

Screenwriting is a visual medium that requires a writer to create words on a page that can be transformed into images on the big screen. Writing for a script that will be visualized into a film is very different from writing for a novel/movie.

A scene is a structural element or a building block of a story. Your plot and characters are a plan of a building. Scenes are materials which you use to build it. Every scene should move the plot forward because if it doesn't, then you don't need it and you should cut it.

- Each of these is supremely important. Scenes are made up of Actions, Thoughts, Dialogue and Emotions. **Each scene has a structure:** beginning, middle, end. This implies that some event is happening. It may be walking inside a house, or it may be a scene where a character finds out something important.
 - Scenes open in various ways, but the goal of an opening is to hook the reader/viewer, just as you would in the opening chapter. Opening Scenes should be loaded with character and set up your premise. That's where you want to slip in important bits of backstory.
 - The middle involves obstacles and complications to the goal, and the end is usually a disaster. Somewhere, there's a **pivot point**, a place where the action speeds up, changes direction, or twists off in a tangent. Things don't go as expected. It may be just deepening of tension or emotion.
 - Climactic Scenes should build to a riveting climax, so they might be shorter and packed with action and emotion.

8-Step Process of Writing Scenes

1. Identify Its Purpose

A scene should either advance the plot, reveal character, or both. You want strong pacing, showing rather than telling, and to [create empathy](#) for your protagonist. Plus,

you want mystery and conflict in every scene to keep readers/viewers turning the pages.

So, the purpose of the scene is key.

In life, things happen, we react, process what happened, and decide on new action. So it's action-reaction-process-decide-new action.

Write one sentence that encapsulates that for each scene.

In every scene, a character has external goals and internal goals. These goals can be expressed through actions, thoughts, dialogue or emotion, usually all four. A Goal is what your main character wants at the beginning of the Scene. The Goal must be specific and it must be clearly definable. The reason your character must have a Goal is that it makes your character proactive. Your character is not passively waiting for the universe to deal him Great Good. Your character is going after what he wants, just as your reader/viewer wishes he could do. It's a simple fact that any character who wants something desperately is an interesting character. Even if he's not nice, he's interesting. And your reader/viewer will identify with him. That's what you want as a writer.

2. Identify the High Moment

This occurs near the end of a scene, maybe even in the last line.

Because most of your scenes should mimic overall [novel/movie structure](#), with a beginning, middle, climax, and ending. Of course, a scene could effectively “hang” at the end, to add tension and propel the reader/viewer into the next scene.

This crucial step in the process reveals the ultimate purpose of your scene.

3. Emphasize Conflict: Inner and Outer

Conflict is the series of obstacles your character faces on the way to reaching his Goal. You must have Conflict in your Scene! If your character reaches his Goal with no Conflict, then the reader/viewer is bored. Your reader/viewer wants to struggle! No victory has any value if it comes too easy. So make your character struggle and your reader/viewer will live out that struggle too.

A great novel/movie will have conflict on every page, sometimes inner, other times outer or both. But you don't want meaningless conflict, such as two people arguing over what type of coffee to order—unless that specific argument reveals something important that advances the plot or exposes a key bit of character.

Think of ways to ramp up conflict to the highest stakes possible.

Every scene—even thoughtful, “processing” ones—should convey tension, inner conflict, and high stakes. You don't need explosive action to have conflict.

4. Accentuate Character Change

Writing instructor James Scott Bell says, “Every scene should have a death”—of a dream, a relationship, or a plan.

Literary agent Donald Maass encourages writers to consider how a point-of-view (POV) character feels before a scene starts and how she feels when the scene ends.

Your character should be changed by what happens. That change can be subtle or huge. It can involve a change of opinion, or it could be a monumental personality shift.

But change must occur. Why? Because, for the story to advance, decisions must be made and action instigated. Every event in your novel/movie should impact your characters and foment change. But it must be significant and serve the plot.

5. Determine POV

Who is the best character through whom the reader/viewer should experience this scene? With novel/movies solely in the protagonist's POV, this isn't an issue. But for novel/movies in shifting third person, with more than one perspective character, you need to decide whose POV you'll portray in each scene.

You may find it easier to choose your POV character when you determine the purpose of your scene.

Or the POV choice may become obvious.

In romance novel/movies it's common to alternate between hero and heroine, so each gets a turn filtering the scene through their POV.

To decide whose POV to choose, ask yourself:

- Who has the most to lose or gain in the scene?
- Who will react strongest emotionally?
- Who will change the most?
- Whose reaction would most impact the plot?

6. Leave Out Boring Stuff

Start your scene in the middle of the action, a bit before you build to the high moment, and you'll avoid pages of unimportant narrative.

Inject important backstory but not at the expense of the present action. Cut anything that doesn't serve your scene's purpose. Make every word count.

7. Perfect Beginnings and Endings

It's not just your novel/movie's first line that has to hook readers/viewers. Every scene promises to entertain your reader/viewer, to enthrall, to evoke emotion. You must make good on those promises.

A scene's last paragraph and closing line should ratchet up the conflict and underscore character transformation.

8. Inject Texture and Sensory Details

While some writers stuff scenes with too much detail, most tend to underwrite sensory specifics. This step in this scene-crafting process involves combing through your draft and bringing scenes to life with vivid detail that engages your reader's/viewer's senses.

Your goal is to paint enough of a picture to help your reader see the scene as if on the big screen. Too much detail is boring, as are details that don't reveal anything important.

Scenes serve as the framework of your novel/movie and shouldn't be thrown together. Use this 8-step method every time, and you're sure to succeed.