

Screen Writing Conventions

A major character is introduced. What does he look like?



Ext: We can see the ramshackle pier of an English Seaside town. It is raining lightly it is a miserable, unhappy day.

A bird's eye shot sweeps over the pier, picking out a few rain-sodden tourists hiding under awnings, walking miserably, etc. We are introduced to Brian, an unhappy father contemplating the direction his life has taken.

A C.U. of Brian drawing hard on the end of the cigarette. This shot is uncomfortably intimate, making the spectator feel uncomfortable. He is not an attractive man, so this shot makes us feel sorry for him but at the same time perturbed that we are being shown his face so closely. He exhales smoke.

We don't need camera instructions in a screenplay

Brian (V.O.)
A day at the seaside was not what I'd had in mind.

How are these effects on the spectator created? Shouldn't this be saved for the cinematic ideas?

C.U. of fingers holding cigarette butt over railing. It is allowed to fall. This is a metaphor for the sadness he is feeling.

L.S. of Brian from behind. His five- year old child runs into view.

Child
Daddy, it's raining

Low angle M.S. of Brian from child's P.O.V. We see he is a loving father but understand his sadness.

Brian
It's good.
(He says this without enthusiasm, telling us that this is an ironic moment.)

(201 words)

This could be written with more economy
It is also too instructive



Time of day? Lighting cue?

Ext: The ramshackle pier of an English Seaside town. It is raining lightly.
Sound: Seagulls; faint music from a fairground carousel.

Aerial long shot sweeps over the pier picking out a few rain-sodden tourists hiding under awnings, walking miserably, etc. A lone figure in an unfashionable jacket of blue and grey checks, black jeans and dirty trainers can be seen leaning over the railing, smoking.

Extreme, uncomfortable C.U. of Brian drawing hard on the end of the cigarette. His balding, ginger hair is long at the back and his complexion is pockmarked. He exhales smoke.

Brian (V.O.)
A day at the seaside was not what I'd had in mind.

Is it hard to separate dialogue from directions? How can we SEE that he feels uncomfortable?

C.U. of fingers holding cigarette butt over railing. It is allowed to fall. The shot follows the butt's progress towards the water until it is extinguished.

L.S. of man from behind. A 5 year old child with ginger hair runs into view.

Child
Daddy, it's raining

Low angle M.S. of Brian from child's P.O.V. He smiles faintly

Brian
It's good.

How can we make this more user friendly for a director, cast and crew?

(169 words)

It is raining lightly. A burst of seagulls fills the air. Faint music from a fairground carousel.

From above we pick out a few rain-sodden tourists hiding under awnings, walking miserably, etc.

BRIAN, A lone figure in an unfashionable jacket of blue and grey checks, black jeans and dirty trainers can be seen leaning over the railing, smoking. His balding, ginger hair is long at the back and his complexion is pockmarked. He draws hard on the end of the cigarette and exhales smoke. Pause for a beat. Brian sighs.

We see Brian's fingers hold the cigarette butt over the railing. It falls and we follow the butt's progress towards the water until it is extinguished.

Behind Brian, **BARRY**, a 5 year old child with ginger hair runs into view.

Barry

Daddy, it's raining

Brian

(smiling faintly)

It's good