

Mastering the Playscript: A Guide for Young Dramatists

Learning objective: To identify and understand the structural features of a playscript, including stage directions, character names, and dialogue.

Read the front of each flashcard carefully to test your knowledge of how playscripts are written. The answer is provided after the vertical bar. Use these to help you write your own scene for Max the Monkey's next theatre production!

What is a playscript?

A written document that tells the story for actors to perform on stage, including lines to speak and instructions for movement.

What are stage directions?

Instructions written in brackets or italics that tell the actors how to move, look, or feel, rather than what to say.

Where do you write the character's name when they are about to speak?

On the left-hand side of the page, usually followed by a colon or a full stop, to show who is talking.

Why do we use parentheses () in a playscript?

To enclose stage directions so the reader can easily distinguish between spoken dialogue and actions.

What is the purpose of a 'Cast List'?

A list at the beginning of the script that introduces all the characters appearing in the play.

What is the difference between an Act and a Scene?

An Act is a large section of a play, while a Scene is a smaller part of an Act that usually takes place in one specific location.

What is 'dialogue' in a playscript?

The actual words spoken by the characters to one another during the performance.

Explain why stage directions are essential for a director.

They provide vital context about the atmosphere, mood, and physical actions that the playwright envisioned for the performance.

Compare and contrast a playscript with a storybook.

A storybook uses descriptive prose and narration, while a playscript uses character names and stage directions to focus on performance.

What might happen if a playwright forgot to include stage directions?

The actors would not know how to move, what props to hold, or what emotions to show, making the play confusing for the audience.

Justify your answer: Why is it important for character names to be clearly formatted on the page?

It allows actors to quickly scan the page to find their lines and understand the flow of the conversation during rehearsals.

What does a 'Setting' description tell the reader at the start of a scene?

It describes the time, location, and visual environment of the stage, helping the audience imagine the scene.