

Don't Write Your 1st 3 Pages Until You Do These 3 Things



How to Get Literary Managers, Agents, and Execs to read to the end

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PART II: CUT

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MFA Screenwriting from AFI

- Award-winning screenwriter and podcaster
- **Top 20** Final Draft Big Break Screenwriting Contest Quarter Finalist, 2023, *Family/Animated*
- Published Non-fiction Author
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What's in store...

- How to cut dialogue that doesn't support the story



BLONDE AMBTION

CUT the dialogue

- Parentheticals references

3.

MADONNA 23, immediately averts her green eyes, hiding her tired face behind a gruff pout, boyish haircut, and order pad. Swimming in an ill fitting uniform, we can still appreciate her unconventional beauty. But one thing is for sure, she couldn't be further from the vestiges of "fuck-me pop stardom" we associate with her today.

MADONNA

What, am I supposed to know you?

The Bitchy Ballerinas exchange looks, then:

BITCHY BALLERINA #2

(to Ballerina #1)

Wait, *the* Madonna who Alvin threw out of the company?

BITCHY BALLERINA #1

(To Ballerina #2)

Oh no, she quit, remember? To be a "dancer" in Prague or was it Paris?

BITCHY BALLERINA #3

(to Madonna)

I heard it was Paris - Burlesque, right?

The girls laugh amongst themselves while DEMITRI, her sleazy shift manager, watches her like a hawk. She needs this job.



TEST
EACH
LINE

CUT the dialogue

- That drop off into a one word

Poor Things - Final Cut

3.

FOP 1

May I ask what is the purpose of putting them back in sir?

Baxter looks up. Considers him.

BAXTER

My amusement. Mr Max McCandles!

Everyone is startled.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Walk with me at the end of the lesson.

6

EXT MEDICAL SHOOOL LONDON HALLWAY DAY

6

Max is staring at a portrait of a very serious looking man, handsome, in a suit. "Barret Baxter. Our founder. 1842." Baxter appears and passes right by him walking in a quick pace. Max struggles to keep up.

BAXTER

Your paper.

MAX

You liked it sir?



TEST
EACH
LINE

CUT the dialogue

- That doesn't advance the story

HELEN MIRREN (V.O.)

Yes Barbie changed everything! Then she changed it all again!

We go through all the changes to Barbie Margot, as she moves through the decades.

HELEN MIRREN (V.O.)

All of these women are Barbie, and Barbie is all of these women. She might have started out as just a lady in a bathing suit, but she became so much more.

We see a row of Barbies. As we move back we see that "Barbie" is a EVERY different kind of woman -- every profession, every ethnicity, every body shape, every different ability and every gift. As we pan by each one, we hear:

HELEN MIRREN (V.O.)

She has her own money, her own house, her own car, her own career. Because Barbie can be anything, women can be anything.

We see a Map with Barbie Land on it and a long red arrow is drawn across a split screen to the Real World.

HELEN MIRREN (V.O.)

(triumphantly)

And this has been reflected back onto the little girls of today in the Real World.



TEST
EACH
LINE

TOP GUN: MAVERICK

CUT the dialogue

- That doesn't reveal theme or genre

HONDO
Darkstar, Control loud and clear,
how me?

MAVERICK
Loud and clear. Ready for APU
start.

HONDO
You know Mav, you don't have to do
this.

MAVERICK
I know what happens to the program
if I don't.

(alt)
I know what happens to everyone
else if I don't.

(alt)
Everyone loses their job if I
don't.

(alt)
They'll scrap the whole program if
I don't.

(alt)
Alright sweetheart, one last ride.

HONDO
Cleared APU start.

Mav presses the APU START button and the left engine whines.

MAVERICK
Good start.



TEST
EACH
LINE

RAISING DION

CUT the dialogue

- That doesn't say the character's tagline

RAISING DION - Ep 101 - "Pilot" - Studio Draft (01/17/18) 1.

OVER BLACK:

NICOLE (V.O.)
I always knew you were special...

FADE IN:

CLOSE ON THE FACE OF 7-YEAR-OLD DION, bright and curious; eyebrows cocked as he considers the move he's about to make. Dion takes a deep breath, then runs full tilt until...

HE IS FLYING THROUGH THE AIR in SLO-MO.

We catch his expression of pure joy against the backdrop of the blue sky.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- ABSTRACT IMAGES ALL FROM NICOLE'S POV:

A WOMAN'S ARMS reach up into frame from below, waiting --

NICOLE (V.O.)
I know, everyone thinks their kid is special but...

DION'S SMILE grows wider as he looks down.

NICOLE (V.O.)
...You're mine.

THE ARMS WAVE to him -- 'Come this way...'



TEST
EACH
LINE

THELMA AND LOUISE

CUT the dialogue

- That doesn't state a character's emotional state (how they "see" life: angry, sad, happy, anxious)

THELMA
He already thinks you're out of your mind, Louise, that don't carry much weight with Darryl. Are you at work?

LOUISE (V.O.)
No, I'm callin' from the Playboy Mansion.

THELMA
I'll call you right back.

Thelma goes through the living room to the bottom of the stairs and leans on the bannister.

THELMA
Darryl! Honey, you'd better hurry up.

DARRYL comes trotting down the stairs. Polyester was made for this man, and he's dripping in "men's" jewelry. He manages a Carpeteria.

DARRYL
Damn it, Thelma, don't holler like that! Haven't I told you I can't stand it when you holler in the morning.

THELMA
I'm sorry, Doll, I just didn't want you to be late.



TEST
EACH
LINE

TOP GUN: MAVERICK

CUT the dialogue

- Of secondary characters

12 CONTINUED: CHERRY 11.25.19 - OFFICIAL 2.
12

Maverick finishes his breakfast, stands, pats the P-51 with affection as he passes her on his way to the workbench.

REVEAL: CLOSE SHOTS of Mav's surroundings (as he dresses in b.g.): TROPHIES and AIRSPEED RECORDS, PHOTOS of a younger Maverick, with ICEMAN, at Ice's wedding, with GOOSE, CAROLE and their young son BRADLEY. Mav with that same boy as a TEEN.

He opens a cabinet lined with jackets. He pulls one out, wrapped in plastic, saved for special occasions, it seems. He rips the plastic off revealing patch laden leather that's been around a long, long time.

Mav passes a calendar, the date marked in red:

MACH 9 TODAY

He walks past a COLLECTION OF MOTORCYCLES, a beaten up old Pepsi machine, stops at one bike under a tarp. Revealing a familiar '86 KAWASAKI NINJA.

CLOSE ON: Aviators and a set of keys by a helmet.

He takes the keys and sunglasses, leaves the helmet...

13 EXT. HANGAR - DESERT ROAD

13



TEST
EACH
LINE

Next up...

**I'll show you how to craft
your 1st three pages using
top-tier persuasive writing
techniques.**



1st Three Pages

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