



22 Ways to Learn & Improve Your Screenwriting

By Hal Croasmun

Whether you are trying to win contests or sell your script, it is important that you take advantage of every opportunity you can to increase your chances of success.

Some people have estimated the odds of a good screenwriter selling a script to be in the neighborhood of 1 in 5,000.

What if you could cut that in half just by one action? Now, you're at 1 in 2,500.

Then, what if you could cut that by 1/5th by taking a series of actions. Now, you're at 1 in 500. And if you continue on that path, sooner or later, you'll get to 1 in 10 or even 1 in 2.

If you don't believe that, let me ask you this: What are the chances of Charlie Kaufman selling another screenplay?

He wrote BEING JOHN MALKOVICH, ADAPTATION, and other screenplays. Would you say that his chances of selling another screenplay are pretty high? Would you be shocked to hear that he sold another script in the next six months? I doubt it.

But if you'd met Charlie Kaufman when he first began writing, wouldn't you say he was right in there with the 1 in 5,000 odds against him?

My point is this: Everyone starts at 1 in 5,000 odds and it is up to us to shift the odds until they are in our favor. Shifting those odds is just a matter of constantly improving and taking advantage of the opportunities that come to us.



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Below is 22 ways to improve your screenwriting. I've started with the most obvious and built to some ideas that are out of the ordinary.

I present this list so you will always have a way to improve your screenwriting, even if you are trapped in your room by yourself with no money and no contacts.

1. Write every day
2. Read produced screenplays and search for what they did well. Read for a contest and see the difference between the winners and the ones that didn't make it
3. Take a screenwriting class. I can easily recommend a few
4. Get feedback on your writing
5. Critique another writer's scripts
6. Join a screenwriting group
7. Take your favorite screenplay and transcribe it, noticing the choices the writer made
8. Select a technique to improve and use it in one or more scenes
9. Write the same scene a completely different way
- 10.
- 11.
12. -Reverse a scene or character
13. -Increase the stakes
14. -Change who prevails in the scene
15. -Use a twist to change the end of the scene
16. -Put the characters in a worse positionHave another writer write one of your scenes in a completely different way
17. Take a character to an extreme to see what other possibilities are available
18. Take a line of dialogue or description and rewrite it 10 different ways or more
19. Stretch yourself: Give your character an unsolvable problem and then solve it
20. Pick a scene in a movie you like and write it. Once you have completed it, read the writer's script for that scene and see how he or she wrote it differently



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21. Watch a movie, stopping it at the end of each scene. Write down what happened in the scene, how the characters changed, what was the in and out points, and what was the most interesting part of the scene
22. Take your best idea and top it in some way! Sometimes, it is not about the writing. It is about the thinking and the breakthroughs and getting used to coming up with fresh ideas. Force yourself to top your best ideas on a regular basis and soon, you'll have the best ideas in Hollywood.
23. Find out what a producer or reader wants in a script. This can shift your chances dramatically. It may save you from writing something that has no chance of success
24. Take an acting class
25. Do a read-through with actors
26. Shoot a short on DV. For anyone who has done this, you've had the experience of seeing actors bring your script to life. Until you do, you can't imagine the amount of pride and embarrassment you'll experience. But directing even one scene will change how you write
27. Give yourself permission to write from your heart with no holding back
28. Decide that you will constantly improve your writing until you are one of the best screenwriters there is

There you are. 22 ways to shift the odds of your success. Many of which do not even require that you leave your computer. If you're serious about writing, I wouldn't let a day go by without doing at least one of the above.

A 1% improvement every day is a 365% improvement over the next year. Keep doing that and sooner or later, you'll be in Charlie Kaufman's league -- making those 7-figure deals.

Hal Croasmun is a writer/producer and the author of "33 Ways to Break into Hollywood." He publishes the ScriptForSale newsletter with articles about screenwriting and interviews with A-List screenwriters at <http://www.ScriptForSale.com>. Article courtesy of ArticlesBase.com

http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/learn_screenwriting.html



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