

GETTING STARTED

WRITING A 10-MINUTE PLAY

Do you have an idea for a story? Is there a nagging image in your head that symbolizes something important to you? A set of characters so interesting you can't wait to share them with the world? Maybe you just want to apply your writing talent to a new genre...or maybe you accepted a dare.

Whatever the reason you're here – welcome! Attempting to write a 10-minute play is guaranteed to push you into exciting creative territory. It truly is a difficult-yet-fun, highly collaborative process.

A ten-minute play is the same as a full-length play. The challenge is that all the ingredients—characters, stakes at risk, climax and resolution— have to be crammed into a short amount of time. Often a newbie will write what is actually a sketch, and think they've written a ten-minute play. To learn more:

- read “A More Perfect 10,” by Gary Garrison
- read or listen to lots of 10-minute plays (newplayexchange.org, playingonair.org, public library)
- practice giving and receiving feedback

A FEW RANDOM TIPS for writing a 10-min play:

- Start your play in the middle, where the action is in full swing.
- If a character is saying a line that doesn't move the story forward, delete that line.
- Make sure it's clear your main character wants something, then throw obstacles in front of it.
- Experiment with using less talk, more physical action to tell your story. Do this by writing stage directions, which are instructions that describe exactly how actors should move.

There are as many ways to write a play as there are playwrights, so you can use any kind of structure you like. That said, here is Gary Garrison's *traditional structure* for a ten-minute play:

Pages 1-2: set up the world we're in, introduce central characters, make sure we understand what they need

Pages 2-3: illuminate the central conflict—a dramatic question that has an answer at the play's end

Pages 3-8: complicate the story/conflict two or three times

Pages 9-10: resolve the conflict, even if that creates an unhappy ending.

Write the first draft in one sitting. Take as long as you need to get ready to write it, but don't stop in the middle, get to the end once you start. You can always go back and fix things, but by the time you're done, you should be able to see your story in its entirety. (from Craig Pospisil)

*“Transformation. What gives a short play weight and depth is its ending. The characters should be changed by getting or not getting what they wanted. And if the audience's *understanding of what they've watched is transformed*, it gives their whole experience a deeper feeling, because thinking back on the play increases their time with it, their thoughts about it.” –Dawson Moore*

“Jello in is jello out. If you don't really care about your writing, neither will I.” –Gary Garrison

(Sincere thanks to playwrights Gary Garrison, Julie Jensen, Craig Pospisil and Dawson Moore. **Please check out each of their works at: newplayexchange.org**)