

Mastering the Stage: Playscript Mastery

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

Read each question carefully. Use your knowledge of dramatic writing to transform narrative scenes into professional scripts, ensuring you include essential layout features.

In this exercise, you are the playwright. Remember that a playscript is a set of instructions for actors. You must use a colon after the character's name and include stage directions in brackets to describe how an actor should speak or move.

Word bank: stage directions · dialogue · setting · character · italics · brackets · colons · performance

1. Max the monkey is explaining a complex maths problem to Pip the caterpillar. Write a short script segment between them. Include one set of stage directions to show Max's enthusiasm. (3 marks)

2. Explain why playwrights use italics for stage directions. Why is it important for these to be visually distinct from the spoken dialogue? (2 marks)

3. Nova the owl is stargazing and notices a shooting star. Rewrite the following sentence as a playscript line: 'Nova gasped, pointing her wing towards the North Star, and whispered, "That is the brightest one I have ever seen!"' (3 marks)

4. Compare and contrast a playscript with a narrative story. What information is lost if you remove the stage directions from a script? Justify your answer. (4 marks)

5. Imagine Leo the lion is preparing to give a brave speech to his friends. Write two lines of dialogue where the first is spoken 'confidently' and the second is spoken 'nervously'. (3 marks)

6. What might happen if a playwright failed to use colons after character names? How would this affect the actors during a rehearsal? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a diagram of a theatre stage from a bird's-eye view. Label the 'stage directions' areas, such as Upstage, Downstage, Stage Left, and Stage Right, and place a small sketch of Kit the fox standing in the centre.



Extension challenge: Compose an original scene (approx. 150 words) featuring Ellie the elephant and Bea the honeybee discovering a historical map. You must include at least four different stage directions that dictate tone of voice, physical movement, and interaction with a prop.