



Formatting Guide

For One-Act and Full-Length Plays

Obey the demands of Van Halen’s infamous tour contract.

Buried among pages of technical specs was a seemingly absurd request: the backstage candy bowl must contain **no brown M&Ms**. This wasn’t rockstar ego—it was a test. If the venue missed that detail, the band knew other, more critical instructions (like stage load limits or pyrotechnics) might’ve been ignored. That meant everything had to be unloaded and reloaded—wasting everyone’s time and potentially endangering the show.

We feel the same about formatting. These formatting guidelines are here to help us engage fully with your work—and to make it easy to transition into a beautifully typeset acting edition, should your play be selected. It’s not about being fussy. It’s about attention, clarity, and respect for your reader.

GENERAL SETUP

File Format

PDF required. Other formats don't necessarily compress or travel well through online forms.

Font

Use a clean, readable **serif font** like *Times New Roman* or *Georgia*

Font Size

12 pt.

Margins

1 in" on all sides

Spacing

- Single-spaced. There should be an added space between any Dialogue or Scene Direction (read further.)

TITLE PAGE

Centered halfway down the 1st page, we require:

- Title of the play
- Subtitle (optional, italicized)
- Byline (Author Name or Pen Name)

Further down, in the bottom right corner of the page, we also require:

- Author's Legal Name
- Their Address
- Their Phone Number
- Their Email Address
- Active Copyright

Only include logos, quotes, or decorative text on a cover page if they serve a greater purpose in your work. Consider whether or not the flair adds or subtracts from the reader's experience.

TITLE OF PLAY
BRILLIANT SUBTITLE

by PLAYWRIGHT NAME

Legal Name
123 Drama Ave. New York, NY - 10011
(123) 456-7890
email@emailprovider.com

Copyright © 2024 - Playwright Name

SETTING & CAST PAGE

Immediately following the title page:

- **Character List** with names, ages, gender and brief descriptions
- **Place** and **Time** of the play
- **Performance Notes**, if applicable

CHARACTERS

MARCIA - 32 (F) Up-and-coming zookeeper.

HENRY - 65 (M) Deadbeat owner of the joint. A real bottom feeder.

ESME - 28 (NB) Henry's child. Didn't inherit his thick brain or bad temper.

GHOST OF ESCAPED CHIMPANZEE - Ethereal. Loves bananas.

PLACE

Tulsa, Oklahoma - *Handsome Hank's Animal Kingdom*

TIME

The present-ish.

NOTES

This performance requires a LIVE snake (*yes, you read that correctly*) for Scene II (ACT I).

Proper handling is recommended, but not required.

ACT & SCENE STRUCTURE

Start each **Act** and **Scene** on a new page

Center and bold scene headings, like so:

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Include a brief setting description and "At Rise" note below the heading:

Late morning. Murphy Funeral Home. Main viewing room. At rise: Paddy and Liam stand in front of an empty casket.

DIALOGUE & DIRECTIONS

Character Names:

- Use **ALL CAPS**, *left-aligned*
- End each with a period (.)

Dialogue:

- Add two spaces from the period (.) after the character name before starting any Dialogue.
- Capitalize the first letter of the first spoken line. And the rest for that matter.
- The entire block should be single spaced.

Stage Directions:

- Use *italics*.

Wrylies (parentheticals):

- These go next to character names, a single space after the period (.)
- Two spaces should go between a parenthetical and any dialogue.

PADDY. (losing his temper) What on earth does that mean?

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Late morning. Murphy Funeral Home. Main viewing room. At rise: Paddy and Liam stand in front of an empty casket.

PADDY. Looks a little funny, no?

LIAM. Show some respect.

PADDY. (Sheepishly) Looks a little...wrinkly, no?

LIAM. You are one rotten sonofabitch, you know that?!

Additional Notes

- Keep formatting consistent throughout.
- No screenplay templates—this is for **theatre**.
- Do **not** include a page number on the title or character pages. The page count should start on the first page of the script.
- Please paginate your document consecutively (don't reset page numbers for new acts).
- Dialogue overlap can use dashes (—) or ellipses (...) but should remain readable.
- *Not required but helpful*: if your play requires an extensive property list, please reference them after the final page of the script by order of appearance.

ONE MINOR CONTRADICTION...

Don't format your work death.

Don't let margins, fonts, or formatting become a form of procrastination. Focus on writing your story—just make sure your play is legible and that any stylistic choices are intentional. These small adjustments help us read—and, hopefully, one day typeset—your work more easily.

Our deepest gratitude goes to you, the artist—for letting us in, for allowing us to get to know your work. We believe every playwright deserves an audience, and we think you might, too. Otherwise...why would you have read this far?

-INKWELL EDITORIAL