

My Play For You

A ten-minute play

By Your Name Here

*(These comments should not be included. The above is centered on the page, in 12 pt Times New Roman font. Some folks use Courier, though that is more common in screenplays. If you're not writing a 10-minute play, you may identify it as a one-act play, or a play in three (or whatever) acts. If you use a pseudonym, use that above. Below, you will have your contact info--using your real name. If you don't have an agent, omit those lines and lower your contact information on the page. Your play has full copyright protection as soon as you write it, so you don't need a copyright notice. There are alternative, acceptable script formats; as long as you use an accepted one for **play manuscripts** (which are different from published scripts), it should be fine. Or just use to be safe.)*

Logline: A playwright gives guidance to another playwright about format.

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My Play For You

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

HE--a down-on-his-luck bum in his fifties or sixties. Wants to avoid notice from others.

HIM--a young, recent Harvard MBA graduate. Oblivious to others until they catch his attention. Efficient and analytical.

*(Note, the items on this page are single-spaced, but a linespace is put between each element. The left margin is 1.5 inches; other margins are 1 inch. Character names are ALWAYS all caps, except when they are spoken by a character. The following element is optional if the play is set in the present.)*

**TIME**

2025, during the first Pence Presidency, early morning on Thanksgiving day.

**PLACE**

A street corner in downtown Akron, OH. Sounds of street traffic, but no pedestrians other than HE and HIM.

*(In a 10-minute play you may begin with the opening stage directions and the subsequent dialogue on the "Character" page. The next block is the opening stage directions.)*

*(Intro Music: Lost at Sea. At lights up, HE is sitting on the sidewalk, leaning against the base of a stop sign. HIM walks hurriedly, his briefcase opening and dumping a pile of scripts onto HE's lap. Note that **opening stage directions** have a left margin of the center of the page.)*

*(HE looks at the scripts. Note that general and character stage directions are **indented 2 inches** from the left margin. This is a general stage direction because it isn't restricted to how one character behaves as he delivers the line. They may also be light or sound direction. Use them sparingly.)*

HE

Hey, what's this?

(HIM tries to take the scripts back from HE, but doesn't want to tear them. HE continues trying to read them, perhaps mumbling the words.)

HIM

(Flustered. *This is a character stage direction. Use them sparingly.* BTW, note that the character names have a left margin of the center of the page, and it's typed in all caps. Keep character stage directions short--no longer than one line. Character stage directions should NEVER include the actions of another character.)

Give those back!

HE

You've formatted them all wrong. (He turns the script right side up. *Occasionally you will need to put a character stage direction within a speech. Do it sparingly.* You can put them in italics. Also, make them short!) And what is this font, Comic Sans?

(HIM takes the script out of HE's right hand, though he still has others in his left.)

HIM

That's not . . . What I mean to say is this. (Pause.) There are several entirely appropriate ways to format scripts for the stage, and--

*(Note that an ellipsis, a pause, and an em-dash are used differently. An ellipsis signifies a trailing off or uncompleted statement. A pause (or beat) signifies a purposeful pause to make a point or for the character to collect their wits or change their line of thought. An em-dash signifies the speaker being cut off. A speaker can cut himself off when he catches a mistake or abruptly changes the topic of speech such as: I love you, Jessi--I mean Margaret. I love you, Margaret.)*

HE

Just because different formats are allowable doesn't mean that if you *do it your way* that you won't look like a noob. Find a reliable source and follow that advice. *(The italics in the last speech signifies that the actor should emphasize those words. Such italics can often avoid character stage directions such as (Sarcastically.) You could also use quotation marks-- "do it your way.")*

HIM

You think you're so smart. Why should I listen to you? You're just some homeless bum.

HE

(With a shrug.)

I have had three plays on Broadway, fourteen regional or off-Broadway productions.

HIM

What are you doing on the street?

HE

Writing plays doesn't make you rich unless your plays are big hits. Or get picked up by hundreds of community theatres. My plays tended to be experimental. And my characters say fuck a lot. That doesn't play well in community theatre.

HIM

So, what advice can you give me?

(A spotlight comes up on HE while the rest of the stage goes dark. Stagehands set a podium in front of HE, who stands before it, clasping the top of the podium. The song, "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," plays softly in the background.)

HE

First of all, to not have characters spout lame dialogue like you just gave me. I'll respond with unrealistic dialogue of my own by listing a few things so we can wrap this script up. Figure on 150-180 words per minute. So, 1500-1800 for a 10-minute play, and start counting words with the opening stage directions. Sometimes you can cram a higher word count into a minute, but make sure it runs within your time limitations. One page per minute is also a rough guideline. When in doubt, do a reading. There are a couple of ways to indicate overlapping speech. One is to use the character stage direction (Overlapping), and another is to use / in the first person's speech to indicate where the second person will start and an / at the beginning of the second person's speech. You can use // to signify the end of the overlapping, though that's used less frequently. For extended bits where characters speak over each other, you can split the page into multiple columns. It's extremely difficult to match things up so that one character says something at exactly the same time as another character says something else. Use the stage direction (Continued) at the end of a page where a character's speech continues, and as a character stage direction on the next page. Finally, keep in mind practicalities--don't require a character to go offstage to the "kitchen" and return a page later dressed in evening wear. And one more thing—

(Fade to black. Outro music: "You're My Hero")