequences of individuality in a totalitarian dictatorship.
- *Boogie Nights*: Self-delusion.
- *Buckaroo Bonzai*: Superhero with a pure heart can see evil.
- *Casablanca*: Loss of love for some greater cause.
- *Citizen Kane*: Exploration of personality; who was Kane?
- *Clockwork Orange*: Violence is a cost of individuality and non-individuals have a loss of soul.
- *Dangerous Liaisons*: Courtship as combat.
- *Dr. Strangelove*: Exploration of systems and their crushing of individuals.
- *Evil Dead 2*: Triumph of hero.
- *Fargo*: Treasure the little things in life.
- *Fatal Attraction*: Cost of deception.
- *The Graduate*: Alienation of 60's youth.
- *Magnolia*: Forgiveness in Los Angeles.
- *Memento*: How humans construct and deconstruct reality.
- *Princess Mononoke (2D)*: Everything is alive and connected in our environment.
- *Pulp Fiction*: Seeking out redemption in underworld with emphasis on loyalty.

- *Requiem For a Dream*: Addiction to dreams.
- *Run Lola Run*: Exploration of how the power of love can change fate.
- *Shrek (3D)*: Seeing inner beauty. When you can love someone else you can love yourself.
- *Star Wars*: A hero coming of age taking on lost father's path.
- *Terminator*: Man being destroyed by their own machines.
- *The Bad And The Beautiful*: Creativity and corruption.
- *The Big Chill*: Warmth of friendship against cold world.
- *The Blair Witch*: Arrogance of youth lacking respect for themselves, surroundings, and subject.
- *The Celebration (DV)*: Dark secrets destroy families.
- *The Cruise (DV)*: The beauty of Manhattan.
- *Lord Of The Rings (1)*: Even the smallest person can change the world. Pure heart needed to wield great power.
- *The Matrix*: Rise of superman against the system of the future.
- *The Piano*: The need for creative expression.
- *The Remains Of The Day*: Individual vs. place within class society. Class society destroying individual.
- *The Usual Suspects*: Construction and reconstruction of memory and identity.
- *There's Something About Mary*: Love is more important than beauty. Struggles with perfection.
- *Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead*: Honor among thieves.
- *Trainspotting*: Conflict between life and death urges.
- *Toy Story (3D)*: Being the most favorite toy.
- *Waking Life (DV)*: Exploration of lucid dreaming state. What is real verses what is illusion.
- *Wallstreet*: Greed leads to corruption.
- *Wizard of OZ*: The importance of home and family
- *You Can Count On Me*: Loves evokes love.

Theme	Metaphoric/Symbolic Image Description in Script
Treasure the little things in life	Character eating fresh pie savoring every bite.
Alienation of youth	Young character looking out of place at grownup party.
Desire leads to suffering	Character getting beat up trying to get what he wants.
Exploration of character	Searching for meaning of last word uttered on deathbed.
The blurry line between sanity and insanity	Show all the characters acting crazy but functional.
Violence as cost of individuality	Hip, artsy, unique criminal characters.
Cost of deception	Pet cat found hanging on clothesline by antagonist.
Power of love can change fate	Character screaming so loud that he wins game of chance to save lover.
War changes people	Main characters all experience extreme changes as result of war. Some characters die, some become very scarred and others get very resourceful.

**One Word Theme for your story:**

**How is your theme original and specific?**

**Controlling Idea:** List 3 ways to show story events being controlled by the theme in your story:

1)

2)

3)

## Step 12: Character Traits

A character trait is anything that determines the way a character sees the world and how the character thinks, speaks, and acts.

**Pick one best trait, one worst trait and five others for each of the main characters in your story idea using the spaces below:**

Possible Best Traits				Possible Worst Traits
Champion	Intelligent	Airhead	Fake	Insane
Professional	Athletic	Aloof	Activist	Addicted
Master _____	Affectionate	Middle class	Moody	Dead inside
Top _____	Fearful	Beatnik	Corporate	Mean
Model _____	Worrywart	Gypsy	Homeless	Alcoholic
Warrior	Brave	Thief	Hippie	Negative
Beautiful	Positive	Intuitive	Cool	Poor
Courageous	Average	Bitchy	Dork	Annoying
Rich	Loyal	Bookish	Trashy	Depressed
Charming	Blue	Nerd	Cultivated	Crazy
Talented	Competitive	Liberal	Boring	Corrupt
Well educated	Creative	Convict	Nice	Greedy
Mentor	Conservative	Lies	Natural	Obsessed
Happy	Confused	Curious	Mysterious	Evil
Caregiver	Black humor	Glamorous	Nervous	Clumsy
Childlike	Delicate	Fugitive	Obnoxious	Gossip
Funny	Deluded	Forgetful	Outlaw	Hot tempered
Compassionate	Dissatisfied	Foolish	Party animal	Hypochondriac
Loving	Easy going	Freak	Peaceful	Ignorant
Artistic	Uptight	Gentleman	Young/old	Impulsive
Independent	Dirt	Humble	Political	Jerk
Enlightened	Anal	Hood	Playboy	Irresponsible
Enthusiastic	Drifter	Holy	Perfectionist	Maniac
Heroic	Motherly	Intense	Genius	Neurotic
Imaginative	Egomaniac	Lucky	Sexy	Cruel
Inspiring	Fashionable	Logical	Perky	Cynical
Passionate	Streetwise	Loud	Responsible	Psychotic
Integrity	Heartbroken	Lonely	Small-town	Possessive
King/queen	Cheap	Musical	Shy	Violent
Leader	Mindful	Simple	Superficial	Zombie
Survivor	Stubborn	Stressed	High strung	Burned out
Wise	Storyteller	Listless	Tough	Worthless
Prodigy	Modern	Alien	Wild	Broken
Psychic	Worldly	Soft	Biker	Slothful
<b>Protagonist:</b>				

<b>Antagonist:</b>				
<b>Mentor:</b>				
<b>Sidekick:</b>				
<b>Love Interest:</b>				
<b>Other Characters:</b>				

**Step 13: Plot Points**

**Write 1-3 sentences for what happens at each of the 9 basic plot points for your story idea:**

**1) Hook** start in the middle of a high intensity mess. How could you show your main characters doing what they do best or have them make an exciting visual entrance into your film world? What twists, shocks or surprises could you add to your opening hook (twist ideas: accident kills someone, a shocking truth revealed, key equipment or transportation breaks down, sudden change of plans announced) ?

**2) Setup.** How will you introduce us to your characters, film world, and story? How will you show your character in his or her normal life? The audience needs a chance to get to know your main characters, along with the limits and possibilities of the film world.

**3) Inciting incident.** What event happens that forces your character to act by choosing a goal and committing to making it happen?

**4) Journey Into Unknown** - Protagonist sets off to accomplish plot goal leaving what is familiar behind.



**5) Investigation** - Protagonist searches for goal object or information encountering lots of Obstacles/conflicts. What are some obstacles or conflicts your characters might face while attempting to accomplish their plot goal in your story idea?

**6) Twist** - A new plot goal usually emerges at this point because the first goal is accomplished or an unexpected event occurs which changes the focus of the main plot goal. Accident kills someone, a shocking truth revealed, key equipment or transportation breaks down, sudden change of plans announced.

7) **Final confrontation.** This is a confrontation between two characters, groups or a situation that has been building up during the story Protagonist/antagonist conflicts related to plot goal.

8) **Climax.** Highest point of intensity and audience interest where the plot reaches a crescendo. What is the big climatic event at the end where we see whether the characters succeed or fail in accomplishing their goals?

9) **Resolution.** Ties up the loose ends in the story such as who lives, who dies, who gets the girl, and who lives happily ever after.

#### **Step 14: Conflict & Obstacles**

**Choose 1-3 conflicts or obstacles your characters face** at each of the 9 basic plot points:

Types Of Conflict:

**1) Inner** - different beliefs, desires, voices in the head or goals that are in opposition. What types of inner conflict can you give your main characters? Character flaws coming to the surface, pride, fears or jealousy.

**2) Personal** - How well do your main characters deal with other people? Show character in conflict with relationships, family, friends or pets. Any ideas?

**3) Social** - Conflicts with school, work, church, law, politics, businesses, justice or organizations. What kind of social conflicts could your main character encounter while trying to accomplish their plot goals?

**4) Environmental** - Conflicts with urban city environments (gangs, cars, crowds) nature, diseases, disasters, mystical forces, wars, jungle, security devices or difficult to get through locations

**5) Combinations** of the above.

9 Basic Plot Points to add 1-3 conflicts or obstacles to in your story:

**1) Hook:**

**2) Setup:**

**3) Inciting incident:**

**4) Journey Into Unknown:**

**5) Investigation:**

**6) Twist:**

**10) Final confrontation.**

**11) Climax.**

**12) Resolution.**

### **Step 15: Adding Plot Twists**

**Think of one big twist that happens in the middle of your story to shift the plot goals and any little twists you can add to each scene.**

Mark the twists that you want to use in your story on the list below. Add the plot point and brief description of what happens during each twist:

**One Big Twist that shifts plot goals:**

**Scene Twists: (Mark up list below with plot point numbers and ideas)**

Twist Brainstorming Ideas:

1. *Accident kills someone.*
2. *Lies multiply fast.*
3. *Code is finally broken*
4. *Being attacked from several directions at once.*
5. *Choice between obtaining goal and love.*
6. *Backup never shows up.*
7. *Character has sudden epiphany and changes behavior*
8. *Shocking truth revealed.*
9. *Secrets revealed or hidden.*

10. *Character loses the ability to move, see or walk*
11. *Incorrect information revealed*
12. *Misunderstanding revealed*
13. *Character switches loyalty.*
14. *Lots of little goals need to be done first.*
15. *Unforeseen trap.*
16. *Characters react in strange ways.*
17. *Dead guy comes back to life.*
18. *Unforeseen love triangle exposed.*
19. *Clues destroyed.*
20. *Key witness killed or disappears.*
21. *Innocent people get in the way*
22. *Communication system goes haywire.*
23. *Plans are stolen by the enemy.*
24. *Character gets caught.*
25. *Cover is blown*
26. *Traitor revealed*
27. *Unexpected suspicious opportunity*
28. *Key equipment breaks down.*
29. *Worse situation gets even worse during escape route.*
30. *Progress towards goal is an illusion.*
31. *New information is revealed that changes current situation completely.*
32. *Sudden change of plans.*
33. *Natural obstacles or unforeseen disasters.*
34. *Unexpected event occurs.*
35. *No more food, money, air, bullets or gas.*
36. *Shot from unknown place.*
37. *Ticking clock time deadline pressure such as bomb about to explode.*
38. *Hidden fear or weakness revealed.*
39. *Past comes back to bite character.*
40. *Weapon now broken or out of use.*

### **Step 16: Setups 7 Payoffs**

Once you start thinking about plot points, you will want to weave in setups and payoffs to pull your story together.

**Setup - Any information, phrase, event or object introduced early in the story, that may seem unimportant at the time, which turns into a key payoff element later.**

Setups need to be carefully presented in way that audience does not suspect they are being given key story information. Audiences should flash back to the earlier setups during payoff moments and put the information together in a new way.

Setups	Payoffs
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Character says something that seems unimportant like “I don’t drink coffee”	Character needs to be rushed to the hospital for allergic reaction to coffee later.
Object given, found or obtained which seems useless or of small importance at the time	Useless object becomes valuable tool or enables character to accomplish plot goal in surprising way.
Information given to character that seems unimportant.	This information becomes the key to accomplishing plot goal later.
Character finds clue, information or evidence. We do not see what they do with this new information.	Character uses clue in surprising way that audience may not see at first. Show the result, such as information being suddenly presented at a meeting. Another character could explain it was sent earlier.
Character states opinion about situation such as “The truth shall set you free”	Character ends up in courtroom forced to lie then goes to jail for perjury.
Unexpected event occurs causing character to adjust.	Unexpected event spirals out of control.

**Look at your climax plot point and see what setup info or thing** you can include early in the story to shift the outcome in a surprising way:

Plot Goal succeeds or fails at climax because \_\_\_\_\_

**Any other ideas for using setups and payoffs in your story?**

### Step 17: Using Symbols & Metaphors

**Metaphor = Action/Sound.** Visual or auditory representation of a separate action, experience, or idea. A character blows out (action) a candle in a bedroom to show death of a loved one.

**Symbol = Object/Sound.** Visual or auditory representation of another object. The candle (object) is in the shape of a ballerina to show grace and beauty.

Object	Symbolic Meaning
axe	Authority, sacrifice, punishment

bubble	Beautiful but fragile object, non-permanence, childlike happiness
egg	Cosmic totality
fig	Psychic ability, fertility
flame	Danger, anger, speed
honey	Pleasure, sweetness, fertility
ice-cream	Pleasurable, sensual tastes
quartz	Becoming more powerfully expressive
satellite	communication
shoes	Grounding, in touch with life. Weird shoes mean new change.
waves	Ups and downs of life
anchor	Stability, grounded, sanctuary
bell	Warning, disaster, death, alarm, religious,
fire	Passion, desire, anger, destruction
spiral	Rebirth, learning, evolution, path.
Sun	Creative energy, male, transformation, higher consciousness, light,
Moon	Unconscious, Intuition, female, cycles, changing,
dent	Unfortunate event
drowning	Overcome by emotions
East	Birth, consciousness
kissing	Acceptance approval, respect.
North	Unknown
South	Earthly passion/sensuality
victory	Overcoming conflict between two parts of ourselves.
West	Spiritual awareness, death
coins	Wealth
grapes	Fertility, wine, pleasure, harvest
Falling Leaves	Harvest, dropping, letting go surrender.
crystal	Clarity of perception

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Metaphoric Meaning</b>
butcher	Death, rejuvenation, bloody, violent
outlaw	Rebellious, anarchy, law breaker
queen	Female authority figure, ruler, political
Artist	Inner creative force made physical
Banker	Authority, manager of resources, wealth
Doctor	Healer, authority, respect, care giver
Guru	Wisdom, farther figure, unconscious, knowledge
Priestess	Intuitive, female, moon, independence, responsibility, clarity, balance, clairvoyance
Rock Star	Superman, decadent, talent
Landscaper	Sculpting earth, connected to plants, making natural things beautiful
lawyer	Server of justice, shark like instincts
solider	Brave, team player, trained for combat
Stock broker	Risk taker, big money, fast decisions
Waitress	Server, cheerful
Secretary	Detail oriented, office worker, assistant

Actor	Trained to pretend different feelings or personalities, hard to read
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<b>Weather</b>	<b>Metaphoric Meaning</b>
lightning	Unexpected changes
tornado	Violent destructive behavior
floods	Chaos, destruction, welled up emotions overflowing
hurricane	Forces beyond our control, passion
Rain	Sadness, romantic, cold,
rainbow	Wholeness, beauty, perfection, bridge between heaven and earth, unity
Hot And Sunny	Hot tempers, sensual, summer, lazy
Cold And Icy	Frozen emotions, cold feelings, static, frozen, sharp, harsh, survival

**List any Symbols and/or Metaphors** ideas for your story in the following areas:

**Objects/props.** Household items, flags, T-shirts, games art in room, statues, furniture style, shape of windows, magazines, pictures, weapons, wall hangings, books, instruments, pets, cars, people, houses.

**Music/sounds.** Background sounds, songs atmospheric music bed, music in scenes, street noises, weather sounds, sirens, people crying/laughing/screaming in the next room, weird unexplainable sounds, heaters, equipment, natural sounds, animals, event sounds.

**Color.** The color of *everything* in the frame may mean something.

**Words.** Heard in dialogue or appearing on sets or otherwise onscreen.



**Character types.** People who represent the theme or plot to the extreme (positive or negative, even an extreme mix of the two).

**Lighting.** Colored lights, light sources, brightness, lighting subjects specific to metaphor. Good characters may be in bright light, whereas evil characters may be darkly lit. Quality of light (time of day as a metaphor). Glows around certain characters, face-lighting strategies to evoke emotion, source of light (sun, spaceship, flaming building) as metaphor, spinning ambulance lighting in room to represent emergency situation.

8. **Staging.** Placement of characters and metaphoric objects inside the frame to represent relationships. Where are your characters in relationship to each other metaphorically? You could have three characters who form a love triangle standing around a fire to represent a secret affair about to be uncovered. What metaphoric items surround the characters? Are they talking while walking through a field of sunflowers or in between cactuses? What metaphoric objects could you place between characters to show relationship or emotional state during a scene? Two characters on opposite sides of the frame with knives hanging on the wall between them may represent conflicting emotions.

How can you take two symbols and combine their meanings and shapes to make a unique one for your film? Sketch some ideas.

**Fables.** How could you interject little stories into scenes to show plot, theme or character? You might want to have just pictures of parable characters or allude to them visually through stuffed animals, statues, paintings, cartoons, or drawings on the set. Try to think of new ways to incorporate parables visually into your films. Perhaps you could make your own little cartoon fable to play on a TV in the background during a scene. You might make up your own original Aesop-type fable, which the characters could discuss, see in a play or on TV, read in book, hear about in dialogue, or be relayed by a magical object. Create a fable or use an existing one.

**Sets.** Location as character. What does the setting say about the mood of each scene? A conversation in a junkyard has a different context than one at the top of the Eiffel Tower. National monuments, natural settings (swamps, waterfalls, caves, rivers, ocean, desert), cities with different personalities, small-town local flavor, visual themes, types of businesses, geographical themes, amusements parks, clubs, bars, graveyards, temples, stores, abstract interpretations of the Internet, art galleries, circus tents, fantasy places.

<b>Symbolic Setting</b>	<b>Possible Meaning/ Emotion/Mood</b>
Arch	Gateway to new beginning, entrance to heaven or hell (depending on the design)
Attic	Past experiences, hidden things, family patterns
Backyard swimming pool	Suburban life, comfort, similar to others (conformity)
Boat House	Ungrounded, free, mobile, traveling
Cave	Unconscious, contacting inner self, deeper understanding
Church/temple	Sacred space, sanctuary
Cliff	Danger, decision, risk, unknown, edge
Dark city alley	Danger, underworld, uncertain, violence
Expensive house on a hill	Rich, money, success, power, exclusiveness, above the law
Family dinner table	Family dynamics, seating shows relationships, atmosphere shows emotional mood of family
Freeway	labyrinth
Foggy pier	Edge of known world, mystery, unclear,

	things are not what they seem
Inside a bank	Money, power, establishment, control, profit, system
Inside an airport or airplane	Between lives, change, new beginning, entering unknown.
Inside an empty old cathedral	Looking back to the traditional past, spiritual, moral authority, sacred space
Inside body of water	Unconscious, sexuality
Inside speeding muscle car	Danger, recklessness, retro, criminal, rebel, youth, cowboy
Island	Isolation, loneliness, retreat
Japanese tea garden	Reflective, meditative, Zen, ordered beauty, tradition, harmony
Jungle	Chaos, obstacles, wild, dangerous, hot, steamy, bugs, fever, waterfalls
Ocean	Cosmic total consciousness, emotional weather, expansion
Paradise	Perfection, harmony, inner beauty
Pit	Death of old self, tough situation, darkness
Pyramid	Concentrating power within, ancient wisdom
River	Crossing for change, flowing through things, unconscious flow
Sacred cave	Journey into dark areas of conscious, hidden secrets, going inside
Slum apartment building	Poor, broken, defeated, powerless, poverty, struggle to survive, harsh, dangerous
Stalactite-filled cavern full of bubbling glowing toxic waste	Hidden danger, dark secrets, unconscious poison, beautiful toxic danger, chemicals
Sunset at beautiful beach	Love, beauty, peace, freedom
Symphony hall	Refined, cultured, snooty, formal, musical world, beauty
Top of hill	Expanded vision, achievement, getting perspective
Top of mountain	Where important things happen, realizations
Train	Wandering, change, on a track returning again and again, always moving
Train or train station	Restlessness, inability to settle down, roaming, new beginnings, endings, passing by

**Pick one symbolic setting for each of your 9 basic plot points:**

Describe the mood, visual style or color of each symbolic location.

**1) Hook:**

**2) Setup:**

**3) Inciting incident:**

**4) Journey Into Unknown:**

**5) Investigation:**

**6) Twist:**

**7) Final Confrontation:**

**8) Climax:**

**9) Resolution:**

**(Optional) Pick one Main Story Symbol that changes throughout your story** like the purple star thistle flower in Braveheart used to symbolize the theme of freedom:

**List Changing States and what they represent:**

### **Step 18: Creating Suspense**

How many suspense and ticking clock ideas can you add to your film idea?

**Write down any suspense ideas with plot point numbers** on the brainstorming list below:

Suspense Brainstorming Ideas:

- Show antagonist in hot pursuit of protagonist without protagonist being aware of the danger then cut back and forth between them in the story
- Place protagonist in situations where they are clearly going to lose by overwhelming odds such as being outnumbered or outgunned. Then have them

succeed in surprising way after failing several times to get out of situation by doing something surprising or using a hidden thing.

- Show antagonist doing something really scary or heartless to someone else first to let us know how deadly, evil, dangerous or powerful they are in comparison to the protagonist then show them going after or towards protagonist.
- Add a ticking clock time pressure to the main plot goal and a little ticking clock to each scene if possible – bomb about to go off, meeting, deadline, race, running out of something important.
- Create tension by constructing characters who are opposites forced to be together then show them disagreeing and having strained relationships
- Establish something as important to one character then have another character destroy important thing by mistake or on purpose
- Show antagonist planning to kill loved ones, hanging out around family pretending to be someone else as a warning or getting ready to kill something dear to protagonist
- Show character trying to hide a secret that keeps being about to be revealed
- Clearly establish what character will lose if they get caught doing something they are not suppose to be doing (like having an affair (lose rich spouse), murdering someone (lose everything and go to jail) who is blackmailing them or stealing/gambling to cover debts (financial ruin/ shame/ loss of family) then show them almost getting caught over and over again
- Show main character being squeezed emotionally to come up with money or results forcing character to do things they would not normally do
- Show character who seems good at first suddenly do something horrific with little emotion or thought - like killing someone casually - audience realizes they do this all the time - very chilling

- Show smart police or detectives closing in on solving character's crimes
- Show protagonist on journey to deliver something or find something with antagonist in hot pursuit, after same thing or opposite goal
- Use universal relationship conflicts between people - new rich mother in law does not like son's poor fiancée and tries to break up their relationship
- Show protagonist trapped in evil or dangerous place that seemed normal at first but changes suddenly
- Show secret antagonistic character going from nice/ friendly/ flirtatious, to creepy and threatening
- Establish very clear high stakes outcomes for both protagonist and antagonist plot goals (loved one lives if protagonist helps antagonist / hotel where protagonist works is blown up with VIP inside by antagonist)
- Show cutaway shots of potential victims walking into trap or dangerous place that is about to blow up because of other plan in the works
- Show protagonist trying to outsmart antagonist and getting caught (first show them almost getting caught a few times) - Sets off silent alarm, uses secret phone to call for help, slips a message to someone, digging an escape tunnel, hiding a potential weapon)
- Use an escalation of violence with antagonist - first nice then hits protagonist hard then threatens with a knife

**Create 1-3 suspense ideas for each plot point** in your story. Add a ticking clock time pressure to the main plot goal and some plot points if possible:

**Ticking clock time pressure for main plot goal:**

**1) Hook:**

**2) Setup:**

**3) Inciting incident:**

**4) Journey Into Unknown:**

**5) Investigation:**

**6) Twist:**

**7) Final Confrontation:**

**8) Climax:**

## 9) Resolution:

### Step 19: Adding Humor

How many funny moments or gags can you add to your film idea? Write down any funny moments next to the humor brainstorming ideas below:

- Dress character in funny outfit with silly hairstyle then have him or her walk really funny or in an exaggerated way – draw a sketch if you can:
  
- Show character using normal thing in funny way - a microwave reinvented as a time machine, a toaster that has been modified to be a satellite
  
- Create one character who is just so funny in some way every time this character does or says anything we laugh, - speaks with funny accent, really forgetful or emotionally over reacts in funny
  
- Have character use funny mode of transportation - old beat up car with funny bumper stickers, art car, hotdog shop commercial car, flames on tiny motorcycle that is not working too well, old limping beat up ugly horse that bolts and flips out, rocket made out garage parts, straddling a rocket in mid air - anything that looks ridiculous, far fetched, embarrassing or impossible to do



- Have character do some gross, rude, embarrassing or loud scene activity while dealing with others - eating sunflower seeds and spitting the seeds out around the room loudly during important meeting
- Have character do something obviously stupid - crawls into empty cage to look for lost animal - cage is obviously empty
- Give character funny original occupation or combination occupation - pet detective, kid FBI agent, boy genius inventor, superhero office worker
- Give character funny flaw - Dori in Finding Nemo has short term memory problems, a bumbling detective

## **Step 20: Final Story Idea**

Congratulations you are almost done with completing your story idea!

**Add all of the new ideas you just came up with** from conflicts, twists, setups, symbols, suspense and humor to your basic plot points. Then rewrite the 1-3 sentence scene description for what happens at each plot point from Step 13.

### **1) Hook:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**2) Setup:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**3) Inciting incident:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

#### **4) Journey Into Unknown:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**5) Investigation:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**6) Twist:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:



Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**7) Final Confrontation:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**8) Climax:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

**9) Resolution:**

Conflicts/Obstacles:

Scene/Plot Twist:

Setups/Payoffs:

Symbolic Objects:

Metaphorical Activities:

Suspense:

Ticking Clocks:

Humor Ideas:

New 1-3 sentence description of what happens at this plot point using the new information from above:

Now take all your final sentences and put them together to form your new story idea:

**Thank you for trying out this step-by-step storytelling process!**

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