

## [A Quick Guide to Entering the Scriptwriting Category of the Hammond House International Literary Prize](#)

The Hammond House Literary Prize started in 2016 (with the screenplay category added in 2017), and it continues to grow in popularity. The screenplay category was expanded in 2021 to include *all* types of script: film/ TV, radio and theatre.

Here are seven ways to ensure your script stands out:

### **1. Stick to the page count**

This competition is for scripts of *up to 10 pages*. Although there is a 10% tolerance above this, it's best to think of 10 pages being the maximum. If you enter a script that is over this limit, it could be disqualified. The best way to keep inside the page count is to plan your story first, and make sure you can tell it in under 10 pages. Write the first draft, and then begin the editing. You might need to lengthen some scenes, and shorten others. Make sure the version you send off is the best it can be, and that it is definitely within the page count.

### **2. Write to the theme**

The Hammond House competition always has a theme. Previous themes have been: Conflict, Eternal, Precious, Leaving, Survival, and Stardust. Make sure you know what the current theme is, and think about all the stories you could tell that involve this theme. There are so many ways you can include it, from the obvious to the hidden – the only limit is your imagination! Although you won't be disqualified for not adhering to the chosen theme, you may be marked down. Having a theme encourages you to write a new story, and to hone your creative writing skills!

### **3. Don't include your name on your entry**

This *will* get your script disqualified! All entries have to be judged blind, so that the process is fair for everyone. Judges need to judge the *script* (the characters, the plot etc) without being influenced by knowing details about the person who wrote it. Judges only find out the names of the writers once all the decisions for shortlists and winners have been made. So, please make sure your name and contact details are *not* on the script you are entering.

### **4. Use the correct format**

There are industry standard formats for different types of scripts, so it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with them before you write your entry. Presenting your script in

the correct format allows the judges to concentrate on the story (the emotions, the action, the mystery etc), without the way it's laid out becoming a distraction. Ask yourself if your story would be better told as a short film, a radio drama, or a piece of theatre. Then write your script to that format (you can find quick guides on my website [www.sarahcrockford.com](http://www.sarahcrockford.com), or check out the BBC Writersroom resources page). For film/ TV format, one page is equivalent to one page of screen time i.e. a ten page script is ten minutes long. Radio and theatre have more words on a page (as the dialogue is more important than the visuals/ sounds), but it shouldn't feel cramped on the page. Give your words room to breathe!

## **5. Check spelling/ grammar**

This is the same for any writing you do. Once your early drafts have been completed, and you're getting closer to sending it off, check your spelling and grammar. Read it out loud, ask a trusted friend or relative to read it, or pop it in a drawer for a week and re-read it with a fresh perspective. You want it to be as smooth a reading experience for the judge as possible – let your characters and your plot shine through. That said, if you find this hard (for example if you have dyslexia), don't get too stressed by it – your story is more important than how the words are spelt.

## **6. Invent great characters**

To help your entry stand out from all the others, spend time developing your characters. Even though this is only for a short script, it's still possible for your characters to have emotional depth, and for the judges to invest in their journey.

## **7. Plan your plot**

The basic framework for a plot is to have a beginning, middle and end. So even if the ten pages you are sending in is a 'scene' rather than a complete story, it still needs to have a sense of completeness. Set up a question or challenge, explore it, then answer or resolve it (even if only partially). It can be tricky to do this in only ten pages, but it's great fun too! If you think it isn't working as you intended, spend some more time editing, until it's the best it can be before you send it off.

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Full terms and conditions are at [www.hammondhousepublishing.com/competitions](http://www.hammondhousepublishing.com/competitions). Need more guidance? There are many books and courses available to help you, including a free two-week online screenwriting course with Future Learn. There are also a couple of video tutorials about screenwriting on the Hammond House Writers page. If you have any questions about entering, please contact the Hammond House team. After that, all you need to do is send off your script. Good luck!