



## HOW TO WRITE A TEN-MINUTE PLAY

### What is a ten-minute play?

This new dramatic form is a short but complete play, with a beginning, middle, and end. It is not a scene from a larger play or a comedy sketch with a single gag; rather, it presents deep character transformation within a specific time limit. The 10-minute play is sometimes called the "haiku of the stage" or "a bolt of theatrical lightning."

A few writing tips:

- Create compelling characters who captivate the audience's attention
- Make sure each character wants something badly
- Give each character an obstacle to his or her goal
- Both the goal and the obstacle need to be important, necessary, and urgent in order for the audience to care
- Pull in your audience from the first moment of the play
- Focus on a single dramatic idea
- Something has to change or transform
- Surprise your audience

### GETTING STARTED ON YOUR SCRIPT

For the first draft, turn off your inner critic and just write. Don't worry about page count.

There are two approaches which work well:

(1) Exploratory Writing -- Write everything you know about the character or story, and everything you want to find out. See what happens.

(2) Writing Toward a Goal -- Many playwrights prefer to have a story goal in mind before they begin to write. Figure out a strong inciting incident (the event that starts the story) and how it will turn out. Create interesting characters. Then follow your outline and write the dialogue.

## REVISING YOUR SCRIPT

Put your first draft away to 'cool off' overnight, or for a few days. Then take it out and read it. Invite your inner critic to help you decide what's working and what's not. Make notes. Write new drafts!

Analyze the following elements of your play:

1. CHARACTER: Who is the main character? Who is the antagonist? Is there a good reason for extra characters? What does each want? What do they do to get it?
  2. CONFLICT: What opposes/stops each character from getting what they want?
  3. STAKES: What will each character lose if they don't get what they want?
  4. SET UP: How does the play establish the world we're in? How is each character introduced? How does the play reveal what each character wants?
  5. CENTRAL CONFLICT: Is conflict revealed in the first line? What is the inciting incident? Has it already happened or do we see it on stage? Does the play start in the middle of the action? (It should!) What is the dramatic quest which will resolve by the play's end?
  6. COMPLICATIONS: What complicates the quest and builds suspense? What do we believe is the reason for the main character's problem? What revelations change our understanding of his or her motive? How does this challenge or reveal our own value systems?
  7. RESOLVE THE CONFLICT: How is balance restored to the world of the play?
- \*\*A ten-minute play should have one moment when the character is forced to confront something that will change him or her.**
8. SPECTACLE: What is aurally or visually exotic, rhythmic, appealing in the play?

## A GUIDE TO STRUCTURE

Page:	What:	How:
1	BURST OUT OF THE GATE!	Create compelling characters in conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Show the world we're in</i></li><li>• <i>Introduce central character</i></li></ul>
1 to 2	GRAB & HOLD!	Clarify quest <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Reveal the dramatic question</i></li></ul>
2 to 6	TWISTS & TURNS!	Complicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Introduce an unforeseen event?</i></li><li>• <i>Introduce a new character?</i></li><li>• <i>Character has a change of heart?</i></li></ul>
7	SPRINT TO THE FINISH!	Resolve conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Answer the dramatic question</i></li></ul>