

M22 Script Formatting Guide: Antonson's list of common formatting problems

PARAGRAPHING - BREAKING UP BEATS WITHIN THE SCENE

Prose style:

INT. BANK OF UNITED STATES- DAY

The bank tellers are organized by Jack to bring out vast wads of cash and stuff it in a duffel bag he brought along. One teller is looking for an opportunity to pull out a sawed off shotgun but just then a cop walks in to investigate. Jack shoots him as he's midway through the door and wildly swings the rifle around to see the teller fumbling with the shotgun. He shoots him in the arm and presses his foot into the wound, taking the shotgun amidst the screaming.

JACK
(Points the shotgun!)
Out of time folks.

Script style: less adjectives, more verbs, active voice, write down the page

INT. BANK OF UNITED STATES- DAY

Jack pushes several bank tellers towards the safe. He throws a duffel bag at them.

JACK
You know what to do.

Two of the tellers begin loading cash into the bags, hands shaking. TELLER #3 eyes a sawed-off SHOTGUN that is hidden under the table, just within reach.

Suddenly a police officer ENTERS and is surprised to see a robbery in progress. Jack whirls around, leveling his gun at him.

A beat. The Officer slowly raises his arms above his head. Then WHAM! Jack blasts a hole in his chest! Blood splatters on the wall behind him - the tellers scream fearfully.

Teller #3 reaches for the hidden shotgun. But Jack is too fast for him. Again - WHAM! This time the shot is to Teller #3's arm. He erupts into sobs.

Jack walks over to him slowly. Leveling the gun to his head, he presses his foot to the bloody wound.

JACK
Out of time folks.

FLASHBACKS AND EXPRESSING TIMES:

Doug lays down to sleep.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK:

EXT. CITY STREET CORNER, LONDON - NIGHT

Doug walks through the sick fog of a London city street.

Expressing Time in the SLUG LINE:

EXT. CITY STREET CORNER, LONDON - NIGHT, 3:30AM

Expressing Time in the ACTION LINE:

Doug looks at his watch.

INSERT WATCH: "3:30 AM"

Expressing time as Character Generated text on screen

CG: "Tuesday, 3:30."

TEXT ON SCREEN: "

Other time SLUG LINE time indicators: CONTINUOUS, LATER,
and SAME TIME

USING **SUBHEADERS** TO CHANGE ROOMS IN A SINGLE LOCATION

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Doug is pacing back and forth as Sarah sits with her arms
crossed on the couch.

Doug exits to the kitchen.

DOUG (O.S.)
I can't believe you did that.

SARAH
It doesn't mean anything.

DOUG (O.S.)
It means something to me.

Sarah also exits to-

THE KITCHEN

Sarah joins Doug at the sink washing dishes.

or, using a SLUG LINE TO CHANGE ROOMS (this way is a little clunky, because this is really one scene that moves through two locations):

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

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Sarah also exits to-

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sarah joins Doug at the sink washing dishes.

USING SUBHEADERS TO SHOW A MONTAGE

MONTAGE OF:

- Rocky punches slabs of beef in a giant freezer
- Micky coaches Rocky as he does push-ups.
- Rocky chases a chicken down a dirty ally as Micky watches
- Rocky sprints down the beach during sunrise

SHOWING A CHARACTER CHANGE IN AGE

DANNY, a 10 year old boy, ...

DANNY, now a 30 year old business man.

could also refer to them as 10 YR-DANNY, and 30 YR-DANNY

3 KINDS OF PARENTHETICAL/ PERSONAL DIRECTIONS**1) ON THE SAME LINE:**

To clarify *where a voice is coming from*.

Off-Screen and Voice-Over indications are always abbreviated--(O.S.), (V.O.)

JAMES (V.O.)
I was a dead man. I knew I
wouldn't live through the day.

Or (TV) or (RADIO) if the dialogue is being broadcast.

REPORTER (FROM T.V.)
A body was found floating in a pool
in Hollywood Hills...

2) PARENTHETICAL/ PERSONAL DIRECTIONS UNDER THE DIALOGUE LINE:

To *clarify who the Receiver of dialogue is* when it isn't clear.

OFFICER
(to crowd)
C'mon now, pack it up. Show's over.
(to Jackson)
Follow me.

3) PARENTHETICAL/ PERSONAL DIRECTIONS UNDER THE DIALOGUE LINE:

Or *to show an action that happens WHILE* a line is spoken.

OFFICER
(handing him a ticket)
Have a nice day.

PHONE CALLS: #1 SHOWING BOTH PEOPLE

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

DANNY paces around the room, talking to his wife SARAH on the phone.

DANNY
(on phone)
Don't hang up on me!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah sits on the couch doing her nails.

SARAH
(on phone)
Then stop saying that.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION:

DANNY
(on phone)
Well I want to settle this now.

SARAH
(on phone)
Why can't we deal with that when I
get back?

PHONE CALLS: #2 SHOWING ONE SIDE

INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

DANNY paces around the room, talking to his wife SARAH on the phone.

DANNY
(on phone)
Don't hang up on me!

SARAH (V.O.) **OR** (O.S.)
Then stop saying that.

DANNY
(on phone)
Well I want to settle this now.

SARAH (V.O.)
Why can't we deal with that when I
get back?