

## STORY DEVELOPMENT

**Premise/Logline:** *A one-sentence description of the theme of your story.* In many good stories, there is both a literal premise and a figurative one. What one thing do you wish to leave the audience feeling and considering? Keep this in mind throughout the whole. It should hook the reader and reveal character, setting, and conflict.

**Treatment:** *The objective is to focus on the story to develop the characters, setting, conflict, and resolution.* Your treatment will not likely be used to sell a project or used during production -- it's main purpose is to write a story without the distraction of thinking about scenes, script formatting, nor any filmmaking tools such as cinematography and editing. There is not a particular format that must be followed, but one could view the process as writing an effective short story such as O. Henry or Mark Twain might.

**Script:** *The goal of the script should be to communicate the experience of watching the film, even though it has not yet been made.* Work to divide your treatment into scenes and arcs of scenes that flow, follow the three-act narrative structure, and each work to develop the character and plot. Follow the conventional formatting and seek to describe actions concisely with visual description devoid of direct description of character thoughts, as these should be communicated through action first and possibly dialogue as a fall-back. Also, other than dividing the story into scenes that work well together, avoid written descriptions about the cinematography or editing of the film. Revise the script continuously many times, and eliminate any scenes, dialogue, or description that is not needed, cutting to the heart of the premise. Then complete a "breakdown" of the script to determine shots and needed assets per sequence and scene.

**Shotlist:** *While considering the film grammar of camera placement and movement as well as techniques for cutting images, divide each scene into individual shots (clips between cuts) that will most effectively communicate the feelings of the characters and themes of the narrative.* (In live-action filmmaking, there may be overlap or "coverage," but this will not be needed for an animation where the shots are tediously refined to complete the story without as much need for inventing new concepts in the editing room). Each shot should be described briefly so that it could be communicated to a storyboard artist, a director of photography, or a cg-layout artist. Number them for clear organization and communication throughout production.

**Overheads:** *These are "bird's-eye view" drawings of camera placement and movement.* They are a great help on-set for planning principal photography, but they are not as needed for an animated piece. They do help in looking for potential pitfalls such as "crossing the line" and other considerations. They also help devise blocking of actors and movement of the camera -- particularly useful when physical layout of a location or set constrains the cinematography.

**Storyboards:** *The goal is to communicate the story in a visual format.* Now that ideas have been well-developed, the objective is to communicate from written communication to visual communication of the story. Devise how the characters and settings will appear and what style of framing, camera movement, and cutting will be used to craft the images shown to the audience. Again, consider aspects of film grammar to best communicate character realizations and decisions. Label each board with the shot number and a brief description; also, note any important considerations for the set, props, and visual effects.

**Animatic:** *The goal is to communicate the story in a visual format with consideration for timing, layout, and blocking.* The storyboards are cut together in a moving "slide show" along with rough sound and dialogue and should appear much like the final film will. This should be interesting and entertaining to watch, communicating the important themes of your story along with the important character decisions, revelations, and developments that build those themes. If these are not *very clear* at this point, go back through the process and revise at every step until these are clear! Do this before you waste anyone's money or time. :-)

**Color Keys/Color Script:** *The objective is to develop the "look" or primary art direction/style of the film.* Color pastels are often used, or use a program such as Painter, SketchBook Pro, or Photoshop to create these. The color palette and lighting of the scenes should be communicated. (Other development sketches are usually used to develop the look of characters, props, and sets, but these should match here as well). A few are created initially to develop the overall style, but these are usually done on a per-scene basis to establish the look of each scene (which should tie-in with the dramatic themes of the scene). Taken as a whole, the color keys form the color script of the film.