



**ArtAge**  
Publications

**Senior Theatre Resource Center**

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## Writers' Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in ArtAge Publications. We're excited to read your work. These guidelines will help you learn how to format the play, where to send your script, and other related information. Please understand that accepting new works is often a lengthy process. Your patience is appreciated. Again, thanks for sending us your shows!

**What to submit:** Senior Theatres perform plays and musicals of all lengths, but short shows which run up to 20 minutes are the most popular. Directors look for comedies with mainly female casts that require few technical elements and can be staged as readers theatre. Successfully performed shows have senior casts (or mostly senior) with up-to-date, feisty characters in current situations. Roles should challenge performers, yet be fun to stage.

### Use our format:

- Type your play on standard size 8.5" x 11" paper. Always number your pages consecutively. Never reset page numbers when you change acts or scenes.
- Use 1 inch margins all the way around. If your play will be in a binder, add 1/2 inch to the left margin so the text will be at 1 inch when it is read.
- ArtAge uses Palatino Linotype 12 point as its standard font. Type dialogue in regular font and stage directions in lowercase italics. Avoid bold and excessive underlining. Text should be left justified and should run margin to margin.
- Begin with a title page that follows the attached example page. Your title and name go in the middle of the page. Put your name, address, telephone number and email in the lower right corner. If you wish, you may put a copyright statement in the lower left corner.

- The next page is for your cast list. Using the example, center your title and name at the top. Double space. Type CAST. Double space. Put character names in CAPS with a colon at the left margin. Follow with a brief description. After your cast list, designate Time and Place. Be brief.
- Again, as the example shows, on a new page type your title in CAPS and centered at the top. For short plays with no scene changes, that is enough. For multiple acts and scenes, write the act in letters and CAPS. Put scenes in capital and small letters with a number:

ACT ONE Scene 1

- Double space and begin with a description of your Setting: as shown in the example. In a new paragraph, use At Rise: to describe the action that opens your play.
- For speaking characters, put their names in CAPS at the left margin. Follow with a colon and one space. Otherwise, for character names, use normal upper and lower case and ordinary punctuation. Character names are uppercase when used in stage directions.
- Use one space between sentences. For example:

At Rise: *Wild Bill Hiccup enters and crosses to the poker table.*

BILL: Sorry I was late. I had to bed down my horse at the stable.

*Tossing back his shot of whiskey, Oneeye Joe Baddie gets to his feet and shoves a chair at Wild Bill.*

JOE: Yes, sir, Billy, sit yourself down.

### How to Submit:

Send one **hard copy** of your play to our office:

7845 SW Capitol Hwy Ste 12  
Portland OR 97219

We do not return scripts. Thank you for understanding that it takes a while to read, approve, and accept new scripts and materials for our collection. Your patience is appreciated.

If you want personal help on your show, we are happy to serve as a consultant on the project!

**More Guidelines:**

**KEEP YOUR TEXT SIMPLE, CLEAN, AND CLEAR!**

Of course, proper grammar and spelling are crucial. You may use sentence fragments in plays because that is how people really talk and think. Still, even sentence fragments must make sense. Beware of sentences that begin with 'oh,' 'and,' 'but,' or 'well.' Some may be fine. Used often, this is a bad habit.

Please pay careful attention to proper capitalization and punctuation. It is best to limit yourself to commas, periods, question marks, and an occasional exclamation point.

Use quotation marks around quoted text. Use single quotations marks around emphasized or other text.

AVOID ellipses (...) and dashes (—). Please note that ellipses consist of only three dots. The em dash shown, however, can be typed with two ordinary dashes. Use these marks very rarely and only according to these rules:

- Use ellipses to indicate an incomplete thought or silence at the end of an incomplete sentence, such as when a character's voice trails off. For example:  
  
ROCHESTER: I don't know, Mr. Benny. I put the message...uh...let me see...
- Use an em dash when a speaking character is interrupted by another character.  
  
JACK: Rochester, where in the world—  
  
ROCHESTER: I don't know, Mr. Benny. I put the message...uh...let me see...
- There should be no space before or after ellipses and em dashes.
- Never use ellipses or a dash to begin a sentence.

### A WORD ABOUT 'PARENTHETICALS'

Parentheticals are stage business instructions enclosed by parentheses within dialogue. It is fine to use them so actors know what action to do. For example:

RUTH: (*entering*) Good morning, everyone. Lovely day, isn't it?

But avoid telling actors how to do the action. That's the director's job. For example:

RUTH: (*cheerfully*) Good morning, everyone. Lovely day, isn't it?

Ruth's speech indicates cheerfulness. Therefore (*cheerfully*) is not necessary. You may need a parenthetical if you want the actor to behave in a manner that is not clear from reading the line.

RUTH: (*grumbling*) Good morning, everyone. Lovely day, isn't it?

Avoid a parenthetical that shows to whom a line is directed as in (*to Ruth*). This should be apparent in the text. For instance, when there are only two characters, they are obviously talking to each other. With more than two characters, it is easy to use the name of the person who is being addressed, but it is not necessary to repeat their name in every sentence. When one character answers another, no designation is required. Sometimes, however, the reference can be vague. In that case, you may need a parenthetical. But be very stingy and use them only when it is absolutely necessary.

**(Sample Title Page)**

POINT OF DEPARTURE

A Play in Two Acts

by

Wendy Henson

Copyright XXXX

Wendy Henson  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code  
Tel: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email:

**(Sample Cast Page)**

POINT OF DEPARTURE

By Wendy Henson

CAST

BARBARA MONTGOMERY: In her forties, pretty, small of stature, bright, and articulate.

STEVE MONTGOMERY: Barbara's soon-to-be ex-husband. Also in his forties, he is handsome, with the color and condition of the outdoor type. He has taken himself too seriously for far too long.

IRENE JACOBS: Barbara's mother. Never mind her age. She is svelte and sophisticated with a caustic wit. Her wit, however, is her shield against vulnerability.

FR. NATHAN BRADFORD: An Episcopal priest. He is a kind, good natured man with a dry sense of humor.

PAUL BRADFORD: Steve's father. Egocentric. Harsh. Bombastic.

Place

Steve and Barbara Montgomery's upscale suburban home.

Time

The present. A Saturday in August.

## ACT ONE

*Setting: A living room. The décor is a pleasant hodgepodge of styles. The front door is Up Left. A picture window dominates the wall at Left Center. In front of the window is a desk, desk chair, and floor lamp. A cordless phone shares the desk with an array of golf trophies. An exit Down Right leads to the rest of the house. Flanking this exit, an entertainment unit boasts stereo equipment and a large record collection. At Center is a sofa with end tables and a side chair. One end table boasts a small lamp and a pair of bronzed baby shoes. The other table has an identical lamp and a candy dish. Against the back wall are shelves with photos, memorabilia, and a collection of house plants.*

*At Rise: Barbara Montgomery enters Down Right. Her hair and makeup are perfect, even though she wears shorts and a summer blouse. She carries a pitcher of water. Going to the shelves Up Center, she moves from one plant to the next, crooning to them, and making libations.*

BARBARA: Good morning, guys! *(watering a pot of ivy)* Hi, Sidney! How ya doin'? *(next a potted palm)* Hello, Igor! My, your fronds look lovely today. *(dousing an asparagus fern)* Hey, Robert, how about a drink? *(scowls at a splitleaf philodendron)* Phil, my friend, you're drooping. Is it this August heat? You don't have bugs, do you? *(the doorbell rings)* Just a minute! *(going to open the door)* Steve! Good morning!

STEVE: Hi, Barbara. I know it's early. I hope you don't mind.

BARBARA: Not at all. Come in. *(he enters)* But why ring the bell? You still have your keys.

STEVE: Yes, but I didn't want to barge in—

BARBARA: The divorce won't be final for ages. Until then, the house is yours as much as it is mine.

STEVE: I didn't know what you'd be doing this early. I didn't want to infringe on your privacy.

BARBARA: I wasn't entertaining one of my lovers, if that's what you were worried about.

STEVE: No. That didn't worry me.

BARBARA: I always make 'em leave before sunrise. *(he glares at her. she laughs)* Actually, I was doing what I do every Saturday. Giving the plants a drink.

STEVE: (*perusing the greenery*) Ah, yes. Keeping the jungle alive. Tarzan would be pleased.

BARBARA: How about you? May I get you something?

STEVE: (*coming down to the sofa*) I don't think so.

BARBARA: (*following him*) Coffee?

**(End of sample formatted script)**