

Writing the Fact-Based Screenplay... The Essentials

Who is the story about?	Who is the main character (protagonist)? Why are they interesting?
<p><i>For example: In Moneyball (2011), the main character is Billy Beane, a failed Major League Baseball player who's now the general manager of the Oakland As baseball team.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
What do they want / need?	What is the practical goal driving the story? What emotional need underpins the story? These elements make up the central story thread and character arc .
<p><i>For example: Billy <u>wants</u> to build a winning baseball team on a budget using the innovative "Moneyball" method of picking players. He <u>needs</u> to win to make up for failing as a player.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
What's the theme?	In other words, what attracts you to the story? This is likely to inform the theme/s which add extra depth to the script.
<p><i>For example: Moneyball's themes include winning/losing; tradition vs change; the ethics of money in sport.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
What kind of conflicts will the protagonist face?	What kinds of obstacles will make it hard for the character to get what they want. Other characters (including the antagonist)? Internal flaws? External forces? (Hopefully all three)
<p><i>For example: Billy's obstacles include the challenge of picking players on a low budget, as well as Art (the team coach); the Oakland As' owners; and the "old school" scouts – all of whom resist the Moneyball method. Internally, his hatred of losing is both a strength (committed) and a weakness (stubborn).</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
What about subplots?	Most scripts include at least one subplot, which underlines the theme, provides a counterpoint, or complements the main plot.
<p><i>For example: In Moneyball, there is a subplot involving Billy's young daughter, with whom he shares custody with his ex-wife.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
What research is needed?	What types of research are required to bring your story to life? Is the research feasible for you to carry out?
<p><i>For example: Moneyball has defined source material (see below). Other possible research includes interviews with the real-life figures involved and the world of Major League Baseball (circa. 2001/02). Also, how baseball "works" in terms of buying players, putting together a team, and the organizational structure.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	
Are there any rights issues?	Life rights? Copyrighted source material? You don't need to be a legal expert but it's important to be aware of any rights issues which might crop up.
<p><i>For example: Moneyball is based on the non-fiction book, Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game, by Michael Lewis. The rights to the book would have been obtained prior to production.</i></p> <p>Notes:</p>	