

Scriptwriting Tips

Write for the ear instead of the page (Right-hand side of script sheet)

1. Use the active voice.

For example: “Check library catalog for books” instead of “The Library catalog should be checked for books.”

2. Put statements in positive form.

For example: “add a Boolean operator” instead of “don’t leave out the Boolean operator.”

3. Omit needless words and keep it conversational.

For example: “your goal is to get five good articles for your research project” instead of “the goal of the outstanding student is to get a reasonable number of journal articles in order to write a good research project.”

4. Read it out loud (or record it and listen).

Listen for timing, believability, transitions, information flow, and conversational style.

Write for the eye instead of the page (Left-hand side of script sheet)

1. Write with an emphasis on pictures.

Avoid verbal dominance (wall to wall text). Write in cues that direct the viewer to the visual information.

2. Show camera shots and scene content.

Include titles, music and fadeouts. Be specific about camera shots (close up, wide shot, etc)

3. Include people in situations

For example, rather than showing just a bookshelf, show someone locating a book on the shelf.

In General:

1. Capture the viewer’s attention during the opening shots.

Demonstrate the importance of the topic through teasers, action, mystery, questions.

2. Use pauses and transitions

Leave pauses in narrative and in visual pacing so viewers have a chance to reflect.
Include transitions between a change in location or topic.

3. Keep it short and to the point. An ideal length for an instructional video is 3-5 minutes. A single shot shouldn’t last more than about 6 or 7 seconds.

4. Continually place yourself in the position of the audience.

Consider what must be included to deliver the message and accomplish the objectives.