

# SCREENWRITING

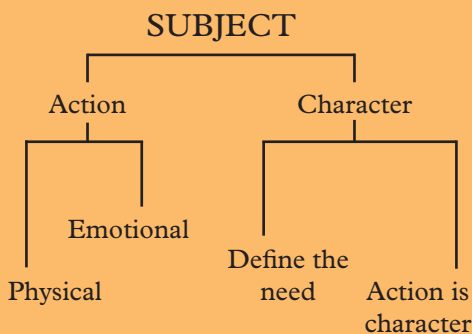
## THE SUBJECT

A screenplay starts with an idea. But you need a subject to embody and dramatize the idea. The subject of your screenplay is an action and a character. An action is *what* the story is about, and a character is *who* the story is about.

Knowing the subject of your screenplay allows you to write from the position of choice, confidence, and security.

Remember, every creative decision must be made by choice, not necessity. Be purposeful in decision making.

Without conflict, there is no action. Without action there is no character. Action is character. What a person does is what and who they are, *not* what they say.



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## WHERE TO FIND YOUR SUBJECT

What or whom do you want to write about? A character? A particular emotional situation? An experience that you or one of your family members has gone through? It is best to isolate your generalized idea into a specific dramatic premise. This becomes the starting point of your screenplay.

## FREE WRITING -----> RESEARCH

When you can articulate your subject in a few sentences, in terms of action and character, you're ready to start expanding on the elements of structure and story. It may take several pages of free writing about your story before you begin to grasp the essentials and reduce your story line into a simple sentence or two.

Then begins the research. You want to find out as much as you can about your subject. The key to a successful screenplay is preparing your material.

**Text Research:** Going to the library or doing research online from reliable sources. You're reading about a period, people, a profession, or whatever is relevant to your story.

**Live Research:** Going to the source. Doing live interviews, talking to people, getting a real "feel" for the subject.

## ACTION IS CHARACTER

The character's needs determine the creative choices he/she makes during the screenplay, and gaining clarity about that need allows you to be more complex, more dimensional, in your character portrayal.

There are two kinds of action--physical action and emotional action. **Physical action** can be a battle sequence, a car chase, a fight, a shootout, etc. **Emotional action** is what happens inside your characters during the story.

Your characters actions will be based on what kind of story you are writing. Once you know what kind of action you're dealing with, you can breathe life into your character.

First, find their dramatic need. What does your character want or need? What drives them to the resolution of your story? The need of your character gives you a goal, a destination, an ending to your story. How your character achieves or does not achieve that goal becomes the action of the story. **ALL DRAMA IS CONFLICT.** If you know the need of your character you can create obstacles to fulfilling that need and thus, have a story.