

## The Story Structure of a Play

Once you've decided on the style and length of your play, and the kind of stage design you prefer, you are ready to write your story!

A play can be divided into acts and scenes. This is called *play construction*.

Most plays divide into what has come to be called the three-act structure.

- The first act is the exposition.
- The second act is the complication.
- The final act is the resolution.

So what does this three-act structure mean? It means that, no matter whether you label the divisions in your script acts or scenes, the flow of a good play will roughly be the same.

Logically, though, if you're writing a play that is not meant to have an intermission, it makes sense simply to have scenes. If you expect to have an intermission, put the intermission between two acts. Of course, you could also put an intermission between two scenes, if you prefer.

## The Story Development of the Play

*There are so many ways to approach an idea. A good play usually starts with a catalog of good ideas, dialogue, and other details. They are developed from starting points such as-*

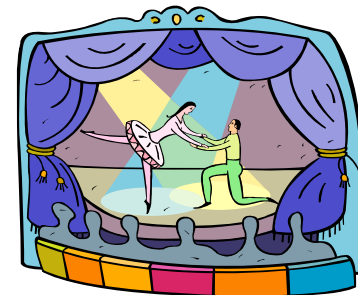
1. Create a world that's true to real life or fantastical or that mixes the mundane with the magical.
2. Write a conflict that builds as the play progresses. Include a beginning, middle, and end.
3. Write characters who want something (which puts them in conflict with other characters), and who try to get what they want at every moment.
4. Make sure that each character has something at stake, a consequence if he doesn't get what he wants.
5. Put the characters under pressure to get what they want right away.
6. Make sure there is a good reason, an "event" for your play. Give your audience some important reason why they should be watching at every moment.
7. Write dialogue that reveals your characters and advances the plot at the same time.
8. Make each character speak in a distinctive voice.
9. Do *not* have a character tell us something he/she can show us instead.

**For more information check out**

**<http://www.playwriting101.com>**

# Producing A Play

## Blending SPACE, STRUCTURE and STORY



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When a playwright begins to write his play, he/she needs to consider more than the story idea. Some plays have complex plots and need to be structured and developed differently than others. In addition, not all theatre spaces can accommodate the physical demands of every production.

In this brochure, we will take a look at play forms and lengths, we will outline theatre spaces generally available, and we will suggest some ways for you to structure and develop your play's storyline.

## TYPES OF PLAYS

Plays come in all shapes and sizes. Here are the most common ones.

### Ten-Minute Plays

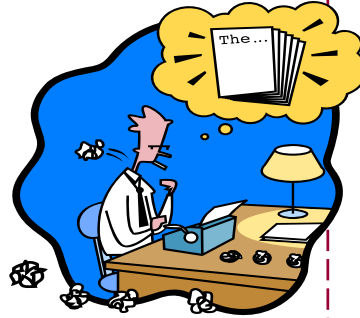
A good ten-minute play is not a sketch or an extended gag, but rather a complete, compact play, with a beginning, middle and end. It typically has one scene, and runs no more than ten pages.



### One-Act Plays

One-acts can run anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour. Usually a series of one-act plays constitutes an evening's performance. These plays usually have a minimal set and few technical demands.

A good one-act focuses on one main action or problem; there's no time to get into complicated layers of plot. It's a good idea to keep your play to one set and as few scenes as possible.



### Full-Length Plays

Full-length plays are long enough to be their own evening, and are anywhere from around seventy or eighty minutes and up. It's always a good idea to write your play so that it can be produced, if necessary, with minimal set and technical requirements.



### Musicals

Musicals can run up to three hours, but are usually between ninety minutes and two hours. A musical includes one or all of the following—singers, band/orchestra members, specialty musicians, and dancers.

## THEATRE SPACES

Not every theatre space is the same, and it pays to be aware of the types of spaces in which your play might be produced. Plays work better in some spaces than others.

**Proscenium**—The actors perform with the audience sitting in front of them. Either the stage is raised above the level of the audience (for example, in many schools), or the seats in the "house" are raked. The farther away from the stage your seat is, the higher you get. Most theaters are prosceniums.

**Thrust**—In this stage configuration, the actors will have the audience on three sides.

**In the Round**—The actors are in the central playing area, and the audience surrounds them on all sides. Actors may enter and exit through the aisles.

**Black Box**—A black box is a performance space that is a black-painted square or rectangle. There is no fixed seating, offering flexibility. The theatre can configure the audience arrangement to match the staging needs of your play, rather than staging your play around the audience.

**Touring**—If your show is going on tour, your play will be performed in the available space—anything from a huge auditorium to a classroom. Keep your sets, props, costumes, lighting and sound demands simple and easily transportable, your play's running time short, and your cast small.