

AUDIO PLAY

(HANDOUT RADIO DRAMA FORMAT)

(FOR THE SOURCE OF THE HANDOUT:)

<https://www.celtx.com/a/ux/desktop>

1 BILL:

This first Format Sheet deals with Radio Drama. Like all formats, it has a simple function. The format itself is designed to allow you to write a radio drama WITHOUT having to position text by tabs, spacing, and centering. It's designed to look after formatting, so you can focus on the most important element of all - the writing. The easiest way to show how this would look on the page is to type it in the form of a script. Right now, I'm in the dialogue mode, but want to hear what sounds an audience would hear.

2 SOUND: HEAVY TYPING. KEYBOARD BEING SLAMMED AS IT RATTLES ON A DESK. THERE ARE THE SOUNDS OF MANY QUICK SLURPS OF LATE-NITE COFFEE.3 SOUND: THE CLICKING OF A MOUSE.

4 BILL:

In addition, it will allow any Producer or Director to pick up a script and know, by the time she has finished reading it, what production elements are necessary to produce your script. The document tells them how many sound effects will be needed, and where they are to be placed. It lets those who'll produce your script know where music cues are expected, what characters are in your script, and what settings are intended for your drama.

My name is in the "Character" position. All I had to do to enter dialogue was hit 'return' after typing my name in the Character position. The word processor then placed the dialogue in that position.

(BY USING THIS PRODUCTION NOTE SELECTION, YOU'RE ALSO ABLE TO LEAVE STAND-OUT NOTES FOR THE SCRIPT-READER)

5 SOUND: CREAKING HALLWAY BOARDS.

6 BILL:

Sorry. Had to check that hallway out. Nothing to worry about. Nada. Where was...I...oh yeah, to continue...because this format has, of course, no visuals, the focus in the script goes on Sound Effects, Music Cues, Narration, and Action.

The visuals in Sonic Theatre emerge in the reader's or listener's mind as a result of the dialogue, the effects & the music. They also emerge out of the rhythm of the piece, and the characters you've created.

(IF YOU CLICK YOUR CURSOR ON ANY ELEMENT IN THIS SCRIPT, YOU CAN FIND OUT WHAT ELEMENT SETTING WAS USED. CLICK THIS ONE & YOU'LL SEE "PRODUCTION NOTE" A VERY USEFUL WAY TO ADD NOTES TO THE READER. IT PUTS BRACKETS AROUND THE ASIDE, AND TURNS THE TEXT INTO ALL-CAPS SO IT'S CLEARLY NOTICEABLE. THAT'S VERY USEFUL IN A FORMAT WHERE THE SCRIPT MAY BE PRODUCED LIVE.)

7 BILL:

This script format, as all script formats, exists in present tense. When you describe where characters move, what they're doing, and how they look - the tense used is *always* present tense. It isn't that your character 'crossed the room,' your character 'crosses the room' the same characters never 'drove their cars' they always 'drive their cars.' Even if your drama is set in the past, your description is always done in the present tense. If you write a futuristic script, the descriptions still remain in present tense.

This is for a very good reason - the moments in a drama are always 'now.' No matter how far ahead in the future, nor how far back in the very distant past, what we hear and what we see is always 'now.'

As for your characters, however, they get to speak in any tense they choose - for they're very much like us; although they live in the present they may speculate about the future, wonder about the past and say whatever they wish. Radio action description however, has one simple rule - present tense.

(THE FOCUS IN SONIC THEATRE, OR RADIO DRAMA, OF COURSE, IS ON THE EAR - WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE EAR. EVERY DAY WE USE OUR HEARING THE SAME WAY THAT RADIO DRAMA 'USES' HEARING. OUR VISUAL FIELD IS ACTUALLY FAIRLY NARROW - MUCH LIKE THE VIEW AN ASTRONAUT HAS FROM HIS OR HER SPACESUIT. IT'S AN EYE-SHAPED VISUAL FIELD. ALMOST ALL TO THE SIDE OF US, AND EVERYTHING BEHIND US IS 'CREATED' BY SOUND AND MEMORY.)

8 BILL:

So the first things we use in radio drama are sounds and memories of the world we create. As you write your radio drama, become aware of how much you use your ears. Instead of listening to music as you walk around,

(MORE)

BILL: (cont'd)

spend a day and a night listening to what you learn about your environment from your hearing. How do you know what's behind you?

If you enter a new space, observe how much you rely on your hearing to give you advance information. As you walk along the street how early do you hear those who approach you?

Notice how voices create perspective for you - if you were blindfolded, could you still tell where people are when they're speaking or moving? How do you do this?

Close your eyes and imagine a scene from the past - something vivid and important - what do you 'hear' when you remember this?

(EYES CLOSED, THE READER IMAGINES THE SCENE;
RECALLS FAVORITE SOUNDS. WHEN FINISHED THE READER
OPENS EYES WIDE & READS ON)

9 BILL: (cont'd)

Well, this gives you the basic idea. In this dramatic form you concentrate on what people say, how they say it, and the context in which they speak their dialogue. Are they in a meadow near a stream, or are they working inside a paper mill? This will make a huge difference in the way dialogue is delivered. Two people holding a conversation in a meadow will speak very differently from two people having a conversation on a catwalk above machinery. The format in radio drama is designed to reveal the sonic environment of your drama.

Oh yes, the reason that Radio Drama has a frequent use of ALL CAPS is because the format was developed in the days of live Radio. An actor would frequently arrive at a studio just in the nick of time, and would be handed a script typed on soft paper (no rattling of pages) and would sometimes have to, with no rehearsal time, perform in a complex drama. The large typeface, and the spacing meant that a script could be performed in a 'cold reading' and there was still an excellent chance of it being presented the way the writer intended.

(NOW ON TO THE SCRIPT ITSELF. HERE'S A SAMPLE OF
HOW THIS WOULD WORK - FOR AT LEAST ONE HAPLESS
WRITER)

SCENE ONE: INT. APARTMENT- WRITING

ROOM - DAY

(NOTICE THAT WE USED THE SCENE HEADING FOR THE SCENE. AND INCLUDED IN THE DESCRIPTION IS THE INFORMATION THAT WE'RE INDOORS, AND TELLS US THE LOCATION, & THE FACT THAT IT'S DAYTIME.)

10 BILL:

In Radio, we call that the SCENE HEADING. We use the same term in Stage, and in film, we call this the SLUGLINE. It means the same thing in every format - that we're starting a new scene. What's a scene? In drama format it means, usually, a continuous unit of time and space. If we jump time (e.g. - going back to yesterday, or ahead to tomorrow) it requires a new scene.

If we have a change in location we have a new scene. If one scene in a house takes place in the Kitchen, and then we go to the bedroom, then we'll need a new scene heading when we enter the bedroom.

Easy way to remember it: If we jump time and/or space, we'll need a new scene heading. More on that later, as I can hear some odd Music...

11 MUSIC: SINISTER MUSIC. ESTABLISH. CONTINUE UNDER.12 SOUND: SOUNDS OF TYPING, THE KEYBOARD RATTLING AS THE WRITER SLAMS THE KEYS

13 BILL:

Complain about my typing will you! Read this e-mail and weep!!! Listen for what happens next.

14 SOUND: BURST OF TYPING. SOUND OF APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS IN APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY. KNOCKING AT THE DOOR - AT FIRST LIGHTLY.15 BILL: (cont'd)
Go away!16 SOUND: KNOCKING INCREASES.

17 BILL: (cont'd)

Go away, I said!!! Where was I? Oh yeah. "...because you are the worst neighbor I've ever had. Even though you're known in the building as a Homicidal maniac - I still want to let you know that I don't give a crap! Your pathetic threats don't scare me..."

18 SOUND: DOOR SPLINTERING AS THE SOUND OF AN AXE CLEAVES THE WOOD.

- 19 BILL: (cont'd)
On the other hand, an axe through the door? That scares me!
- 20 MUSIC SINISTER MUSIC SWELLS, THE AXE CUTS THROUGH THE DOOR ON THE BEAT. THE KEYBOARD IS SLAMMED WITH EVEN GREATER VIGOR.
- 21 BILL:
. . .Before I sign off, I do think there's something to be said for complaints. How could I modify my behavior if you didn't take your favorite axe, and . . .
- 22 SOUND THE DOOR SPLINTERS. FOOTSTEPS STAMP TOWARDS THE KEYBOARD.
- 23 SOUND: THERE IS THE SOUND OF AN AXE CUTTING THROUGH THE AIR, AND A MONITOR BEING CUT IN TWO; IMPLODING WITH FORCE. A STRUGGLE; A SCREAM.
- 24 SOUND: THE FOOTSTEPS WALK AWAY.
- 25 SOUND: A SHATTERED DOOR FALLS OFF THE HINGES. PIECES OF WOOD HIT THE FLOOR. ALL IS SILENT EXCEPT FOR THE DISTANT SOUND OF HEAVY FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY DOWN THE HALLWAY.NO MORE SOUNDS OF BILL EXCEPT FOR ONE WHIMPER & THEN SILENCE.