

Screenwriting



Screenplay: the revision mode

From blue to
GoldenRod Revision

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FREE



Introduction

Once a screenplay goes into production, it is now designated as a Shooting Script. Certain features are applied to the script during the entire production process to identify different versions of the script. While these features can be used during the writing process, especially when working with a writing partner, a screenplay with any of these features should never be submitted to a potential producer. This guide will explain the uses of the script revision features and how they are applied.

What's the purpose of script revisions?

The genesis of many of the production features harkens back to the old days when screenplays were printed and distributed among the production cast and crew. With so many draft rewrites, without revision features, it would be difficult to differentiate one draft from the next, causing confusion as to which is the most current. Every time changes were made to the script, pages needed to be reprinted and distributed. Add the cost and logistical issues of printing script pages over and over, a system was devised to save time, money and frustration.

Today, as some scripts may be distributed electronically, these features remain in place. While the cost factor is not as great, it's still important to know which script version is the

most current and which pages have changes made to them by the writer or director.



Most screenwriting software programs like Final Draft® or WriterDuet have revision features under a separate “production” menu. This is so as not to confuse screenwriters writing during the non-production phase of a screenplay. Let’s examine each feature in depth.

Revision colors

The very first script that goes into production is called the White version. While it may have gone into multiple revisions during the pre-production phase, it is considered the same revision-the initial version. This is the version that is

distributed to the entire production's cast and crew at the start of production. It can be sent as a physical screenplay or as PDF.

However, there will be many more changes made to the script over the course of shooting and from this point forward, each newly distributed version will be designated with a different color. The key is "distributed". While there may be a few changes going back and forth between the writer, director and, possibly, the producer, once the script is ready to be distributed, it will be labeled with a new color.

Any changes made on a particular page of the script that is different from the previous version will have a "colored" page to match the revision color. If the script is printed and distributed on physical paper, the color of the new pages will match the revision color, i.e. during the "Blue" revision, the pages will be printed on blue paper.

When the pages are received, the recipients replace the old pages with the new colored

pages. Again, in the days when scripts were more likely to be printed, the paper would have the color of the revision. Now, if the script is redistributed electronically, the program can change the color of the page and a label in the header will note the color version. It is common for a finished production to have multiple colored pages.



Generally, the standard WGA (Writers Guild of America) order of colored revisions after white is:

- Blue
- Pink
- Yellow
- Green
- Goldenrod

After Goldenrod, it can be up to the production as to what colors to use going forward, including Buff, Salmon and Cherry.

The header of these pages will have the color and date, i.e., BLUE REVISION 5/4/2019. Likewise, the title page will also note the color.

Blue Rev. (08/13/18)

3.

Deanna pulls out an ornate bejeweled pouch. DEEP breath as she looks at the glass rectangle.

She wipes a palm to gather blood from her calf. It's a lot.

DEANNA

That's more blood than I needed...

She drips her blood into the pouch.

DEANNA

(whispering into pouch)

Find me the one who can bring justice to the wicked. The one who can right wrongs. The guide of the immoral and the leader of the weak. Find me the Hero of Strength.

*

Deanna pours the powder into her mouth. Holds it there.

More WARLOCK VOICES ECHO down the lava tube. Closing.

She scales the wall of the cavern. It's not graceful. She's struggling, but she reaches the ceiling.

Warlocks stream in. They don't see her. She leaps for the glass rectangle.

Text and scene revisions

She wipes a palm to gather blood from her calf. It's a lot.

DEANNA

That's more blood than I needed...

She drips her blood into the pouch.

DEANNA

(whispering into pouch)

Find me the one who can bring
justice to the wicked. The one who
can right wrongs. The guide of the
immoral and the leader of the weak.
Find me the Hero of Strength.

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*

Deanna pours the powder into her mouth. Holds it there

*

More WARLOCK VOICES ECHO down the lava tube. Closing.

*

She scales the wall of the cavern. It's not graceful. She's struggling, but she reaches the ceiling.

Warlocks stream in. They don't see her. She leaps for the glass rectangle.

*
*

She almost misses. Grabs the bottom edge of it like it's a windowsill-to-nowhere.

The force knocks the wind out of her. Half the powder comes

*

When a writer makes changes to a shooting script, whether it's dialogue that has been added or deleted, or entire scenes omitted, it's important for the cast and crew to easily note those changes. This is where Revision Marks comes in. So, in addition to the various revision colors, revision marks note the specific places

on the page where the changes have taken place. This is usually in the form of an asterisk (*) on the right side of the page next to the changed or omitted line(s). Some productions also place an asterisk in the header to easily find pages with any revision marks.



Some screenwriting software programs like Final Draft® allow you to alter the appearance of the revision mark, changing it from an asterisk to something else (a letter or more frequently the sign #). This is helpful if you want to code the revision. For example, if there are two writers on a project, a revision mark may be changed to a particular writer's initials to differentiate between the two.

Omitted Scenes

Sometimes during production, an entire scene will be omitted as it may no longer be

necessary for the story or may be cut due to budgetary and/or time constraints. The scene will not be deleted from the script. Rather, it will be noted as OMITTED on the page with the scene number intact. This is so everyone knows that there is not a missing scene when the script is broken down for scheduling.



Some screenwriting software programs have an automated process for omitting scenes where they will “hide” the scene and replace it with OMITTED. By “hiding” the scene, it can be easily referenced or restored, if need be.

This leads to a very important element of revising the shooting script.

Locked pages and scenes

Once a shooting script is distributed with a definitive number of pages and scene numbers, those numbers should never change. In other words, if text is added to or deleted from a page, it should never affect the text on subsequent pages. Likewise, a scene omitted or added should not mean all the subsequent scenes should be renumbered. This would create great confusion.

In this case, pages and scene numbers would be “locked.” With a locked page, if you delete text on a particular page, rather than have all the following text repaginate, a blank space is created instead. So it’s possible to have a page that is only half filled with text. On the other hand, if additional text is placed on the page and it spills over to the next page, all

subsequent pages should not be affected.
Instead, an “A” page is created.

Her left foot dangles so close to the lava, her boot CATCHES FIRE. But she heaves herself up and into the rectangle.

She disappears.

Just as the rectangle folds in half and drops into the lava with a pyrotechnic EXPLOS--

Blue Rev. (08/13/18)

3A.

BEEP.

3

Hamburger Helper scans across a check stand.

For example, if on page 25 some additional lines of dialogue are added that don't fit on the standard page, the text would be pushed not to page 26, but rather to a new page, 25A. Once the new version is distributed, the pages are locked again. This means that should text be added to page 25A that spills over to the next page, 25B

would be created. And what if there are pages labeled 25A and 25B on the next locked version and text is added to 25A that spills over to a new page? That page will be 25AA.

For scene numbers, this works in a similar fashion. As stated earlier, a scene number should never change, whether one is omitted or added. If a new scene is added between scenes 5 and 6, the new scene would be 5A. A new scene following 5A would be 5B. A new scene between 5A and 5B would be 5AA.

7	EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY	7
	Trish passes two former coworkers cleaning up the Great Grocery Cart Spill of Ten Minutes Ago.	
	TRISH (on phone) Wait. Evelyn. Please. I'm on my way. What do you mean 'fighting?'	
7A	INT. AIRSHIP DECK - DAY	7A *
	Some text here.	*
7B	EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY	7B *
	Some text here.	*
8	INT. PRIUS - LATER	8
	Trish drives an old Prius that's seen better days. Piles of mail and old fast food bags are everywhere. It looks like a homeless person lives in the front seat.	

Conclusion

While these features may seem confusing at first, they follow a logic that makes for a much smoother production. The most important thing is to use these revision tools so that everyone involved in the production can find changes to the script at a glance. It is often the job of the Script Coordinator to collate and distribute revised scripts, and this is the standard method of isolating changes from one draft to the next. Mastering these features will make their job, and everyone else's, much easier.



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