

Screenplay terms and abbreviations

The short forms on almost every page, and the words you will hear about scripts.

ABBREVIATIONS

Written	Means	Where it goes
INT.	Interior	Start of a scene heading
EXT.	Exterior	Start of a scene heading
INT./EXT.	Inside and outside	Start of a scene heading
(V.O.)	Voice-over: not in the location	After the name
(O.S.)	Off screen: here, out of the picture	After the name
(O.C.)	Off camera, the same as O.S.	After the name
(CONT'D)	The same speaker again	After the name
(MORE)	The speech continues on the next page	Foot of the page
POV	Point of view	Heading or action
SUPER	Words over the picture	Action
b.g. / f.g.	Background / foreground	Action

TERMS

CONTINUOUS In a heading: the action runs straight on from the scene before.

LATER In a heading: back in the same place after time has passed.

SAME In a heading: at the same moment as the scene before, somewhere else.

INSERT A close view of something we must read. Ends with BACK TO SCENE.

INTERCUT Back and forth between two scenes at once, such as both ends of a call.

MONTAGE Short moments that compress time. Closes with END MONTAGE.

SERIES OF SHOTS One stretch of action in quick pieces, often lettered.

FLASHBACK Labelled in the heading. A dream works the same way.

Parenthetical A short note in brackets on how a line is said. Use rarely.

Beat A pause in dialogue, or one unit of change in a story.

PRE-LAP Sound or dialogue from the next scene, heard before we cut to it.

Dual dialogue Two speeches side by side, spoken at once.

Transition How one scene gives way to the next, at the right margin. Use few.

SMASH CUT A sudden, jarring cut.

MATCH CUT A cut that links two shots by a shared shape, movement or sound.

Spec script Written to be read and sold: no scene numbers, no revision marks.

Shooting script The production version: scene numbers, revisions, locked pages.

Logline The story in one sentence, ending held back.

Synopsis The whole story in brief, ending included.

Treatment The story as prose, in order, 10 to 20 pages for a feature.

Beat sheet The story's turning points, a line or two each.

Coverage A reader's report: logline, synopsis, comments, a verdict.

Teaser, cold open A scene or two before the opening titles.

Act break The end of an act in a TV script. The next act starts a new page.