

Dictation Questions for Screenplay Development

Courtesy of www.scribblejerk.com

You don't need to answer all or even any of these questions before you get to work. If you're good to go, then go for it. The answers to these questions don't need to be well-written or understandable by anyone other than yourself. Everyone has their own process. You do you.

At this stage of development, my process is dictation. If that sounds interesting, I suggest blathering your answers into Google Docs, Google Recorder (Only on Pixel), Otter AI, or any other speech-to-text software you like. You can also incorporate the questions and/or your answers into a prompt for an LLM like Claude or Chat GPT to facilitate your process in other ways. Whatever it takes to get you off page one and cranking out material. Happy scribbling!

Screenplay Brainstorming

Answering these questions can help you brainstorm and narrow down the genres, concepts, and themes you want to explore in your screenplay, setting a strong foundation for the development of a unique and compelling story.

- What are your favorite movie genres, and what draws you to them emotionally and intellectually?
- Are there any specific genres or subgenres you feel passionate about exploring in your screenplay?
- What are some of your favorite films or TV shows within your chosen genre(s), and what elements make them stand out to you?
- Are there any particular stories, characters, or themes within your preferred genre(s) that you feel are underrepresented or that you'd like to put your own unique spin on?
- What personal experiences, interests, or passions do you have that could inform or inspire a compelling story within your chosen genre(s)?
- Are there any specific social, cultural, or political issues that you feel strongly about and would like to explore through the lens of your chosen genre(s)?

- What are some universal human experiences, emotions, or conflicts that resonate with you and that you'd like to delve into through your screenplay?
- Are there any particular settings, time periods, or environments that fascinate you and that could serve as an interesting backdrop for your story?
- What are some unique or unconventional ways you could combine or subvert genre tropes to create a fresh and engaging story?
- What are some of the core values, beliefs, or life lessons that you'd like to convey through your screenplay, and how could these themes be effectively explored within your chosen genre(s)?
- Are there any specific types of characters or character dynamics that you're drawn to and would like to develop within your story?
- What are some of the most compelling or memorable scenes, sequences, or set-pieces you can envision within your chosen genre(s), and how could these moments serve as anchors for your overall story?
- What emotional journey do you want to take your audience on, and how can your chosen genre(s) and themes facilitate this experience?
- Are there any particular storytelling techniques, structures, or styles that you'd like to experiment with in your screenplay, and how could these choices enhance your genre, concept, and themes?
- What are some potential obstacles, challenges, or risks associated with your chosen genre(s) or themes, and how could you approach these in a way that feels authentic and respectful?
- How can you use your chosen genre(s) and themes to say something meaningful or thought-provoking about the human condition or the world we live in?
- What are some ways you could inject your own unique voice, perspective, and creativity into your chosen genre(s) and themes to make your screenplay stand out?
- Are there any particular audiences or demographics that you'd like to reach or impact with your story, and how can your chosen genre(s) and themes resonate with them?
- What are some potential sources of inspiration or research that you could explore to deepen your understanding and authentic portrayal of your chosen genre(s), concepts, and themes?

- How can you balance your creative vision with commercial viability and audience expectations within your chosen genre(s) to create a screenplay that is both artistically fulfilling and potentially marketable?

Style & Tone

These questions will ensure that all aspects of your script work together to create an engaging and cohesive story that resonates with your intended audience.

- What is the primary genre of the screenplay (e.g., action, drama, comedy, horror, sci-fi, thriller, romance)?
- Are there any secondary genres that blend with the primary genre to create a unique tone and style?
- What specific subgenre or genre combination best describes the screenplay (e.g., romantic comedy, sci-fi thriller, action-adventure)?
- What are three to five existing movies or TV shows that have a similar tone, style, or genre blend to your screenplay?
- How would you describe the overall tone of your screenplay (e.g., gritty, lighthearted, nostalgic, irreverent, suspenseful)?
- On a scale of 1-10, how serious or dramatic is your screenplay, with 1 being entirely comedic and 10 being entirely serious?
- What is the balance between humor and drama in your screenplay, and how does this balance contribute to the overall tone?
- Are there any specific comedic elements, such as slapstick, witty banter, or situational irony, that are prevalent in your screenplay?
- On a scale of 1-10, how intense or action-packed is your screenplay, with 1 being very slow-paced and 10 being non-stop action?
- How does the pacing of your screenplay, including the balance of action and dialogue, contribute to its overall style and tone?

- On a scale of 1-10, how much sexual content is present in your screenplay, with 1 being no sexual content and 10 being extremely explicit?
- How does the level of sexual content align with your screenplay's genre, tone, and target audience?
- Are there any specific visual or narrative techniques you plan to use to depict sexual content, such as fade-to-black or suggestive camera angles?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much violence is present in your screenplay, with 1 being no violence and 10 being extremely graphic violence?
- What type of violence is most prevalent in your screenplay (e.g., gun violence, hand-to-hand combat, psychological torture), and how does this contribute to the overall tone and style?
- Are there any specific visual or narrative techniques you plan to use to depict violence, such as quick cuts or off-screen implications?
- How does the level and type of violence align with your screenplay's genre, tone, and target audience?
- What is the overall visual style you envision for your screenplay (e.g., stylized, realistic, gritty, glossy, retro)?
- Are there any specific cinematography techniques, such as unique camera angles, lighting, or color grading, that will contribute to your screenplay's visual style?
- How do the tone, genre, level of humor, sexual content, violence, and visual style work together to create a cohesive and compelling narrative experience for your target audience?

The Story

Dictate a general overview of your screenplay's story, ensuring that all elements – including theme, character arcs, plot, structure, and emotional resonance – work together to create an engaging and meaningful narrative experience for your target audience.

- What is the central theme or message of your screenplay? What do you want the audience to take away from the story?

- How does the protagonist's character arc reflect and support the central theme of the story?
- What is the primary conflict or obstacle that the protagonist must overcome, and how does this relate to the theme?
- What are the stakes for the protagonist if they fail to achieve their goal or overcome the central conflict?
- How does the antagonist's goal or motivation directly oppose the protagonist's, and what does this reveal about the theme?
- What is the inciting incident that sets the story in motion and propels the protagonist into the main conflict?
- What are the key plot points or turning points that occur at the end of each act, and how do they shift the direction of the story?
- What is the midpoint of the story, and how does it raise the stakes or introduce a new complication for the protagonist?
- What is the climax of the story, and how does it represent the ultimate confrontation between the protagonist and the central conflict?
- What is the resolution of the story, and how does it tie together the theme, character arcs, and plot threads?
- How does the story's structure (e.g., linear, non-linear, episodic) contribute to the overall narrative impact and theme?
- Are there any subplots that support or parallel the main plot, and how do they intersect with and reinforce the central theme?
- What is the role of each supporting character in the story, and how do their actions and relationships impact the protagonist's journey?
- Are there any recurring symbols, motifs, or visual elements that reinforce the theme or emotional arc of the story?
- How does the story's setting or time period contribute to the conflict, theme, and overall narrative?

- What is the target audience for your screenplay, and how does the story's content, theme, and structure align with their expectations and preferences?
- Are there any specific cultural, social, or political issues that your story addresses or reflects, and how do these elements enhance the theme and relevance of the narrative?
- What is the emotional tone or mood that you want to maintain throughout the story, and how do the plot, character arcs, and theme contribute to creating this overall emotional experience for the audience?
- How does the ending of your story leave the audience feeling, and what specific emotions or thoughts do you want them to walk away with?
- What makes your story unique or fresh within its genre, and how can you highlight these elements throughout the narrative to keep the audience engaged and invested?

The Hero/Protagonist

From basic attributes and background to inner conflict, growth, and thematic relevance, these questions can help you create a well-rounded, compelling protagonist that anchors your screenplay and engages your audience.

- What is your protagonist's name, age, occupation, and personal background?
- What makes your protagonist unique or interesting? Do they have any special skills, quirks, or defining characteristics?
- What is your protagonist's primary goal or desire in the story? What do they want more than anything else?
- What is the main obstacle or conflict preventing your protagonist from achieving their goal? Is it an external force, an internal struggle, or a combination of both?
- What is your protagonist's main flaw or weakness? How does this hinder them in their journey?
- What is your protagonist's greatest strength or asset? How does this help them navigate the challenges they face?
- What is your protagonist's character arc? How do they change or grow over the course of the story?

- What is your protagonist's backstory? What key events or experiences have shaped who they are at the beginning of the story?
- What is your protagonist's motivation? Why do they want to achieve their goal, and what drives them to keep going in the face of adversity?
- How does your protagonist react to pressure or stress? Do they rise to the occasion or crumble under the weight of responsibility?
- What is your protagonist's primary fear? How does this manifest in their actions and decisions?
- What is your protagonist's main moral dilemma? What difficult choices or ethical quandaries will they face?
- How does your protagonist relate to the other characters in the story? Who are their allies, enemies, and love interests?
- What is your protagonist's worldview or philosophy? How does this influence their actions and interactions?
- What is your protagonist's voice and dialogue style? How do they express themselves verbally?
- How does your protagonist's appearance reflect their personality and backstory? What key visual elements define them?
- What specific mannerisms, habits, or behaviors does your protagonist exhibit that reveal their inner workings?
- What is your protagonist's fatal flaw? What mistake or misjudgment could lead to their downfall?
- What is your protagonist's moment of truth? When do they have to make a critical decision that will determine their fate and the outcome of the story?
- How does your protagonist embody the theme or message of the story? What universal human struggle or experience do they represent?

The Villain/Antagonist

Delve into the psychological, interpersonal, narrative, and thematic dimensions of an effective Antagonist/Villain to ensure they are not a one-dimensional obstacle but a fully realized character with clear goals, motivations, and conflicts that drive the story forward and challenge the Protagonist in meaningful ways. Every Villain is the Hero of their own story. Don't judge.

- What is the Antagonist/Villain's name, age, occupation (if relevant), and physical description?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's primary goal or motivation? What do they want to achieve, and why?
- How does the Antagonist/Villain's goal directly conflict with or threaten the Protagonist's goal?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's backstory? What key events or experiences have shaped their worldview and driven them to pursue their goal?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's philosophical or ideological belief system? How does this justify their actions in their own mind?
- What specific skills, resources, or advantages does the Antagonist/Villain possess that make them a formidable opponent for the Protagonist?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's primary weakness or vulnerability? How might this be exploited by the Protagonist?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's relationship to the Protagonist? Are they strangers, former allies, or intimately connected in some way?
- How does the Antagonist/Villain's presence or actions create conflict and obstacles for the Protagonist throughout the story?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's character arc, if any? Do they change or evolve over the course of the narrative, or do they remain steadfast in their goals and beliefs?
- What tactics or strategies does the Antagonist/Villain employ to achieve their goals? Are they more overt or covert in their approach?
- How does the Antagonist/Villain's dialogue and behavior reflect their personality and intentions? What specific verbal and nonverbal characteristics define them?

- In what ways does the Antagonist/Villain serve as a dark mirror or foil for the Protagonist? How do they reflect or contrast the Protagonist's own flaws, fears, or desires?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's moment of ultimate confrontation or defeat? How do they respond when faced with failure or the collapse of their plans?
- Are there any redeeming qualities or moments of humanity for the Antagonist/Villain, or are they purely malevolent?
- How does the Antagonist/Villain's defeat or downfall impact the Protagonist and the story world as a whole? What are the consequences of their actions?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's visual iconography or symbolic representation? How can their appearance, environment, or associated imagery reflect their inner nature?
- In what ways does the Antagonist/Villain embody or subvert archetypal villain tropes or conventions specific to the genre of the screenplay?
- How does the Antagonist/Villain's presence or influence create a sense of tension, suspense, or dread throughout the narrative?
- What is the Antagonist/Villain's ultimate fate or resolution? Do they receive punishment, redemption, or something more ambiguous?

The Scene

Key elements like character, conflict, structure, dialogue, and visual storytelling are essential to crafting an effective screenplay scene. These prompts will guide your dictation process and ensure your scene is dynamic, purposeful, and engaging. You're gonna need a lot of these.

- Who is the point of view character in this scene? Whose perspective are we experiencing the scene through?
- What is the main conflict in this scene? Is it an internal, external, or interpersonal conflict?
- How does the scene begin? Is there an immediate sense of tension or conflict?
- What is the setting of the scene? Where and when is it taking place?

- Who are the characters in the scene? What are their goals and motivations?
- What is the main character's objective in the scene? What do they want to achieve?
- What obstacles does the main character face in pursuing their objective? How do these obstacles create conflict and tension?
- How does the main character react emotionally, physically, and verbally to the obstacles they face?
- What tactics does the main character employ to try to overcome the obstacles and achieve their objective?
- How do the other characters in the scene respond to the main character's actions? Do they help or hinder?
- Is there a power dynamic at play between the characters? How does this influence their interactions?
- What is the subtext of the dialogue? Are characters saying one thing but meaning another?
- How does the scene escalate the conflict or stakes? Is there a turning point or revelation?
- What is the resolution of the scene, if any? Has the main character achieved their objective or faced defeat?
- How does the scene end? Is there a clear button or transition to the next scene?
- What is the overall tone and mood of the scene? How can this be conveyed through description, action, and dialogue?
- Are there any key visual elements or actions that are essential to the scene?
- Is there an opportunity to reveal character through action or dialogue in this scene?
- How does this scene fit into the overall narrative structure? What is its function in moving the story forward?
- What is the emotional impact you want this scene to have on the audience? How can you achieve this through your writing?

The Sequel

These questions can help ensure that your Sequel is not merely a passive reaction but an active, dramatically relevant bridge between Scenes that deepens character, theme, and plot.

- What is the emotional aftermath of the preceding Scene for the main character? Are they triumphant, defeated, confused, or somewhere in between?
- How does the main character process the events of the Scene? Do they reflect, regroup, or react emotionally?
- What new understanding or realization does the main character come to as a result of the Scene's events?
- Does the main character have a moment of introspection or self-reflection? What internal conflict or dilemma are they grappling with?
- How has the main character's perception of the situation or other characters changed as a result of the Scene?
- What are the logical consequences or repercussions of the Scene's events? How do they affect the main character and the story world?
- Does the main character interact with any supporting characters in the Sequel? If so, how do these interactions illuminate or influence the main character's emotional state or decision-making process?
- Are there any key pieces of information or exposition that need to be conveyed in the Sequel?
- How can this be done in an organic, dramatically relevant way?
- What new goal, motivation, or plan of action does the main character formulate in response to the Scene's events? How does this set up the next Scene?
- Is there any necessary setup or foreshadowing that needs to be established in the Sequel for future scenes or plot developments?
- What is the overall tone and mood of the Sequel? How does it contrast or complement the preceding Scene?

- Are there any visual metaphors, motifs, or symbols that could be incorporated into the Sequel to deepen the thematic resonance?
- How does the Sequel contribute to the main character's overall arc and development? What new facet of their personality or background is revealed?
- What is the pacing of the Sequel? Is it a moment of quiet reflection, a burst of emotional turmoil, or somewhere in between?
- How does the Sequel end and transition into the next Scene? Is there a clear line of cause and effect?

The Sequence

These questions regarding the dramatic, visual, emotional, and structural components that make up a compelling Sequence can help ensure that your Sequence is dynamic, purposeful, and integral to the overall narrative flow of your script.

- Consider the dramatic, visual, emotional, and structural components that make up a compelling Sequence. Ensure your Sequence is dynamic, purposeful, and integral to the overall narrative.
- What is the main dramatic event or action setpiece that will be the focus of this Sequence?
- How does this Sequence fit into the overall structure and pacing of the screenplay? Is it the Inciting Incident, the Midpoint, the Climax, or another key turning point?
- What is the primary goal or objective of the main character(s) in this Sequence? What are they trying to achieve or overcome?
- What are the stakes of this Sequence? What hangs in the balance for the characters and the overall story?
- What is the central conflict or obstacle that the main character(s) must face in this Sequence? Is it an external threat, a personal challenge, or a moral dilemma?
- How does the setting or location of the Sequence contribute to the drama and spectacle? What unique challenges or opportunities does the environment present?

- What is the initial setup or context for the Sequence? How are the characters and situations introduced?
- What unexpected twist, complication, or escalation occurs during the Sequence that raises the stakes or shifts the direction of the action?
- What specific action beats, stunts, or set pieces will be featured in the Sequence to create excitement, tension, and visual interest?
- How do the characters' choices and actions in the Sequence reveal their true nature, test their resolve, or force them to confront their weaknesses?
- What is the emotional journey of the main character(s) throughout the Sequence? How do they react and adapt to the unfolding events?
- Are there any critical character interactions or dialogue exchanges during the Sequence that deepen relationships or reveal key information?
- What is the pacing and rhythm of the Sequence? How do you balance moments of intense action with beats of suspense, anticipation, or character development?
- What is the climax or turning point of the Sequence? How does the main action or conflict resolve, and what are the immediate consequences?
- What is the emotional aftermath of the Sequence for the main character(s)? What have they learned, gained, or lost as a result of the experience?
- How does the resolution of the Sequence set up the next stage of the story? What new questions, challenges, or opportunities does it introduce?
- Are there any visual motifs, recurring elements, or foreshadowing that can be incorporated into the Sequence to create thematic resonance or narrative continuity?
- What is the intended audience reaction or take away from the Sequence? What do you want viewers to feel, think, or anticipate as a result of this narrative unit?
- How does the Sequence showcase the screenplay's unique tone, style, or genre elements as a whole?
- What is the transition or bridge that connects the Sequence to the following Sequel? How do you create a sense of flow and cohesion between these narrative units?