

I'm not a bot



























Steve Ansell is a professional theatre director and the artistic director of stage@leeds at The University of Leeds, UK. He is also artistic director of Screaming Meda Productions, and founder of Gi60 (Gone in 60 Seconds): The International One Minute Play Festival. Rose Burnett Bonczek is director of the BFA Actin program and a professor at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, US. She is also the festival director and producer of Gi60 (Gone in 60 Seconds): The International One Minute Play Festival, US Edition. She is the co-auroor of Ensemble Theatre Making: A Practical Guide with David Storck. If you're interested in dabbling in playwriting but aren't sure how to get started, a short play might be a great way in. In the past, short plays were written off (pun intended!) as a weaker or easier genre, but the short play has become increasingly recognized and respected as a legitimate dramaturgical form. Lets take a look at a few things you'll want to consider as you begin to tackle your short play. How Long Should It Be? This is one of those questions that has lots of different answers. A short play can really be anything from one minute to about twenty minutes long, although many tend to fall in the ten-minute range. If your play is running more than thirty minutes, it probably falls into the one-act category. There's no hard and fast rule about how long a short play should be, but if you plan to submit your work to play festivals or contests, there will most likely be time restrictions or a page length minimum/maximum requirement. A good way to gauge the running time of your play is to assume that every page will take about one minute of stage time. Lets Talk Structure So, you're ready to start your play much deeper into the story so you can get to the dramatic meat quickly. Its All About Character As you might have guessed, characters in a short play tend to be more one-dimensional than those in a full-length. There just isn't enough time to really flesh them out, so don't worry about crafting a Hamlet or a Blanche DuBois. But there are still plenty of ways to make your characters interesting. I like to pick a couple of defining attributes or characteristics that I know I can get a lot of mileage out of. This is especially helpful if you're writing a comedy. Comedy is all about exaggeration and surprise, so how can you exaggerate your characters' quirky traits? Or perhaps your character behaves in surprising ways. For example, take full-length character Oscar Madison from Neil Simons' The Odd Couple. One of Oscar's notorious traits is that he's a bit of a slob. If you were writing an Oscar-like character in a short play, you might play around with Oscar's messiness and see what kind of dramatic tension you can create out of it. Dramatic characters should be driven by an urgent, pressing need, and this is especially true in a short play. Whatever your character needs, they should need it now. If you get stuck trying to figure out what they need, try thinking about what it is your character fears the most. That often helps lead to what they want. Keep It Simple, Silly Remember: short plays are all about substance and not flash. With a short play, you simply don't have time to employ a whole lot of fancy tricks. To create an engaging short play, focus on storytelling rather than elaborate stage magic, keeping the number of characters minimal to avoid unnecessary page space. The format typically consists of acts and scenes, with each act ending when the curtain comes down and often including an intermission. When writing a short play, it's essential to write what excites you, exploring ideas that spark passion and creativity. Consider using real-life experiences or observations to fuel your story. It's best to dive into the action quickly with a strong dramatic hook, getting the audience involved right from the start. A slow introduction can lead to a lack of interest, so it's essential to reveal the core issue behind the story early on. However, this doesn't mean the audience will get bored if they don't understand what's going on - they'll be expecting to see something happen. The problem is that writing for a live audience is different from screenwriting or television dramatists. A camera can capture every detail, but a stage requires a more subtle approach. When it comes to dialogue and directions, ask yourself if the audience in the back row will be able to understand what's happening. Establishing background and situation can also be challenging. Let's say you want to show Jim, your protagonist, working as a bus-driver, but how can you do this on stage? You could have him walk on stage wearing his uniform, but this might not ring true for everyone in the audience. Alternatively, you could use dialogue to establish his occupation, but be careful not to make it sound too forced. A better approach is to set your story in a dramatic context, such as after a major incident like a bus crash. This allows you to learn about Jim without making the conversation feel contrived. However, this opening must still be relevant to the main plot. To cast five characters for your play, you will need an actor to portray two roles; either one actor who plays multiple parts or actors who can quickly change into different costumes, wigs and makeup. You must also allow time between exits and entrances in case of costume changes by introducing gaps between these transitions allowing Lord Walter to exit stage left, enter, put on a beard, wig, and cloak, then reappear as Crippen the Gardener. For a play to be effective beyond just its punchline, there needs to be a narrative arc that unfolds besides the finale. When creating a 10-minute play, any writing method can be employed to conceptualize the fundamental elements of a story such as character, setting, and so forth. To get the most out of your brainstorming session for a 10-minute play, focus on these aspects in the same manner you would when crafting a short story. Whether you start working on your script before or after developing your ideas, it's essential to follow these guidelines to ensure that you create an engaging narrative. 1. Pose an inquiry As suggested by Sam Graber, every 10-minute play should pose an essential question. This principle holds true for all types of plays, and understanding its significance is particularly relevant when crafting a 10-minute piece since it aids in avoiding the creation of a sketch-like narrative. 2. Develop your character, conflict, and setting. It's not new information that these three elements are crucial to any story you write. Following the initial question posed in your 10-minute play, it's essential to flesh out your characters, setting, and the conflicts that stem from those questions. 3. Omit exposition The time constraint of a 10-minute play necessitates skipping exposition entirely. Prose such as dialogue or stage directions should only be included if they serve a purpose in advancing the plot. This approach allows you to maintain focus on the core elements of your narrative and ensure that every second counts. 4. Introduce conflict quickly! It's equally important to introduce conflict swiftly, ensuring that the audience understands why they're invested in the story from the outset. The introduction of conflict shouldn't be delayed; it should occur within the first minute at the latest. 5. Utilize the play as an instrument for answering your question Your entire narrative should strive to respond to the initial query posed at its inception. This might manifest as a climactic resolution or a more nuanced, thought-provoking conclusion. The entire production should seek to provide some level of insight into the question asked initially. To create a successful 10-minute play, don't be afraid to experiment and take risks with your story. With such a short time constraint, you can get creative without wasting too much time. One of the most exciting aspects of writing a 10-minute play is the experimentation you can incorporate into your story. It can be in a draft or even in the piece itself, allowing you to try out new ideas without worrying about committing too much time. One common mistake people make when writing a short story or a full-length play is trying to cram an entire narrative into such a limited timeframe. A 10-minute play should have its own unique essence and not be forced to conform to longer formats. It's essential to focus on what works best for the 10-minute format, avoiding unnecessary elements that may dilute the impact of your story. Instead of relying solely on dialogue, consider incorporating more action into your script. This will not only make your story more engaging but also provide opportunities for actors to showcase their skills. Moreover, it's crucial to evaluate whether your idea is specifically suited for a 10-minute play or if it would be better suited for a longer format. When writing a 10-minute play, remember that time is of the essence. Cut out any unnecessary details and focus on delivering your main message within the given timeframe. This might require making tough decisions about what to keep and what to cut, but ultimately, it will make your story more efficient and impactful. One Minute Plays: A Theatre Equivalent to Popular Music's Relevance You can access One Minute Plays by Steve Ansell, Rose Burnett Bonczek, Steve Ansell, Rose Burnett Bonczek in PDF and/or ePUB format, as well as other popular books in Literature & Theatre. We have over one million books available in our catalogue for you to explore. A good one-minute play is like a shooting star, it burns bright, and then it's gone... but it remains in the memory forever. (Jan Wilson, Gi60 director) The one-minute play is the theatrical equivalent of a classic rock'n'roll 45. It makes its point quickly, it's irreverent, it comes in many flavours, it doesn't always follow the rules, and most importantly, it's got something for everybody. The history of popular music and the pop charts is filled with humour, pathos, love, politics, novelty, one-hit wonders, and of course, legendary talents. The melting pot of creativity, diversity, and freedom that typifies the pop charts' hey-days, where Elvis Presley's visceral Hard Headed Woman can sit happily alongside The Purple People Eater, can also be seen in a one-minute theatre festival. Popular music was initially dismissed as little more than a fad for the newly invented "teenagers" in the 1950s. Those (now quite mature) teenagers never stopped listening, and popular music has become the most enduring, accessible, and ubiquitous form of creative expression in Western society. This short form of (musical) expression, "the three-minute single," can handle the most serious and the most nuanced of subjects as well as the most esoteric and silly. When Neil Young penned Ohio in June 1970 as a response to the student shootings at Kent State University, he didn't write a book or pen a letter to Congress; instead, he managed to shine a light on a dark moment in American history and articulate the anger and despair of a nation in just under three minutes. No symphony or concerto could have made a more powerful or singular emotional statement. When I heard Billy Bragg sing St. Swithin's Day for the first time, it said more to me about love and heartbreak in two and half minutes than any opera or theatrical musical could ever hope to do. Young and Bragg's vehicle for expression is "popular" music, so called because it's open to every body and was therefore viewed, in certain quarters, as not serious. Popular music now forms an integral part of our lives. The one-minute play may never be viewed with the same reverence that popular music rightfully enjoys, but the one-minute play holds the same opportunities as the pop song. Its strength lies, like that of the pop song, in its irrelevance: its ability to tackle any and all subjects, no matter how high-minded, surreal, metaphysical, or just downright silly. Detractors seem keen to dismiss the one-minute play as not serious and little more than a sketch show for those with limited concentration spans. When the first Gi60 festival took place in 2004, one local newspaper proclaimed from billboards in the town that "Theatre experiments with tiny plays." The publicity was really appreciated, but using the word "experiment" somehow made it sound as if we were doing something sinister, perhaps lurking in a darkened rehearsal room armed with scissors and crazy glue ready to mutilate unsuspecting plays like the playwriting equivalent of The Island of Doctor Moreau. A few years later, a local journalist wrote an article that seemed to suggest that the one-minute play was a clear indicator that theatre, and possibly society itself, was in ruins. Once again, we were reminded of popular music's early years and society's outrage at the "bad influence" of rock'n'roll. Seemingly, a very small play can cause very big emotions. The one-minute play is brash, unapologetic, and to some the "enfant terrible" of the theatre world (we'll take that as a compliment). Rather than dismiss the form's detractors, we consider that their fears and concerns go a long way toward explaining the potency and power of the one-minute play and, perhaps more importantly, what makes it such a vibrant and exciting form. The most usual argument fired at short-format theatre is that 60 seconds or a single page of text cannot possibly provide a platform for serious writing. This is evidenced by citing the fact that so many one-minute scripts are humorous. There may be some merit in this: many one-minute plays do take the narrative arc of a "joke" or a "sketch" with a single punch line. These are very funny pieces of theatre and also! Comedy is a serious business, as W.C. Fields once said, and short-format theatre is no exception. These tiny plays can tackle a wide range of emotions, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Works like Helen Elliot's The Collective Memory of Humans, Being, Sean Burn's Mistah, Ruben Carbajal's Moment Before Impact, and Meron Langsner's Stating the Obvious are all deeply moving and well-crafted pieces that showcase the power of short-format theatre. Tiny plays can handle big emotions just as easily as they can tiny ones. They can be funny or sad, light or dark; but ultimately, their purpose is to tell a story that resonates with the audience. And it's not just writers who are drawn to this format: people from all walks of life are encouraged to participate. I'm a mechanic by trade, and my writing experience is limited to one course I took while serving in the Navy. But Gi60 appeals to people like me, speaking directly to those who might otherwise be overlooked. All you need is a story to tell or something to say and that's exactly what this format offers. We've been asked how writers come up with their ideas for one-minute plays, and Kevin Clyne's answer is revealing: "it drives people to write, not just writers." This format is perfect for newcomers, offering an achievable goal and a platform for everyone to share their stories. It's a way in for those who might otherwise be intimidated by traditional forms. But what about experienced writers? While it may seem counterintuitive, the one-minute play can also be a challenge for seasoned playwrights. As Meron Langsner notes, "a 60-second white-knuckle ride with nowhere to hide" requires clarity, economy, and flair in just one minute. There's no room for error or excess: every word, every gesture must serve the story. Creating the Idea, Structure, and Story of Your Play: A Beginner's Guide This story is about exploring the fundamental elements of a play and learning how to shape them into a captivating narrative. The essential conflict or problem at the heart of your story can be summarized as "good vs. evil." However, you can also choose other forces in opposition, such as innocence vs. corruption, ignorance vs. enlightenment, or illusion vs. reality. The journey of the story itself is crucial. Will it follow a linear path, or will it loop back on itself? Perhaps your characters embark on separate journeys that intersect briefly before coming full circle. Understanding this narrative arc is vital to crafting a compelling story. A specific location and its unique rules are necessary for setting your play in motion. Establish clear boundaries and guidelines for the world of your play, such as time manipulation or supernatural creatures. This will help you build a cohesive and immersive environment that enhances your storytelling. For beginners, it's essential to establish some basic ground rules. Start by deciding on the length of your play, whether it's a short sketch, one act, or full-length production. Develop a clear understanding of how your story begins, builds momentum, and reaches its climax. Make sure to include a semi-climax at the end of Act One that leaves audiences eagerly anticipating what comes next. Determine which genre you're writing in: comedy, drama, musical, or something else from the outset. This will help guide your writing style and ensure your play is easy to produce. Consider who your target audience is and tailor your content accordingly. Keep production costs in mind by making costumes, effects, and sets easy to set up and change. Finally, don't forget about the importance of spelling, grammar, and layout. Ensure that your manuscript meets the publisher's standards before submitting it for review. To submit your play

### How to write a 10-minute play. One minute write. One minute play.

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