



Book to Screen Handout

HOLLYWOOD

Tools For An Indie
Author To
Survive in
Hollywood

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Terms You Should Know

Any indie author coming to Hollywood may feel as though he's just set foot on a small planet. Below are some terms that will allow you to talk like a native as you operate in alien territory.



OPTION — Option is the most common term you will hear surrounding your book. Before your book's rights are sold to a producer to make a movie or TV show, the book is usually optioned. An option gives the optioner the exclusive rights to shop your project in Hollywood. An option can be paid or free.



OPTION (Cont' d) – The sale of your rights (screen, TV, sequel) are often negotiated along with the option. An option is for a fixed period. A year is not uncommon. If the optioner fails to setup a movie at a studio based on your book during this period, your rights revert back to you. If this happens, you can keep any money, free and clear, that was paid for the option.

Shopping Agreement – Shopping agreements are becoming quite common in Hollywood these days. A shopping agreement is a less formal option. Many shopping agreements are free. The good news for indie authors is, since your sale rights have not been pre-negotiated, when a buyer is found, the author can play hardball if they determine the studio or producer is hot for their book, and drive up the cost of the screen rights.





Screenplay – A screenplay is a script. Every movie made needs a script. If you're lucky, at some point in time your book will be made into a screenplay.

Teleplay – Teleplay is technically what a TV script is called, but no one in Hollywood uses this term. We call them TV scripts. If you call it a teleplay, you will look like a dork.



Shooting Script – Many scripts by many writers may be written to turn your book into a movie. The movie *Twilight* was in development for three years with a number of screenplays before Melissa Rosenberg came on board and wrote the script that ultimately got made. The shooting script is the script the film's director deems ready for the film to go into production. If they're talking shooting script, your movie is about to get made.



Attachments — It takes a lot of people to get a movie made. Sometimes it takes your brother's college roommate who interned with that famous director and still has a pipeline in to him. If you want your brother's roommate to slip said famous director your book, he is going to want something in return. What he wants is to be attached to the film. One—being attached will get him paid, and two, it might even get him a coveted producer credit. Once your brother's roommate agrees to slip the project to the director, he becomes an attachment.



Project — Every creative endeavor in Hollywood is called a project. As soon as people begin talking about your book as a movie, it's no longer a book, it has become a project.



Elements – This is Hollywood speak for the different people it takes to get your project greenlit. A star is an element, a director is an element, a top screenwriter is an element. Several elements will be attached to your project in order to make it attractive enough for a studio to make the movie.

Sale of Rights – For a movie to be made your rights must be sold to a producer or studio. Your rights are usually bundled (screen TV, sequel). There can be more. These are the rights I'm familiar with. When you sell your rights, make sure you are getting what you feel is a fair price for them because once they are sold, you can't get them back unless you buy them back.

Green Light – This usually means your movie is about to be made. However, the real term to determine if your movie is getting made is...



Start of Principal Photography – When principal photography begins it takes an act of God to stop it. If you hear principal photography has just begun, congratulations. Your book is getting made into a movie.



Coverage – Coverage is the real capital in Hollywood. Every screenplay, book, article, or blog that is being considered for a movie gets “covered.” Coverage is nothing more than a synopsis of your book with recommendations to either make it into a movie, or not make it into a movie. If you want to get your book made into a movie, your book will need coverage.



Things You Should Know About

The Hollywood Creative Directory – While the Hollywood Creative Directory is no longer in production, there are similar directories that include the names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and list of company's employees. Use one of these, or an older version of HCD to find producers to pitch your book to.



Link: [The Hollywood Creative Directory](#)



How To Find Hollywood

Producers – Major production companies such as Scott Free are easy to find via Google. Contacting them directly will get you nowhere. These companies deal with Hollywood agents and producers they know. Another way you can find the names of smaller production companies is by copying them from the credits of small films and Googleing them. You may have some success with these, but there's a better way.

Young Hustlers – Young hustlers are everywhere in Hollywood. I heard a story that famous producer Jon Peters was once Barbara Streisand's hairdresser. Just because a person doesn't have a big title doesn't mean they can't get your book seen in Hollywood. Young hustlers are the big producers and directors of tomorrow. To find a young hustler, use a directory such as HCD and focus on names toward the bottom in the hierarchy. A third level exec, or the office assistant is a perfect target.



How To Contact Actors and Actresses – Most actors and actresses have their own production companies with a friend or associate handling the day-to-day. These friend/execs are generally pretty accessible. Make a friendly approach via email. Tell them briefly why you think the actor/actress is right for your book, and let them know you have coverage.



How To Get A Screenplay Written – Do not write your own screenplay unless you are already a seasoned screenwriter. Screenwriting is a craft. A poorly written screenplay will doom your chances in Hollywood.



How To Get A Screenplay Written (Cont'd) – Screenwriting is a craft. A poorly written screenplay will doom your chances in Hollywood. You can find seasoned screenwriters in many forums. Use your old pal Google to begin the search. Most screenwriters are out of work most of the time. Try to find someone who is passionate about your project and will write the screenplay free with just a promise that they will be attached. If you cannot find a writer to work for free, do your research on the writer you hire. Make sure they are proficient in your genre.

The Blacklist – The Blacklist is a terrific forum that lists screenplays that get made into movies
Link: [The Black List](#)

InkTip – InkTip is another terrific forum for listing screenplays that get made into movies. InkTip's focus is independent film. Link: [InkTip](#).

Selling your indie book as a movie is hard work, but it's worth it. Good luck!