

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY WRITERS

1. **Q: What advice do you have on “Writer's Block”?**

**What do you personally do to overcome it?**

**A:** I give myself permission to be bad and write the dumbest, stupidest, most awful story. I actually tell myself, “Let me write the dumbest dialogue ever.” Then I write whatever line of dialogue comes to me and I know it’s just a place holder for a better line later. I make it a game and by giving myself permission to be bad and my ego and intellect step aside. Writers block is when you are thinking about writing instead of actually feeling and being and receiving information and creating... Every act of creation requires us to be in the unknown and in chaos and discomfort. The first step in creating is the process of receiving inspiration and information and putting it down on paper and then step away from it for a few days. The second step it to edit what you wrote. You can’t write and edit at the same time. Creating and editing require you to use different parts of your brain. So know when to be in chaos and create and know when to be in your linear, critical intellectual part of your brain to edit and shape your screenplay.

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2. **Q: What is the difference between a union and non-union Screenwriter? A:** A union Screenwriter is someone who joined the Writers Guild of America West/East, (WGA). Usually a writer has to get a contract with a production company, network or movie studio who is a signatory, meaning they signed an agreement with the WGA in which they agree to pay WGA minimums, pay pension, and give writers certain rights over their material and the process of writing, other benefits, and treat writers with respect. Joining the WGA is a great benefit because you are able to get Health Care coverage when you make a certain amount of money and getting a pension is a great thing for writers who are often independent contractors.
  
3. **Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages for writers who fall in either category? A:** Writers who are not union writers can write for anyone who will hire

them and can apply to writer training programs where they don't pay WGA minimums. However, they are not guaranteed a lot and can easily be replaced and exploited. Writers in the Union get a pension, royalties, more respect and if a producer tries to exploit you the union can fight on your behalf. Check out [WGA.org](http://WGA.org) to learn more and to register your Outlines, Treatments, TV Show Concepts/Bibles and screenplays.

4. **Q: Explain the difference between a logline, synopsis, and outline, treatment.** (Download and check out the Drama Vocabulary for a better explanation.) **A:** A logline is a simple way to tell your story in one to three lines. Synopsis is a short paragraph or three paragraphs of your story but no more than one page with a beginning, middle, and end. An Outline is your story from one to three pages. A treatment can usually be as short as three pages, five pages is ideal and no more than ten pages. This is my experience, other writers may have a different take on this.
4. **Q: What advice would you give to writers who are pitching their projects?** Take an acting class or at the very least go to Toastmasters and learn how to speak publicly or even do stand up if you have the courage to do it. You can not be nervous or scattered when you pitch. You must believe in yourself and your idea and speak with authority and confidence. You

must be passionate about your work and as relaxed and confident about your story. Memorize your pitch and have your whole pitch under 15 minutes. Before you begin your You must be able to tell them at the very beginning the longline of your film so they are not guessing where the story is going and they actually listen and tell them the general beats of your story. Make it as exciting as possible, like real story telling in front of a fire like in the old days. Executives hear hundreds of pitches so they may easily forget your story, but if you move them emotionally they will never forget you so even if they don't buy your pitch they may hire you for something later. If you're pitching a TV show - Download the document on how to pitch your show which explains what you need to cover in your TV Show pitch. I have been very successful pitching because I only write and pitch what I am completely passionate about.

5. **Q: How do you know if a pitch went well? A:** The best sign is if they say they love it and they want to make it right after you pitch. If they don't say that, they may get excited about the idea and see that it has so much possibility and potential and may still option it or have you return and rework it and then buy it.
6. **Q: What makes a good pitch? What makes a bad pitch? A:** A great pitch is you taking the lead and making the TV/Studio Executives be on their edge of their seats and they are emotionally moved almost to

the point of tears if it's a drama or laugh out loud if it's a comedy. A bad pitch is when you don't have your story figured out, you meander, go over 20 minutes, and they ask questions that you haven't even considered or can't answer. Or they are yawning or looking at their watch or crossing their arms. Sometimes they don't really want to hear the pitch but because they have to take the meeting they will feign interest but their crossed arms will give them away or their leg keeps moving to pass the time. Yes, when you've feel you've lost them, then wrap it up quickly and thank them for their time.

**7. Q: Should you seek out an Agent or a Manager?**

**A:** You should only seek out a Manager or Agent once you have at least three literary works (preferably plays and screenplays for book agents that's a different process) or three screenplays completed and ready to be read. If you have only one they may not like it and that's it for your chance to be represented by them. If you have two they may not like the second one either. If you have three then they know you are serious about being a writer because you have invested that much time and effort. I was lucky because a studio was interested in making my play into a movie and then it was so easy to get an agent because they just had to negotiate and get their 10% percent without doing the work of getting me the writing job. So enter as many contests because if you win one that

obviously makes you more attractive to an agent or manager.

**8. Q: How should writing partners go about doing the legal paperwork before writing together?**

**A:** Always get a Collaboration Agreement before you start writing even if it's with you Mom or Dad or a family member. Don't lose a friendship over this. Download a Collaboration Agreement from my website and then tailor it to you and your co-writing partner. The agreement must state how much you both own, how you will be compensated should you manage to get it optioned and sold and how much control you each have to exploit the material. (Please check with a lawyer to draw up one if you can afford to or do your own research.)