



STYLE SHEET: “STANDARD AMERICAN FORMAT”

Please use the following guide to make sure your script is in **STANDARD AMERICAN FORMAT** before you send it to the Young Playwrights Contest. Questions? Call City Theatre at (412) 431-4400. Scripts must be typed, on one side of the page only, and bound in the upper left hand corner with a single staple.

Give your play a title. → THE FORMAT 1

In your character list, put the character names in boldface type and give some description of each of your characters. → Characters
John, a friendly 8th-grade budding playwright.
Laura, John’s friend, who also likes to write plays, but doesn’t know Standard American Format.
Mrs. Davis, their teacher, who got them involved in the Young Playwrights school workshops and wants them to enter the contest.

Under the character list, describe the setting of the play in as much detail as possible. → Setting: The play takes place in a classroom. Upstage is the door. Through it we can see into the hall. Desks are arranged in neat rows.

Stage directions should be enclosed in parentheses and indented from the left margin. Don’t write the stage direction on the same line as the dialogue—start a new line for the stage direction, even if it occurs in the middle of a character’s dialogue. → Act I, Scene 1
It is after school. Laura is alone. She sits at a desk, working intently on her play. John runs in from the hall.

Always list the name of the speaker above his/her dialogue. This “character heading” should be centered on the page in all capital letters. → JOHN
(Hopping onto the desk beside Laura’s.)
It was a great idea to work on our plays together after school. The deadline for the Young Playwrights Contest is coming up soon.
(He takes out his play from his backpack.)

LAURA
(Frowning, perplexed by her work.)
John, do you know how to format a play in Standard American Format?

JOHN
Mrs. Davis gave me a style sheet we can follow.
(Takes out the style sheet from his backpack.)
It’s a guide on how to set up your script before you send it to City Theatre.

LAURA
(Her mood brightens.)
Great! I really want to enter my play in the contest. Imagine how exciting it would

Number the pages in the upper right hand corner, to make certain that your pages don’t get mixed up or lost. → 1

List ALL of your characters at the beginning of the script, with the “Characters” heading centered and underlined. → Characters



The beginning of a new scene should be marked, with "Act" and "scene" headings centered and underlined. Act numbers are indicated by Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.); scene numbers by Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.).

Unlike the character heading (the name above the dialogue), the dialogue itself should NOT be centered. It should be aligned with the left margin of the page.

If stage directions continue for more than one line, remember to indent the entire stage direction.

2

be to have your play selected for production by the professionals at City Theatre!
(John and Laura settle down to work on their plays.)

Act I, Scene 2

It is the next morning, before school has started. Mrs. Davis is in the classroom looking over her lesson plans in preparation for the school day. Laura and John enter.

LAURA

Mrs. Davis, I'm so glad you copied the Standard American Format style sheet for John. I was able to finish my play last night and it's all ready to send to City Theatre.
(She proudly shows her completed play to Mrs. Davis.)

JOHN

And mine should be done by the weekend!

MRS. DAVIS

If either of you receive a City Theatre production, we'll organize a field trip for the other 8th-graders to see your play performed!

LAURA

Even if we don't win, a trip to see the winning plays would be fun, especially since we had a City Theatre workshop leader teach us playwriting in school this year.

JOHN

I hope you've signed our school up for playwriting workshops again next year, Mrs. Davis. I already have a new idea for a play, and I liked hearing my friends' plays.

MRS. DAVIS

(Laughs.)
Well, you don't need to wait until next year to write your new play! But City Theatre Young Playwrights will be back in our school next year—I've already signed us up.
{ (John and Laura start to express their excited approval but are cut off by the bell. They exit, running off to class.)

Give a brief description under the Act/Scene heading of anything a reader needs to know, as your scene begins, to be able to picture the scene in his mind.

Make it easy for your reader to read your script. Make sure to double-space between one character's dialogue and the next, and after such things as the character list and the Act/scene headings (or the scene description that follows the Act/scene heading).

But within a single character's name heading, dialogue, and stage directions, the lines should be single-spaced.

A couple other tips: Type your script—do not hand-write it. Leave margins of at least one inch all around your pages. Type on one side of the paper only. And ALWAYS double-check for spelling and other errors, and ask someone else (such as your teacher or a parent) to proofread your work for you, too.