



MASTER THE REWRITE

**MODULE 2: STRUCTURE**

*by Script Society*



## Module 2: Lesson 4

# POLISHING STRUCTURE

**A “Beat Sheet” is a 1 – 2 page document that outlines the key moments of your screenplay**

**THE BEAT SHEET**

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Now that we have established the theme, characters and story arcs, it is finally time to join them together in a single outline. We call this the “Beat Sheet”. It’s an excellent tool that will help you see the new plot of your screenplay on a basic level. At Script Society, we like to use our modified version of Blake Snyder’s “Save the Cat” beat sheet, which we then expand into a treatment. That is the method we will detail here for you. If you have another method that works better for you, you are welcome to use that.

**A lot of writers are tempted to skip this stage and being their rewrite. We urge you *not* to do that.**

Planning out the scenes within your draft before you write them is important. It will allow you to catch issues before you start writing. Remember all those neutral and weak scenes from Module #1? This is the time to make corrections to those scenes.

To begin, please download our **Structure Guide** and a blank document to write your beat sheet on. The **Structure Guide** will explain exactly what needs to happen in each beat of your screenplay.



Once you have done that, you can begin to populate your beat sheet with scenes. We recommend you start by jotting down the important scenes within A, B & C Plot first. Once you have completed that, you can fill in the space in between them. When you finish your beat sheet, it should be about 2 – 5 pages long. This is a very quick breakdown of your new draft.

**The next logical step is the treatment.**

If you took our Screenwriting Mentorship Program you are welcome begin that now, as the material we will be covering in the rest of this lesson was covered in that program. For those of you who did not, we recommend you finish this lesson before continuing on.

## ELEMENTS OF A SCENE

A scene is a segment in a film that takes place within a certain time frame and location. Like your screenplay, it too has a structure. Here are the four things that every scene must have:

### ELEMENTS OF A SCENE

**GOAL:** what the leading character(s) of the scene wants to accomplish.

**MOTIVE:** the reason the leading character(s) wants to accomplish that goal.

**RESULT:** the failure or success of the leading character(s).

**CHARGE CHANGE:** how the tone changes (between positive and negative).

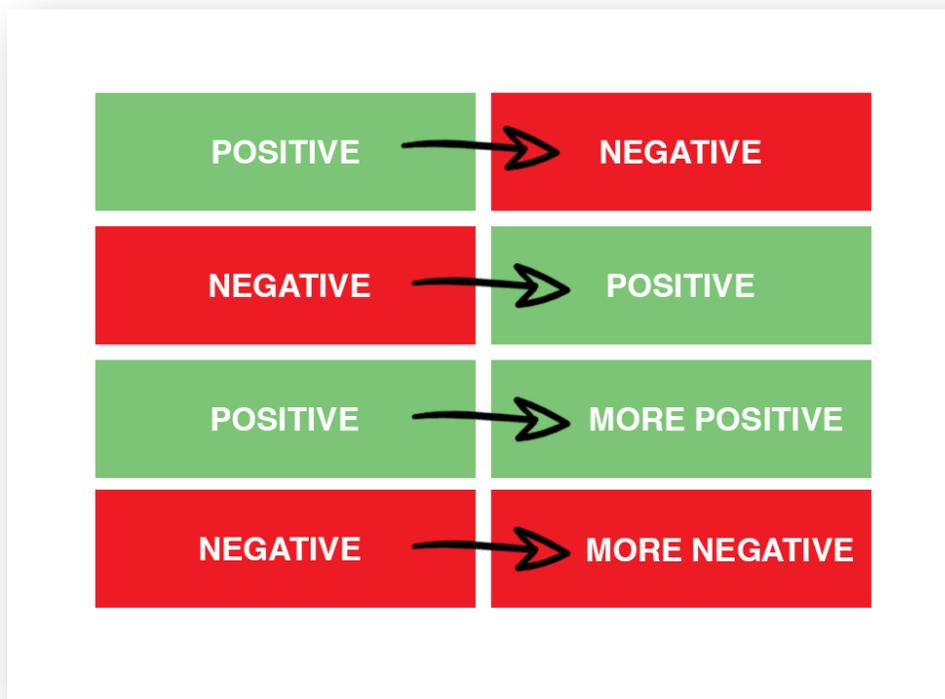
By ensuring that every scene in your screenplay has these four elements, you are eliminating the risk of “filler scenes”. These are scenes that serve no purpose to the plot or characters.



Remember that chart you wrote up in Module #1? I want you to go through that now and make sure that every scene you plan to keep has all four of these elements. The scenes in your “STRONG” column probably do. Your NEUTRAL and WEAK scenes may not. Adding these elements to them could be what transforms them into strong scenes.

## CHARGE

Now if you are new to screenwriting (and did not take our **Screenwriting Mentorship Program**), you may be wondering: What is the “charge” of a scene? The charge is the tone within a scene in relation to the leading character of that scene. It ensures that a shift happens in every scene, which helps the plot progress. There are four main variations of charge changes:



It’s important that this is always changing, back and forth. If one scene ends negative, the next should begin negative (unless you are jumping to a new storyline). The pattern of change should remain the same within storylines.



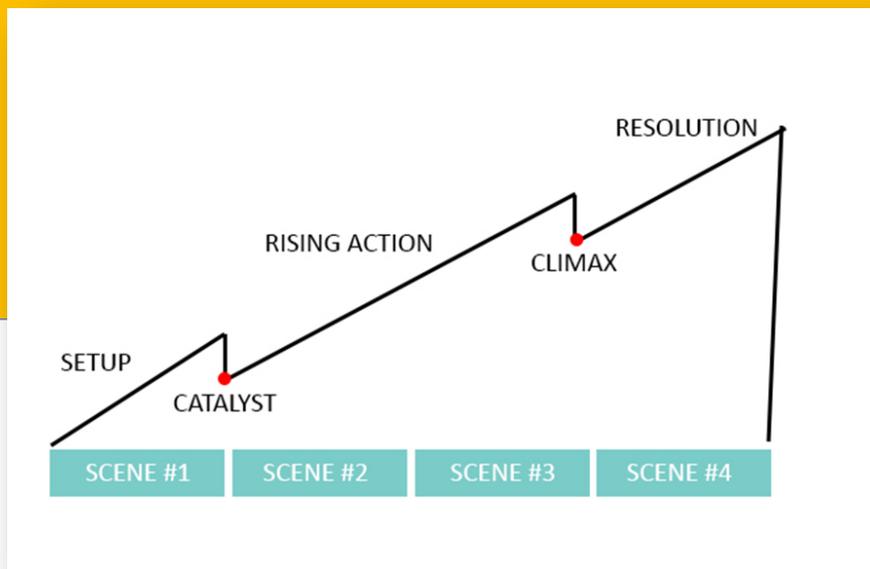
## ARRIVE LATE & LEAVE EARLY

The next thing I want you to keep in mind as you develop your scenes is the timing of them. Have you ever heard of the screenwriting rule “Arrive late and leave early?” The reason this is a golden rule is that it forces screenwriters to cut out the fat and show the viewer the action. By arriving late, we are forced to jump right in, and by leaving early, that action stays with us into the next scene. In other words, cut the small talk. We’re here for the action.

## SHOW, DON’T TELL

The last thing I want you to remember as you develop your scenes is another golden rule: SHOW, DON’T TELL. Film is a visual medium. We don’t want to watch a film where the protagonist tells us about a fight. We want to see that fight! Don’t tell us what is happening; show it to us with visuals. Dialogue should compliment your plot, but rarely discuss it.

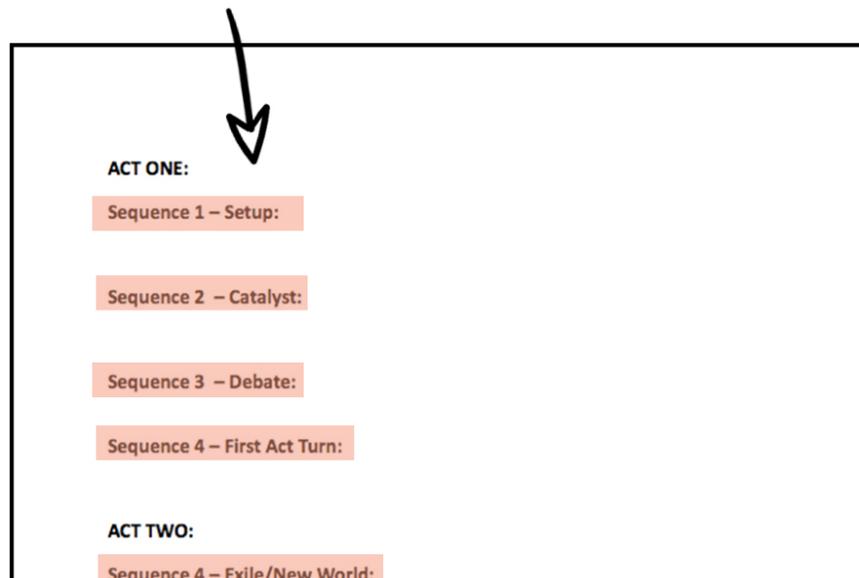
## ELEMENTS OF A SEQUENCE





A Sequence is a series of scenes within a screenplay that form a distinct narrative unit. This means they are all building to the same goal. It's like a screenplay inside a screenplay (is that giving anyone else *Inception* vibes?). Each sequence has its own goal, motive, result and change of charge. The difference is that it happens over the course of several scenes instead of one. Think of sequences as the small journeys or steps your protagonist takes in order to accomplish their overall goal.

**Good news! You have already established most of your sequences.**



The good news is that most of your sequences have already been established in your beat sheet. There are a few beats (such as Trials and Higher Stakes & Complications) that might have more than one sequence since they are long sections... but otherwise you are set.

**In conclusion, these are the three things you must do before you expand your beat sheet into a treatment:**

1. Establish the goal, conflict, result and change of charge within all existing & new scenes.
2. Establish the goal, conflict and result of all the sequences in your screenplay.
3. Revise your Neutral & Weak scenes and determine if they will remain or be cut.

Once you have accomplished those three steps, you are ready to write up your treatment. Your treatment can be anywhere from 10 – 20+ pages long, depending on the amount of detail you choose to go into.