

Script Savvy's Scorecard and Feedback

Title: (withheld)

Author: (withheld)

Feedback is the combined scores and remarks from 2 judges.
On a scale of 1-10, 1= poor, 10= excellent.

Writing Essentials = 9

Spelling, grammar, punctuation = 9

A low score indicates that there are enough errors and typos to possibly affect the overall impression your script makes. Be sure to proofread carefully.

Notes = There are some small errors, such as in Allison's dialogue on page 26 when she says, "I don't know what do" (should be "to do"). But generally, the spelling, grammar and punctuation are clean.

Format = 10

A low score indicates that the author should consult a format guide. We recommend "The Screenwriter's Bible" by David Trottier.

Notes = The screenplay format is professional and accurate.

Narrative = 8

This score reflects the degree in which the author paints pictures with words concisely and creates an appropriate/effective tone for the script.

Avoid overly verbose narrative that resembles a novel vs. a screenplay. Script narrative is concise and to the point, while being vivid at the same time. Study the pros to see how complex imagery is expressed in short, punchy sentences.

Notes = The narrative is concise and clear, but there are times where it could be a bit more descriptive. Although the main characters are well-described when they are first introduced, since there are only a few main characters, they could be developed a bit more throughout the narrative – certain mannerisms, etc. to make them come more fully alive.

Scene construction, placement, and rhythm = 9

This score reflects the degree in which the author exhibits a sense of rhythm and timing. Whether the scenes "come in late and leave early" – letting the audience catch up or infer what is going on, rather than over-explaining and rehashing moments/ideas. It reflects the effectiveness of the script's pacing.

Notes = The scenes are constructed fairly simply, which works well for the script because there's a lot of tension and who's-with-who involved in each scene. The screenplay also moves at a quick pace.

Dialogue = 8

Natural/realistic dialogue = 8

This score reflects the author's ability to create dialogue that has the simple ring of truth. Screenplay dialogue should sound like eavesdropping on real life, with the complex and messy patterns of speech we hear every day. A low score indicates that the dialogue was stilted, wooden, formal, or overly verbose.

Notes = The dialogue sounds realistic, and Sherry and Allison's conversations especially ring true. The men's dialogue is a little less natural; for example, it's difficult to get a sense of Matthew's character through his dialogue alone. (His character is mostly built upon what others, mainly Allison, say about him.)

One thing to be careful of is how many exclamation marks are used in the dialogue. In Act One especially, Sherry has a large amount of lines that end with an exclamation mark, which often makes her sound overly chipper. Punctuation like this should be somewhat reserved for particular lines so that they mean more the few times they are used.

Vibrant/fresh/original = 7

Creating a distinctive voice for each character = 7

Be sure to use dialogue as a means of characterization. For example, a bully might interrupt everyone all the time whereas a shy person might speak in short, mumbled sentences. Be sure to give each character their own quirks, rhythms and speech patterns that illuminate something about who they are on the inside. No two characters should sound exactly alike.

Notes = The writer needs to do a little more work to make each character sound unique. Though there would be some similarities in how each of the characters speak since they are friends and neighbors, the characters for the most part sound too much alike. For example, Allison should sound much more educated than Matthew. Though Allison does sound smart, Matthew doesn't really reveal much character through his dialogue. And Evan's dialogue is also vague in revealing anything about his personality. There is a little bit of suspicion about him (it's not surprising that he is having an affair) but the dialogue doesn't come across enough as though he's hiding something.

Avoiding overt exposition = 8

Be sure to avoid exposition in dialogue. Rather than explaining things outright, find more creative ways to impart information. We recommend that all authors read their work aloud with a friend or fellow writer. Any lines that sound more like pronouncements for the audience's sake should be removed or reworked to sound more natural. Recommended reading: "Creating Characters: Let Them Whisper Their Secrets" by Marisa D'Vari.

Notes = The writer tries to avoid exposition by having the characters engage in conversations, but sometimes these conversations sound a bit forced – the character of Bridget, for example, is placed solely to impart knowledge to Sherry (and, therefore, to the viewer.) Perhaps her character could be introduced earlier so that she doesn't seem out of place.

Characters = 7

How compelling is the protagonist (scale of 1-10) = 7

Notes = Sherry is relatable and sympathetic. It might be good to develop her a bit further, though. She is obviously needy, but it's never quite explained whether it is her neediness that drove Evan to have an affair, or whether some part of her knows that Evan is cheating and therefore she is needy *now*.

Also, it is difficult to imagine her with Matthew, even as a one-night-stand; she does say that she was very drunk, but there might need to be some other reason or attraction between them to explain this a bit more.

Is the character arc well-rendered = 7

Be sure to give your lead character a strong arc illustrating how their journey has changed them internally from the beginning of the story to the end. These changes should be incremental, logical based on the character's experiences, and illustrated through behavior. Giving your character a strong arc enhances the overall impact the story will have on the reader/audience.

Notes = Though Sherry is the protagonist, most of the dramatic character arc involves Allison. For Sherry to be a truly compelling protagonist, she needs to "lead" the story a bit more. She is always one step behind the rest of the characters – at some point, she should be able to figure things out for herself.

Vivid and distinctive supporting roles = 8

Notes = Allison is a very well-written character. Though it is a surprise that she is having an affair with Evan, it is not quite a surprise that she has been betraying Sherry. Despite her seemingly nice exterior, there is something deceiving about her character. The writer does a very good job at hinting at this without making it too obvious or overt.

Matthew could be developed a little further – he veers back and forth from being somewhat nice (to Summer, for example) and completely evil.

There isn't a clear explanation for Evan's betrayal – is he bored of marriage? Not in love with Sherry? It might be good to give us more insight in this regard.

*Recommended reading:
Creating Unforgettable Characters by Linda Seger*

Plot = 7

Rate how engaging or engrossing the overall concept is = 7

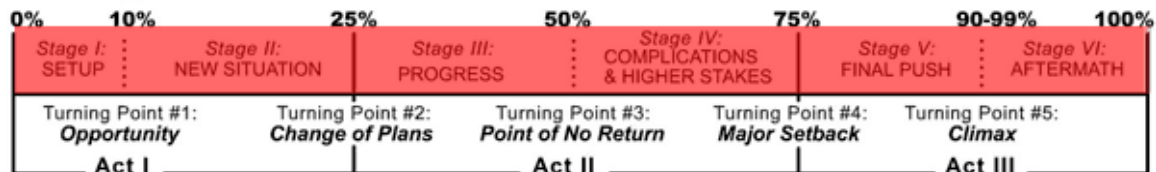
Rate how well defined the plotpoints and Act breaks are = 8

Act One, how well are the characters and conflicts set up = 8

Act Two, does tension mount? Is the midpoint effective = 7

Act Three, is the conclusion emotionally satisfying = 6

Screenplays should have 3 clear Act breaks with plotpoints that fall at specific intervals.



No matter what genre you're working in, applying these techniques will help give your script a more engrossing overall dramatic arc. Recommended reading: Story by Robert McKee

Notes = The main idea of the story is well-conceived, and it has the “you never know what goes on in neighbor’s homes” type of feel. It seems like a realistic, albeit slightly dramatic, friends/neighbors story.

The writer does a good job at providing enough twists and turns. Matthew and Sherry’s one-night stand, as well as Allison and Evan’s affair, are both surprising; it is especially surprising that Allison was never sleeping with Guy.

One thing to try to clarify in the screenplay is how devious Allison is supposed to be. Did she know she was going to use Guy to tease Matthew all along, or was she swept up in the idea of meeting him after placing the ad and then decided to use him that way later?

Another confusing aspect is when Sherry accuses Evan of placing the butcher knife in her pillow. It doesn’t make clear sense why Evan would want to make Sherry go crazy – unless he is trying to frame Matthew?

For this type of story to work, the motives of each character need to be as clear as possible. It’s tricky, for sure, because you have to make the audience understand the characters without giving things away in the wrong places. But the author shows the talent to bring this script up to the next level in this regard.

Originality = 7

Author exhibits a fresh and original style = 7

Characters and situations are unique = 7

Author creates innovative visual imagery = 7
Rate the level of lasting impression the story leaves = 7

Notes = In a way, the characters are supposed to seem familiar. This is meant to have an every-woman/every-man/suburbia feel to it (with stuff lurking beneath the surface) – and the author has achieved that well.

Marketability = 7

The script has an easily defined hook (10 = yes, 1 = no) = 8
Script has potential to attract top talent to the roles = 7
Has a target audience = 7
Has potential in a particular market = 7

Notes = This film would be a bit tricky to market because it really relies upon the twists in the story line, which would be difficult to promote without spoiling the surprises. A preview would have to rely upon introducing the characters and main story, which is lacking the kind of hook studios look for. So with that in mind, this seems more well-suited to the indie marketplace where more character-driven projects can thrive. If the author goes a bit deeper with the protag's character development and clarifies some of the motivations of the supporting roles, this script would attract an interesting ensemble of talent.

Writing Essentials = 9

Dialogue = 8

Characters = 7

Plot = 7

Originality = 7

Marketability = 7

TOTAL SCORE = 45

Further Reading:

Making a Good Script Great by Linda Seger (for good scripts that need tweaking)
Story by Robert McKee (for plot construction issues)
Creating Unforgettable Characters by Linda Seger (for characterization)

Screenplays: The Good Girl

Professional screenplays of produced films are available free online at www.scripts.com or www.script-o-rama.com.