

THE SCRIPT READER

CHEAT SHEET CHECKLIST

PREMISE

TITLE:

- The title is misleading
- The title may cause offence

THEME:

- The overall theme or message is unclear
- There are too many themes
- Theme isn't reflected in the subplots
- The theme doesn't get resolved

ORIGINALITY:

- It's too similar to other produced material
- It's so unconventional, it's confusing
- The story is based on the writers boring life
- The story is a boring fact-based adaptation

LENGTH:

- The script is too long or too short
- Bad formatting has altered the page count
- Altering the page count will add desirability

BELIEVABILITY:

- Characters make implausible decisions
- There are noticeable plot holes

GENRE:

- Genre is unclear
- It doesn't add anything new to the genre
- There aren't enough genre conventions

TONE:

- The tone isn't immediately clear
- Tone isn't strong enough
- Tone is inconsistent

MEDIUM:

- It doesn't fit the chosen format
- The concept doesn't have legs

MARKETABILITY:

- It only has niche appeal
- It won't appeal to its target audience
- It's trying to please too many people
- It lacks international appeal
- There's a lack of diversity

BUDGET:

- There are too many characters
- There are too many locations
- The writer sites copyrighted material

STRUCTURE

OPENING SEQUENCES:

- There's no hook
- The MC isn't in the first scene
- There's too much setup

STORY BEATS:

- The premise is unclear during the first act
- Turning points aren't clear on the page
- There's a weak point of no return
- The end hook is weak

SUBPLOTS:

- There's a distinct lack of subplots
- There are too many subplots
- Subplots aren't linked to the central story
- Subplots don't merge during the final act

SETUPS & PAYOFFS:

- Setups aren't paid off
- Payoffs aren't setup properly
- Setups are too obvious

SCENE STRUCTURE:

- The plot doesn't move forward
- Scenes repeat needless information
- Scenes have no conflict
- Scenes are too long

NARRATIVE DEVICES:

- Flashbacks are used unnecessarily
- Montages don't advance the plot
- Info is revealed in the wrong order
- The writer hasn't used the 'rule of three'

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CHARACTER

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS:

- Physical appearances are too detailed
- Vital information is missing
- Action isn't revealing character
- Gender isn't immediately clear
- Character names are confusing
- Major characters haven't been named
- Characters are numbered instead of named

STAKES:

- There are no clear stakes
- The stakes aren't big enough
- The stakes don't increase throughout

CHARACTER ARC:

- The MC hasn't changed by the end
- Character arcs aren't believable
- The MC doesn't have enough actor bait

ANTAGONISTIC FORCE:

- There is no antagonistic character
- The antagonist isn't developed enough
- The antagonist lacks enough screen time
- The antagonist is a weak rival

GOALS:

- The MC has no clear goal
- The MC's goal isn't interesting enough
- The MC's motivations are unclear

FLAWS, WEAKNESSES, AND LIMITATIONS:

- The MC is too perfect
- The major flaw isn't tied to the central plot
- The MC's flaw doesn't become a strength

ROOT-ABILITY:

- The MC is too unlikable
- Characters are one-dimensional
- The cast lacks diversity
- It's unclear whose story it is
- Characters aren't emotionally engaging

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS:

- Secondary characters overshadow the MC
- Minor characters get more screen time
- Minor characters don't serve a purpose
- Secondary characters are one-dimensional

PASSIVE CHARACTERS:

- The MC isn't solving their own problems
- The MC doesn't drive change

DIALOGUE

EXPOSITION:

- There's too much dialogue
- Dialogue is too on-the-nose
- There's too much filler dialogue
- There's too much Q&A dialogue
- Dialogue repeats info we already know
- Wording is repetitive
- There's too much technical jargon

VOICE:

- Characters sound too alike
- Dialects and accents are overused
- Dialogue isn't realistic

PACE

DRAMATIC MOMENTUM:

- There are noticeable lulls in the story
- There are no 'catch your breath' moments
- Repetition of info hampers the pace
- There's a lack of white space on the page

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READABILITY

TITLE PAGE:

- There is no title page
- Contact details are missing
- The title page has unnecessary elements

PARENTHETICALS:

- Parentheticals are used unnecessarily
- Parentheticals are used too often

SCENE DESCRIPTION:

- Writing is novelistic
- Genre isn't reflected in the tone
- Orphans need to be cut
- Sentence structure is poor
- Dialogue is written in scene description
- There's too much scene description
- Scene description repeats information
- Vital info is missing or in the wrong order
- Actors are being over directed
- There's too much detail

FORMATTING:

- Standard industry layout is incorrect
- There are too many formatting errors
- Scene headings are confusing

PRESENTATION:

- There are huge paragraphs of text
- The script hasn't been proofread
- Scene headings are too long
- Bold or caps have been overused
- Exposition is confusing
- Character names are inconsistent
- There are 'unfilmables'
- The script needs more polish

OVER DIRECTING:

- There's too many camera directions
- There are unnecessary shot transitions

VISUALS:

- The writer is telling, not showing