

Grade 12 Communications Technology

Video Synopsis and Character Descriptions - Thinking

What is a synopsis?

The purpose of a synopsis is to outline all the plot related details of your story from the beginning all the way to the end, and yes, it gives away the ending. Spoiler Alert! It does not include some of the details in your script, shot list or storyboard like specific dialogue or camera shots.

Why is the synopsis so important?

You want your plot to be believable and you want to save yourself time and effort. It outlines all the story details before you are tasked with the script, shot list and storyboard. It is the point in which you should be the most critical. It is far easier to make changes at this stage before having to make changes to your script. In the end, it saves you time and it makes for better storytelling!

Plot related advice

- Follow the elements of a 3 act structure, including the inciting incident, lock-in, setbacks, climax and resolution
- Start with the inciting incident and lock-in and the ending
- In a film short, try to get to the inciting incident and lock-in in as soon as possible.
- If a scene doesn't advance the plot or advances the character development, leave it out.

Do's and Don'ts of Synopsis Writing

Do write in complete sentences.

Do skip lines between occurrences.

Do detail everything that happens in sequence.

Do write in the present tense (even if it's an event that happens in the past, like a flashback.)

For example: Bourne opens the office desk drawer, searches and discovers that the secret files are missing.

For this course Do use the "Synopsis template using the 3 act structure" found online

Do put plot points in parentheses () For example. Character shouts we have to get back at him (lock-in)

Don't explain the why's of each scene. It should be evident in each scene by what the character says or does. The audience will draw conclusion about the why it's happening. For example,

Don't write: Character steals food from the cafeteria because he can't afford it.

Do write: Character checks his pocket only to find a minimal amount of change.

Character lines up in the cafeteria and pockets a bag of chips and but pays for the chocolate milk.

Do not write what a character thinks unless it's a voice over. Remember that stories are developed about what a character says and does, not what he or she thinks unless it's a voice over.

Do not include camera compositions, camera movements, transitions.

Do not include specific dialogue, rather, stick to the content of it. For example.

Sue, confronts her boyfriend, Jim, about not meeting her at the library as they discussed.

Jim replied that he was out with his buddies and lost track of time.

Sue becomes angrier as Jim tries to minimize the impact of his mistake.

	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Synopsis - Thinking	10 11	12 13	14 15	16 18 20
Synopsis worksheet is detailed and submitted with the synopsis; Plot structure strongly follows the elements of storytelling*; All details are very clear, believable and drive the plot; Characters are relatable, believable and suit the genre; Genre conventions are evident throughout the synopsis; Synopsis follows the guidelines				

* the inciting incident, lock-in, a series of setbacks, climax and resolution

Character Description

On a separate sheet of paper entitled "Character Description", centred and bolded, give a description of each of the characters in your story (1 to 4). For main characters include (5 to 7).

For each character include the following:

1. Character name
2. Age and gender of the character
3. Job and financial situation (For example, Mary is lawyer and living comfortably - pays cash for luxury cars)
4. Romantic situation, relationship to other characters (Mary is married to her second husband George, they have 3 children, one from a previous marriage, she's the mother of Bill the protagonist)

For each of the main characters answer the following 3 questions writing in complete sentences.

5. Describe the character's superpower/talent (that you will introduce early), and name a plot related obstacle later on in the plot said talent will overcome
6. What is a character weakness that will be a huge obstacle later on in the plot
7. How is the character different at the beginning of the movie as compared to the beginning? Justify.

All	1. Character name 2. Age and gender of the character 3. Job and financial situation 4. Romantic situation, relationship to other characters
Main	5. Describe the character's superpower/talent (that you will introduce early), and name a plot related obstacle later on in the plot said talent will overcome 6. What is a character weakness that will be a huge obstacle later on in the plot 7. How is the character different at the beginning of the movie as compared to the beginning? Justify.

	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Character Description - Thinking	5	6	7	8 9 10
All character information is very clearly written, detailed and complete; Characters are believable and suit the plot and genre; Characters reflect limited and potential casting choices				