Info Guide

STORY DOCUMENTS

STORY DOCUMENTS – DRAMA

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Introduction

There are numerous types of short documents that shape a screen production - Synopses, Treatments, Outlines, Bibles; all means of succinctly communicating your story and ideas outside of just the screenplay. Very often we see these documents as a means of 'selling' the idea to networks, financiers, producers, or funding bodies. But the truth is that these documents are a vital part of the development process, not just an end result. Great ideas are not born – they are tested and crafted.

For funding applications to Screen Australia applicants are required to provide a range of documents that best reflect the project and the intention of the creators. But importantly these documents are tools to incrementally improve and refine an idea, to identify its strengths and highlight its challenges.

Many projects have stagnated or failed because of a flawed concept or weak story, which no amount of drafting can fix. Good short documents can make the process of defining your core concept and strengthening the story around it much more effective.

That said, there can be a great deal of variation and debate about what is meant by terms such as Treatment, Bible, Scriptment, Outline, Scene Breakdown, and Synopsis, so this document is designed to help define some of these terms, offer practical advice and examples for writing them, and serve as a guide for how to better prepare your application.

The modern screen industry is one of diverse platforms and formats. Gone are the simple days of just feature length movies and TV time slots. The contemporary landscape of production, supported by Screen Australia, encompasses all the traditional forms whilst also including online series, interactive media, cross-platform projects, and virtual reality productions. Yet, whilst these forms all have their unique properties and challenges, they also share a common narrative basis. The definitions and tips in this guide are intended to apply to a wide variety of media - feature, short, episodic, and interactive - by focusing on common narrative elements and the clarity of the Core Concept.

Core Concept

Whilst Screen Australia doesn't require a 'Core Concept' document as part of your application, the criteria by which we assess projects means that we holistically look for the underlying Core Concept in the project you submit.

An idea in isolation does not necessarily lay the foundations for a viable production. It is important that short form documents are built on a solid base of thinking and planning. Whilst writing is an organic and evolving process, unless the 'core concept' is identified, tested, resolved for the project's stage of development, and dramatically viable, projects are at risk of stagnating in development, particularly from less experienced writers and teams.

Three important things for you as a creator to consider are;
- Do you have a distinct point-of-view? Does the story channel something human and truthful?
- Do you have a clear and rich theme centred on meanings and ideas that deeply engage and fascinate you?
- Do you have a sense of your audience and how your story will emotionally resonate with them?

Certainly viewers engage in a well-executed plot and character actions, yet deeper engagement and meaning come from an audience's investment in the themes of the story and how it expresses the underlying core concept. This is both 'the hook' that attracts others to your work, and also the essence of what you as the creator bring to the project - your reason to make it.

Synopses

Simply put, synopses are the most succinct versions of your story, paring away the detail to cut right to the heart of your idea. However synopses do come in different flavours and here we'll define the three most common and useful; the one-sentence *Logline Synopsis*, *One-Paragraph Synopsis*, and *One-Page Synopsis*.

Logline Synopsis

If you're caught in the proverbial elevator with the golden moment chance to pitch your project to a financier with large bags of money, this is the version of your story to have written down and memorised; one that will take no longer than 15 seconds to say.

There's an art to writing a good Logline that encapsulates in one sentence the essence of your project, but it shouldn't be confused with a 'Tag-Line'. A Tag-Line is simple, pithy and evocative (the famous tag for *Alien* comes to mind - *"In space no one can hear you scream"*) but this isn't the same as a Logline, which aims to contain crucial substance and detail. A Logline may be very short but it still has to tell you something of the story.

The heart of the Logline Synopsis is often referred to as the Premise but what that really means can vary. Perhaps a more direct term to use is 'Problem'. In presenting a dramatic problem the Logline often contains the Scenario (and inciting incident that sets the story in motion), the dramatic action (what the characters are compelled to do) and the consequences of failure (the stakes of the story).

In other words… *When Something Happens, Someone Has to do Something or Else…* In many ways this simple template alone can be useful as a starting point to develop your logline. Once you have those basics in place you can begin to modify and shape the logline to give a sense of place, genre and themes.

For example, the Logline for political thriller series, *Secret City*;

"Beneath the placid facade of Canberra, amidst rising tension between China and America, senior political journalist Harriet Dunkley uncovers a secret city of interlocked conspiracies, putting innocent lives in danger including her own."

In this example we have the place and its particular quality (Canberra's placid facade) we have a main character and something about them (a senior female journalist), we have the macro-level tension (China vs America), an inciting incident (uncovering a secret), the dramatic action (reveal a conspiracy), and the stakes (innocent lives).

We see a similar idea of the Problem as central to the Logline in the Scandi-noir series, *The Bridge* logline.

This Logline focuses on the unique place (the border between two countries) and the problems inherent in sharing jurisdiction to solve a murder.

Loglines for series might also place emphasis on an ongoing character dilemma as the dramatic problem. In the example of UK series *River* the Logline centres on a character with a contradictory problem - that the detective is brilliant but haunted.

Similarly a high-concept genre series might use the Logline to present the unique dramatic problem of the storyworld. The logline for *Cleverman* for example;

"In the very near future, creatures from ancient mythology must live among humans and battle for survival in a world that wants to silence, exploit and destroy them."

In all these examples we can see that the common denominator is a 'dramatic problem' - Journalist with a Conspiracy, Police with a Jurisdiction dilemma, Detective who is Haunted, Mythological creatures being Exploited. Distilling and articulating that driving problem of your story is crucial to a good Logline. It should be specific, clear and engaging - not abstract.

In a feature film project with, commonly, a single contained story, the Logline will most often articulate a more definable and singular goal. For example, the feature film *The Proposition*:

"A lawman apprehends a notorious outlaw and gives him nine days to kill his older brother, or else they'll execute his younger brother."

This example encapsulates the problem that is the heart of the drama and embodies a single specific playable action for a protagonist - something the character has to do to solve a problem with high stakes.

With stories that have lower physical stakes but deal directly with emotional stakes the Logline can appear quiet different and yet still embody the same principles. For example, the Logline for the feature film *Somersault* puts emphasis on the conflict of an internal character journey:

"A teenage girl runs away from home, hoping to find herself through love, but the people she meets are as lost as she is…"

Or in the case of an ensemble story with multiple character points of view the Logline might seek to express what sets all the character stories in motion. A good example can be seen in the feature film *Lantana*:

"The relationships of four couples unravel after the discovery of a young woman's body in Lantana bush in suburban Sydney."

Here a very short and simple sentence manages to land together the theme (tangled relationships), the problem (relationships unravelling), the place (Sydney suburbs) and the inciting incident (discovery of a dead body).

The same principles also extend to short form and online series. The 6x15min ABC series *F*!#ing Adelaide* has a Logline synopsis that clearly connects Place, Problem and Stakes;

"Close but disparate siblings reunite in Adelaide but when they discover their mother is selling their childhood home, their middle class freedoms and sense of security is rocked and they are forced to confront a past that none of them can let go of."

For a more long-running episodic series such as a Sitcom (situational comedy), the Logline might need to focus on the repeatable and returnable scenario and characters

- the sustainable engine of the storyworld rather than an individual plot line. Australian series *Please Like Me* puts focus on the thematic engine of the show and one that can potentially spawn numerous storylines connected to a binding idea (in this case 'growing up'):

"Josh has had it up to here with things ending but as he faces an empty house, coupled-up friends and a flagging love life that even a threesome can't seem to fix, he may have to face the idea that it's time to grow up."

There's no true one-size-fits-all approach with Loglines, and many resources for learning how to write them tend to be very feature-film centric, which is often problematic for episodic series projects that have different objectives and structures. But in all these examples the principle of embodying the 'problem' of the story in the clearest sense is a good place to start.

In any medium, the aim is to encapsulate the shortest most succinct version of your story, one that frames what an audience will be compelled to care about, but which is also evocative enough to drive interest to want to read more. Ultimately the Logline is a creative tool that is used to both focus your idea and spark interest in others.

One-Paragraph Synopsis

The One-Para Synopsis extends on the Logline to give more specifics of Who, What, and How, whilst still being short and to the point. Where the Logline can be somewhat a tease, the one-para synopsis needs to embody some specific detail.

Like the Logline, the One-Para can vary greatly in expression depending on whether it is for a feature, episodic, or an interactive project, but there are general rules of thumb to help shape them. In principle the One-Para should encompass:

• Genre and theme (how it feels and what it's really about)

• The forces in opposition (conflict of who's against who?)

• The goals and stakes of the drama and its characters, (what they want and what's at risk)

• What sets the story in motion (the inciting incident and potential escalations).

This is not to say the One-Para Synopsis attempts to tell the story as a plot, and different projects might place the emphasis in different areas. For example, the one paragraph for the feature-film *The Boys* emphasises the story's thematic concerns:

"Brett Sprague is released from jail and returns home to a family he feels has disintegrated in his absence. His attempts to dominate his brothers, his brothers' girlfriends, his own girlfriend and his mother by violence and the assertion of masculine solidarity result in the alienation and escape of the women. Finally, Brett leads his brothers in an act of revenge on one anonymous female, the scapegoat for their failures as men."

The One-Paragraph Synopsis of the feature film *Rain Man* outlines the premise from the protagonist's point-of-view and gives a sense of the film's structure.

Even in online series where episodes are typically shorter, or in high-concept genre shows predicated on a big 'what if' scenario, we can see the same mechanics to distil the story experience. For example *Wastelander Panda,* which is both a high-concept sci-fi story and a short form web-series:

"One of the last pandas in the Wasteland, Isaac has grown up fighting alongside his family in the militaristic Tribe of Legion. After an inexcusable crime sees him banished, along with his mother and brother, Isaac sets out to find a young girl – his only chance of reinstating his family to the safety of the Tribe. In the desperate and savage world of the Wasteland, Isaac loses himself to violence, treachery and deceit. Betrayed during a disastrous raid, he flees with the child named Rose, hoping to reach his family before mercenaries track him down. But Rose, his prize, is not what he expects, and Legion may not be the right place for him after all."

In this paragraph we get a sense of the main story beats, the clear goal and stakes, and a hint of the thematic ideas of redemption and 'finding your place'.

While a feature film One-Para Synopsis might aim to show the arc of the story, an ongoing series needs its One-Para to demonstrate the sustainability of the idea and its ability to be an ongoing engine of many stories, potentially over many seasons. The high school comedy series, *Freaks and Geeks* uses the One-Para Synopsis to connect to audience and themes more than plot whilst still embedding the core source of dramatic and comedic tension.

Once again, there's no set formula for a good One-Paragraph Synopsis and different genres and formats will demand different emphasis. But the principles of including these four main elements tend to be useful as a skeleton that allows for a lot of custom variation:

• Genre and themes
• Forces in opposition
• Goals and stakes
• Inciting incident

You should be prepared to write your One-Para Synopsis many times over, each time refining and clarifying. Write different versions with different emphasis and test them on people to see which one is the most compelling. The important thing is to use these documents as tools to develop an idea, not just an end result of a development process.

One-Page Synopsis

The One-Page Synopsis, or One-Pager, is both a document to present a confident sense of your project's form and substance, while at the time being the primary 'pitch' document aiming to encourage readers to want to see more.

The One-Pager can differ widely in style even more than other synopses depending on the medium - feature, series, online, or interactive. But the heart of any One-Pager goes beyond the 'problem' of the story and into the specifics of a particular Dramatic Question and how it evolves the story. This Dramatic Question is fundamentally what the audience are asking as they watch, active in their mind as the reason for them to keep watching, and embedded in plot, character and thematic elements. As such, the One-Page Synopsis seeks to flesh out that Dramatic Question into characters, escalation, dilemmas, and stakes.

In a feature film project where the storyline is largely singular and contained the One-Page Synopsis should convey a clear sense of structure - the major steps of the story from beginning to end that specify the turning points in a cause-and-effect chain, which reveals the ending. A typical form of this would include:

- the setup and thematic idea of the story
- the inciting incident
- the actions the characters have to take
- the major obstacles in their way
- the climax
- the ending – both in terms of plot and emotional character journey.

However, in a serial drama where story is more complex and plays out over 6-10 episodes (or more) the One-Pager likely can't contain plot detail and it's often not helpful to try and cram it in. Instead of illustrating structure a TV series One-Pager might focus on how the character narratives play out against the main thematic idea of the story - the setup, the major choices the characters will have to make, the ongoing and escalating stakes, and the themes that will be explored within that storyworld.

Genre too can also have a big impact on the shape of the One-Pager. A high-concept genre such as a sci-fi or supernatural series might put emphasis on the concept and the unique storyworld, where as a crime drama might focus the major revelations of the procedural investigation.

A good example can be seen in the One-Page introduction of *Stranger Things* (which was originally entitled *Montauk*). We get a main focus on genre and tone whilst adding intros to the main characters, their goal, and a sense of the escalations that will stand against them as the story progresses.

Alternatively, if the project is a series with self-contained episode stories, like a sitcom or children's series, then the One-Pager might start with the series' inciting incident – defining the storyworld and the setup from which the show will extend from. For example, the British teen-drama series, *Press Gang*, deals with a school newspaper and its One-Pager focuses almost solely on the backstory that sets up the premise of the show - how the newspaper came to be and how the misfit characters are forced to take the job of running it.

If the project is an interactive narrative, such as VR, then as well as working with the above ideas, the One-Pager should identify the active role of the audience (what they must do in the story and how they do it) and articulate the audience's agency.

Different formats, mediums and genres - as well as the unique properties of the creative idea - will shape the One-Page Synopsis differently. But the common element for all is the clarity of the dramatic question that will compel the audience, and the unique circumstances that will engage them.

Outline

An Outline takes the longer narrative storylines of your project and fleshes them out to encompass the major plot and character turning points.

Self-contained episodic series like sitcoms generally don't have need of a dedicated Outline document as it would only serve to show the story of a single episode rather than the series. Such projects are better survived by a Synopsis and Bible with episode summaries. But projects with long-arc stories that develop over time (feature films and serialised drama) often require a more detailed outline document (generally 4-12 pages) that expand the One-Page Synopsis.

The Outline incorporates motives, demonstrates cause and effect, and shows the design of the narrative as it unfolds on screen. As such, the Outline places a greater demand on the writer's storytelling skills as it needs to demonstrate how the core concept plays out through the structure and how the character's trajectory dramatises the theme.

In writing the Outline, it may be helpful to break down the story into sequences. Writing a list of key scenes, for example, may make it easier to bracket scenes together into blocks to see how they build.

To this end there are fundamental components an Outline should be structured around to frame a story. The first is the Dramatic Question - establishing for the reader a clear sense of what the audience are asking? Drama and Comedy is fundamentally based on Characters in Action to solve Problems so a good outline will establish from the start (in cinematic and dramatic terms) what the Dramatic Questions of the story are - which is to say, give the reader a clear sense of anticipation and a desire to know what happens next.

From there, the Outline's job is to show how that Dramatic Question is progressed and ultimately resolved. In a broad sense this is driven by three things - Escalations, Revelations, and Reversals.

- *Escalations* are added problems, events or situations that make the character's actions more difficult or that raise the stakes.

- *Revelations* are new pieces of information that shift a character's goal and/or change the audience's perspective, or are milestones of emotional character development and transformation.

- *Reversals* are major surprises and abrupt changes of direction. They are often connected to story climaxes, dramatic darkest-hours, or major plot twists. Fundamentally they represent significant power-shifts within a story or a substantial change in the power balance between characters; the way they see the world or the audience sees them.

What this all means is that when we talk about outlining the major Turning Points of a story, what we're really referring to are these elements of Escalations, Revelations and Reversals. The plot for any story is often more complex than what can be fit into an outline, so the skill is knowing what is crucial to include and what can be left out. A good Outline is in many ways a very practical document, aiming to break down the story into its building blocks of cause-and-effect and defining sequences that build through Escalations, Revelations, and Reversals.

Treatment

Treatments are a type of development document that is mostly used for feature films. Whereas TV and online series projects rely on a Bible and episode summaries to convey the project, feature films often make use of a Treatment that sets out the dramatic and cinematic way you intend to 'treat' your story in terms of style and unfolding narrative.

Treatments for a feature film are generally between 10 and 20 pages and expand on the One-Page Synopsis and Outline to deliver a document that is more detailed but also focused on being a 'selling' document – intended to convince a reader that there is a cinematic story worth telling and the writer has a firm grasp on how to tell it.

In terms of style, a Treatment aims to give the reader a semblance of the experience they would have watching the film as an audience. If, for instance the film intends to shock, the reader will ideally be shocked, if it's intended to move, thrill, confront, enlighten and so on, then the aim is to create that impact on the reader. Most importantly, a treatment should describe the action or plot of your story, in the order in which it unfolds. All the key structural beats should be covered, and the character's journey should be apparent. As a longer document, the treatment will also include subplots, indicating how they integrate, and reverberate, with the main plot. It should also convey mood and tone.

Below is an extract from the treatment of the feature film, *Lantana*. It is written in a fluid style with a clear tone and describes what the viewer is experiencing as it unfolds, even while wrangling multiple points of view:

"When Leon gets home – late – he is guilty and anxious. He lies about where he's been. Sonya knows something is wrong – and he knows she knows – but she says nothing. Next morning, Leon is out jogging, driving himself, proving that he does not have a bad heart – or perhaps courting disaster. He runs smack into another man – a stranger. Leon abuses him, but then is shocked when the man cowers and weeps. At home, hurt and smeared with the other man's blood, Leon cannot bring himself to describe this glimpse of male vulnerability; he lies to Sonya, claiming he fell.

At work, he lies to Claudia too: he says he hit his head on the clothesline. Claudia makes it very clear that she won't cover for Leon with Sonya again. Exasperated (and lonely herself), she berates him for putting his marriage in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, Valerie has another session with her patient Patrick. She has difficulty remaining objective and finds his description of his gay lover's wife disturbing. She finds herself identifying with this woman and compelled to defend her… Later, she tries to broach her uneasy feelings to John, but he blocks discussion, guesses that Valerie is judging Patrick and advises referral to another therapist…"

You can see here the key element of a Treatment in being written in the present tense and in a cinematic way, confining the prose to only what can be seen and heard by a viewer. Treatments rarely stray into stating either context or subtext, they are in essence a summary of the viewing experience, showing rather than telling.

The Treatment for the seminal sci fi film, *Terminator*, also shows the cinematic present-tense potential of this kind of document.

Something to be conscious of is that the more complex the plot, the more detail you may want to go into. But the more mechanical 'explaining' that's included, the less likelihood of the reader staying engrossed in the story.

Some screenwriters say they hate writing treatments, and they can be limiting and difficult, but they also demand discipline. In the script, the reader may be beguiled by a beautifully written scene or witty repartee, for example, but in the treatment a writer can only rely on events in the developing narrative.

Scriptment

A scriptment is part script, part treatment - a hybrid between a prose presentation of the story and the inclusion of key dialogue scenes. It is usually more detailed than a treatment but not so much as a full script.

In a scriptment, scenes and shots may be separated as paragraphs or sentences and can also include some explanatory notes. Scenes and dialogue that is more developed is presented formatted as a regular screenplay.

Kriv Stenders used a Scriptment to create the feature film *Boxing Day* and in the example below you can see the mix of style that on one hand is succinct and summarising the scene, but at the same time includes the key scenic ideas and moments.

SCENE 3 : 5 MINS (Running time = 10 mins +)

The loud "thud, thud" sound of a car stereo, as a car pulls up outside.

CHRIS and ALAN's conversation is then interrupted by a loud knock on the door.

CHRIS opens the door to find their friend OWEN, obstreperously drunk and holding a case of beer. OWEN invites himself inside, and starts unloading the beers in the kitchen fridge. The tension inside the house rises dramatically.

It soon becomes clear that CHRIS, ALAN and OWEN are all old friends, and that OWEN is still struggling with his alcoholism.

From the way CHRIS and ALAN act, they are intimidated by the dangerous OWEN and his manner towards them indicates that at some point in the past, he was the leader. As they talk there are allusions to their criminal pasts.

OWEN announces that he has come to spend the afternoon with CHRIS and to keep him company.

We also now learn that CHRIS' wife, DONNA has left him and taken his two young sons with her.

CHRIS is clearly uncomfortable, he promised himself not to touch a drop, and anyway it's strictly forbidden under the conditions of his house detention. When did that ever stop CHRIS, challenges OWEN provocatively. "It's fucking Christmas."

This section on scriptment draws on the research of Dr. Alex Munt - Screenwriting research – Stenders in Munt 2008, Senses of Cinema

Scriptments may also be used to showcase important visual aspects of the story, and include illustrations, concept art, photographs etc. They may be suited to some filmmakers as a way to express their style of storytelling and what will make their project special.

A Scriptment isn't appropriate for every project, but it may be a very useful development document if the project needs a mix of summary and detail to effectively communicate its potential.

Bible

Used for episodic projects - both web and broadcast, and also in some forms of interactive projects - a Series Bible is a master document that combines together synopses with episode breakdowns, character descriptions, visual elements, as well as summaries of format and style.

A Series Bible can be a complex document but it's important to note that Bibles can come in different forms to serve different purposes. Broadly speaking we might call these a Development Bible and a Production Bible.

A Production Bible is largely used when a show is commissioned and serves as a unifying document for production, to inform other writers and members of the creative team the show's over-all intentions. On long-running shows over multiple seasons a Production Bible is a means to collate key information on storylines and characters. When searching Google for examples of Bibles you are more likely to find these kinds of documents which are very long and very detailed.

However, when you are developing a new idea and proposing it for funding and commissioning, the more applicable type is the Development (or Pitch) Bible which is much more succinct and focused. Whilst it is specific, showing the full scope of storylines, scenarios, characters, themes, the genre and tone of the show, it should not be an excessively long document.

It is common practice for networks and agencies investing in TV, SVOD, and web series projects to commission a Bible as part of the early stage - oftentimes a Bible together with a Pilot Script.
Like with all story development documents there can be much variety in what goes into the bible, but as a framework there are **nine** main areas to consider (defined below), which look to make up an overall document that is about 10-15 pages in total length.

1. Logline:
As with the earlier breakdown your bible should include - and likely lead with - the Logline to encapsulate your story idea.

2. One-Page Synopsis: (1 page)
A succinct single page presenting a confident sense of your projects' concept and story-engine, and aiming to encourage readers to want to read on.

3. Genre, Concept, and Themes: (1 page)
This includes the 'what if' scenario of your story, what makes it unique, and importantly, what it's really about – what themes does it explore, what bigger-picture questions does it pose, and what are it's unifying elements? Moreover, the genre of the show should be clear and connected both to creative ambitions as well as practical market awareness.

4. Setting and Storyworld: (1-2 pages)
The unique world of the story and its particular pressures and forces in opposition. The idea of a clearly defined storyworld is as important for an intimate domestic family drama as it is for high-concept space opera. In episodic stories it is the world that is often the major returnable element for the audience and a Bible should define your storyworld's unique properties and appeal. Ask what problem in the storyworld effects all characters? What are the rules that define the world? What can and can't happen? What groups and communities exist? What social, historical, cultural, and political beliefs dominate? What does it 'feel' like? What's the tone of the storyworld? The storyworld is in many ways the engine of the series, so it needs to be a world that is dramatically and/or comedically sustainable.

5. Format: (1 page)
This defines not only the number of episodes and their duration in a given season of your series, but also should encompass the rhythms and patterns of episodes. Is it a serial-drama telling long-arc stories that unfold incrementally? Is it a self-contained series where each episode tells and resolves a story unto itself? Is it some hybrid of the two with both micro and macro story arcs over episodes and seasons? And what is the typical shape of an episode? Does it have a definable or repeatable pattern? This is all part of considering the format of your show and it should, if possible, be connected to specifics of audience, networks, and market platforms. Is it for SVOD or broadcast? Is it for online? Is it for an older or younger audiences? What are its antecedents or references? Where does your show sit in the wider market?

6. Characters: (1-2 paras per character)
Short summaries of the major and significant minor characters are important to demonstrate that the series is sustainable. Unlike feature stories many episodic series don't always rely on character transformation and change. Some shows, such as sitcoms, have characters transform and reset in each episode (e.g. *The Simpsons*). Others have characters that are constantly tested to transform but never do, always resisting and resetting (e.g. *The Office*, or *Rake*). Other shows have very long transformative arcs where characters evolve slowly over many seasons (e.g. *Breaking Bad*). Whatever the format or type of show, the way you describe your characters in the Series Bible should reflect their ongoing struggles, their emotional complexity, their contradictions and their problems in a concise summary.

See the example on characters from the Bible for The Wire. You can see that each character description, whilst only five lines long, describes not only who the character is but also suggests their trajectory over the course of the series.

7. Episode Summaries (1-2 paras per episode)
This section defines individual episodes and their role in the larger story. For a sitcom or self-contained episodic show these summaries serve as a short description of the setup of that episode's scenario and its story arc (sometimes we call these Episode Springboards). In a serial drama with continuing storylines, the episode summary should indicate the specific escalations and revelations in that episode that contribute to the major storyline.

See the example from comedy series *Scrubs* (which has both episode and series level story arcs) you can see the summary first identifies in point form the A, B, and C storylines, then encapsulates the major revelations and comic actions in two succinct paragraphs.

8. Look and Feel: (2 pages w/ images)
Bibles can often be very visual documents including concept art, diagrams, and reference images. The Look and Feel section of the Bible is an opportunity to articulate the visual elements of the show, describing its appearance and the concepts behind how it will present on screen.

9. Creators Statement (1 page)
Finally, you might choose to include a Creator's Statement in the Bible, a chance to state clearly both the creative ambitions of the project as well as your personal connection and motivations in making it.

There are no hard rules about exactly how a Bible should present or what it should include, but the guiding principle is that it should leave the reader with a clear and holistic sense of what the show is, what it's about, and its ongoing potential. A Bible is both creative and practical, it should speak to the show's ambition just as it should speak to its viability and market potential. Be clear and succinct, don't waffle, and make it exciting and dynamic to read.

Scene Breakdown

A Scene Breakdown can be a fairly technical document to read, but it can also be crucial in providing a skeleton version of the story and a clear structural map for the whole script.

A Scene Breakdown is literally a scene-by-scene outline of the entire screenplay, which presents a step-by-step summary of each scene in prose.

It can be along the lines of a 'one-liner scene list' or an expanded 'beat sheet' with a few sentences or one short para for each scene. This is also sometimes known as a 'step outline'. Some Scene Breakdowns might also be laid out under act headings.

Some writers choose to put their one-liners on index cards so they can shuffle them around and try different configurations, as more of a working Scene Breakdown. Many writing software packages offer an 'index card' tool to allow for virtual cards to be arranged and colour coded, all of which can then be compiled into a more traditional-looking document as a Scene Breakdown.

Scene Breakdowns might also include notes on dialogue, character development, dramatic actions, and points of change. From this they can be a valuable way to check scene order and to eliminate repetitions, red herrings, dead ends or superfluous scenes - allowing writers to check that each scene is 'earning its keep'.

Many important choices can be made at Scene Breakdown stage, for example about point of view, timing of information, reveals, setups, payoffs, surprises, and character trajectories.

In a TV writers' room, Scene Breakdowns are often required to be submitted to the Script Editor or Story Producer to be approved before going to draft. Similarly for a funding application a Scene Breakdown maybe a valuable document to prove the story is ready to go to draft.

Scene Breakdowns should be seen as important creative blueprints that help solve problems and determine the most effective ways to express the narrative and themes.

Further Reading and Resources

Aronson, Linda, The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide To Writing Tomorrow's Films
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Field, Syd, Screenplay: The Foundations Of Screenwriting
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