

# Character Cull

THE  
SCRIPT  
READER

A screenplay that's crammed with too many characters for the reader (and audience) to keep track of risks being thrown on the rejection pile, so go through this checklist to discover which characters could be crowding your story, hampering the pace, and adding avoidable extra cost to the budget.

1

## ROLE

List all your characters and identify the role they play in your story. This might include protagonist, antagonist, mentor, comic relief, love interest, etc. If a character doesn't have a clear role, they might be unnecessary.

2

## INFLUENCE

Assess each character's impact on the plot. If you could remove a character without significantly changing the events of your story, they're probably weren't needed to begin with.

3

## REDUNDANCY

Look for characters who serve the same purpose or have similar traits. Could these two characters (or extras) be merged into one without losing any essential story elements?

4

## SCENE COUNT

If a character only appears in a few scenes and doesn't significantly impact the plot or other characters, consider if they're really worth including.

5

## ARC

Characters who have no clear arc and don't change or evolve throughout the screenplay are also potential cuts. If they can't be further developed to reflect the theme or help highlight change in other characters, should they be there?

6

## RELATIONSHIPS

Examine the relationships between characters. If a character has minimal interactions with others or their actions don't really contribute to any character development, either change this or, consider cutting them.

7

## AUDIENCE CONNECTION

Does the character form any emotional connection with the audience? If not, is it because they're not necessary, or because they're not yet fully developed enough? Ask what inner struggle each character has to help assess this.

8

## OUTLIERS

If a character feels out of place or doesn't fit with the overall tone or theme of the screenplay, such as the comedic relief in a tense thriller, ask whether they're really helping the story or if they're perhaps hindering it instead.

Be mindful to make these assessments in the context of your entire screenplay. Sometimes, a character may seem unnecessary when looking at a single scene, but their overall contribution to the story could be vital.

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