

How to read a script?

If it's your first time reading a script, you may need a short explanation for the elements and abbreviations in it.

Let's have a look at its elements:

The **Scene Heading** tells the reader where the scene takes place. Are we indoors (INT.) or outdoors(EXT.); Next is the name of the location: STUDY ROOM, SPECHT VILLA; and it might include the time of day - NIGHT, DAY, DAWN. (Or CONTINUOUS if the character's action goes on continuously in a different location.)

Example:

EXT. GERMAN-SWISS BORDER - EVENING

The **Action line** is describing what we see on the screen.

Example:

STEINER (a middle-aged man with back combed black hair) is driving an open-topped car in the setting sun.
When first appearing in the script characters are written in capitals (in the previous example).

In a **dialogue** the character's name stands in the middle of the page in capitals.

(V.O.) abbreviation for Voice Over in a dialogue next to the character's name and it denotes that the speaker is narrating the action on screen and that at the moment she/he is not in the scene.

Example:

STEINER(V.O.)
The booms of gunfire came from
Alsace...we could only hope that the
independence of Switzerland would be
respected. We had to prepare for all
eventualities.

(O.S.) abbreviation for **Off Screen** in a dialogue: the character is in the scene but not to be seen at that moment.

STEINER(O.S)
On the other hand because after nearly
10 years of hard work we've finished
the building of the Goetheanum...

STEINER
...yes, 1923 will be the tenth year.

Parenthetical (see bellow ironically) is an indication of a speech inflection noted by the writer.

PAULINE
(ironically)
As you can see, this would be a work
of a home tutor.

Other elements:

INSERT: an image or a flashback is inserted:
SUPERS, CAPTION, SUBTITLE: quotations, captions, subtitles
are onscreen.