

American Association of Community Theatre

AACT NewPlayFest Script Formatting Guide

These guidelines are designed for Microsoft Word or a similar word processing program.

Do NOT put the name of the playwright anywhere in the script or in the properties of the digital file.

Put the name of the play on every page.

Standard Format. The text of the play should be in standard play format, which looks professional, makes reading easy, and provides an estimation of run-time. If using screenwriting software, please note that its default settings are not necessarily standard play format.

Basics. Use standard one-inch margins. All text should be single-spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman or an equivalent font. Pages need to be numbered, except do not number the title page, pages with character list, etc. Page one should be the first page of the play.

Put the name of the play next to the page number: Play Title 15

When separating characters' lines or longer stage directions, double space. Song lyrics should be in ALL CAPS, indented .5". (Musicals may not be submitted, but a play might have one or more songs included.)

Cover Page. The cover page should contain Title, Subtitle, and Copyright notice (if applicable).

Cast and Setting. After the cover page, there should be a brief cast of characters, as well as time and place notes. Character names, ages, genders, and any short but important physical characteristics, or other description belong here. If doubling is possible, it should be mentioned here, as well.

Acts and Scenes. Each new act and/or scene number should be center justified. The act should be written in ALL CAPS and roman numerals, while the scenes should be in capital and small letters, a double space below and underscored, as follows:

ACT II
Scene 6

You should include a description of the setting and activity at the beginning of each scene. These can be simply designated by the terms "Setting" and "At Rise." An act or scene end should be noted, with "Blackout," "Curtain," etc. The end of the play should also be noted.

Dialogue and Direction. When a character is speaking, his or her name should be either centered or set 3.5" from the left edge of the paper in ALL CAPS. Any other brief direction (one-word) can also go on this line in parentheses. Longer directions belong on the following line in parentheses, 1.5" in.

JOHN (laughing)

Text would go here. Emphasis may be indicated by *italics* or underlining.

OR

JOHN

(Tosses keys across room while laughing)

If you have longer directions, move to the next line. With the same indentation.

(JANE walks across room to pick up keys. She shakes
some dust from them and unlocks the door.)

Then continue dialogue after one space. Note that characters' names in directions are in ALL CAPS. Stage directions should begin 1.5" from the left margin and stop 1.5" from the right margin.

Simultaneous dialogue should be placed side-by-side, spaced to start and end at the same place on the page. Trailing off should be indicated with ellipsis (...) whereas being cut off should be indicated with a dash.

An example of a properly formatted cover page and a play in standard play formatting is included below.

PLAY TITLE

Sub-Title and/or Genre Description

A copyright would be placed
here if there is one.

Play Title

Cast of Characters

JOHN DOE: 45 years old, a university professor.
JENNIFER DOE: 42 years old, a caterer, John's wife.
JANE DOE: 20 years old, a student, John and Jane's daughter.

Place

The Doe Home in Maplewood, New Jersey

Time

Late Fall

Set requirements: single set, interior

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: This is where you describe what is present on the stage, such as furniture, doors, shape of the space, etc.

At Rise: This is where you describe the action taking place when the lights are brought up on the stage, such as: John is discovered sitting in a chair. Jane is looking out the window.

JOHN (Patiently.)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

JANE

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

(Enter JENNIFER, left.)

JENNIFER

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXX.

JANE

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

JENNIFER

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX...

(Song: "EVER THE LADY")

XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX XXX XX
XXXXXXXXXX XXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, etc.

JOHN

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXX.

JANE

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

JOHN

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX!

(Exit JOHN, left.)

