



Coffee Shop Screenwriter

A Story-Telling RPG



1 +



1 - 2 Hours



Designed by
William Long

"To make a great film you need three things -
the script,
the script
and the script."

Alfred Hitchcock



INT. HOME - MORNING

The sun shines through the cracks in your curtains.

You never slept last night. It was the most adventurous night of your life.

Your phone RINGS. It's your agent.

AGENT

(overly cheerful)

Morning, sunshine! How are you doing?

YOU

Ugh...

AGENT

That good, huh? Are we still on track to receive your screenplay today? If not, the producers said that they're finally going to blacklist you.

You check your calendar. Written in blood-red letters beneath today's date is the single, ominous word: DEADLINE.

You then glance at your laptop. The writing program is open, showing a single white page. It's blank.

You'd forgotten all about it.

YOU

There's just a few final tweaks I need to make. You'll have it by the end of the day.

AGENT

I better...

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

You look into the coffee shop as though it's your final lifeline. All you need is a cup of coffee and then you'll be fine... Right?

FADE TO:

INTRO.



Overview

You are an unsuccessful screenwriter who needs to send your latest screenplay to your agent by the end of the day. Unfortunately you haven't written it yet and you didn't sleep last night so, in a desperate final attempt, you go to your favourite coffee shop to write, in the hope that caffeine will make you more creative.

You will need

- **Two six-sided dice**
- **Four sheets of paper** (or copies of the Screenplay, Character, Coffee Shop and Movie List sheets supplied with the game.)
- **Something to write or draw with** (pen, pencil, typewriter...)

About the game

Coffee Shop Screenwriter is a story-telling role-playing game for one or more players. Each player takes the role of the screenwriter as they're frantically trying to write an original screenplay whilst sitting in a coffee shop.

By the end of the game you will have come up with an idea for a screenplay, whilst also developing the character of your screenwriter, discovering more about the coffee shop you're writing from, and you will have made a list of the movies that have inspired your screenplay.

It's up to you how much you want to write down. You could jot down notes or you could even draw aspects of your screenplay, character, and coffee shop if you'd prefer. The screenplay beats your character is following are also used by professional Hollywood screenwriters, so if you are feeling really adventurous you could use this game to actually write a feature-length screenplay.

HOW TO PLAY.



The Sheets

Print off the Screenplay, Character, Coffee Shop and Movie List sheets or take four sheets of paper and title them.

Screenplay: This is the main sheet you'll use in the game. This is the sheet that you will be writing or drawing your responses to the Screenplay Beats on. Write the current Act number along the line as you go. Depending on how much you write or draw, you may need more than one sheet.

Character Sheet: You'll use this sheet to write or draw anything related to the character of the screenwriter you're playing.

Coffee Shop: You'll use this sheet to write or draw anything related to the coffee shop that you're writing in.

Movie List: You'll use this sheet to write down the names of the movies that your screenwriter draws inspiration from.

Caffeine

Your writing ability is directly affected by the level of caffeine in your system. When you're full of caffeine you're able to come up with original ideas and draw on your life experience in creative ways but when you're running low on caffeine you resort to stealing ideas from other movies you've seen or you even just look around the coffee shop and draw ideas from what you can see around you.

You'll need two six-sided dice. One of them will show the level of caffeine in your system and the other will show how much money you have.

Set the Caffeine Die to 1. You haven't had any coffee yet, and you didn't sleep last night, so you're tired.

Set the Money Die to 6. You've come to the coffee shop with six pounds, and luckily for you they're selling coffee for a pound per cup.

Your caffeine level will determine where you can draw your ideas from. (See the **Caffeine Level** chart on the **Turn Reference** sheet on **page 15**.) You'll choose one of two options out of a total of four:

Original Idea: You're on top of your game and can literally come up with anything you put your mind to. Draw a little lightning bolt ⚡ next to your original idea on the Screenplay sheet to remind you of the time that you were struck by a bolt of true inspiration. *You're a genius!*

Life Experience: You use an element of your real life as a source of inspiration. It can be something from your current life, a past experience (maybe something that happened last night), or a hope for the future. Add the real life experience to your Character Sheet. *You're a sensitive poet.*

A Movie: You take another movie as inspiration and change it just a little bit so that your agent won't recognise it. Add the title of the movie to your Movie List. If it's more similar to one of the movies your screenwriter loves draw a heart ♥ next to it. If it's more similar to one of the movies your screenwriter hates draw an X next to it. You could also use a movie that's already on the list as inspiration, if you do then draw a heart next to it. This serves as a reminder of your influences at the end of the game. *You're a hack.*

The Coffee Shop: You're tired as can be and can only muster up enough energy to look around you. What or who do you see in the coffee shop? Maybe it's a couple having a conversation. Maybe it's art on the wall. Maybe it's a dog quietly peeing in the corner. Maybe it's something you see happening outside the window. Use what you see as your inspiration and then write or draw it on the Coffee Shop Sheet. If you're using something that's already there as inspiration then draw a heart next to it to show that it's been used more than once. *You're too tired and need more coffee.*

At the beginning of your turn you can spend one pound (reduce the Money Die by one) to buy a cup of coffee and increase your caffeine level by four (increase your Caffeine Die by four). The Caffeine Die cannot go higher than six, so choose when to buy another coffee wisely. You don't want to run out of steam too soon.

The Caffeine Die is reduced by one at the beginning of each turn. If the Caffeine Die is set to one at the beginning of your turn it remains on one unless you buy a cup of coffee.

The Screenplay Beats

The Screenplay Beats are the heart of the game. These are the story beats that your screenwriter is following to write their screenplay. The beats have questions about your story that you have to consider and answer to write your screenplay.

On your turn you will look at the next beat, read it out loud, and then resolve it. How you resolve it depends on your caffeine level. If you draw your inspiration from Life Experience, Another Movie, or The Coffee Shop you may add something new to one of the relevant sheets or you may use something that has been used previously. If you do use something that is already on the sheet, draw a little heart next to it to show that it's been used again.

If you wish, you may have a short discussion with the other players, but the final decision is that of the current player.

The game is split into five Acts. Each Act has a short description and a question for you to answer as a group. Write your response on the appropriate sheet.

Turn Order

1. Reduce the Caffeine Die by one.
2. Decide if you want to spend one pound to increase your Caffeine Level by four or if you want to leave the Caffeine Level where it is.
3. Read the next Screenplay Beat.
4. Check your Caffeine Level and resolve the Screenplay Beat. Write or draw your answer on the Screenplay Sheet. Fill in any relevant information on the Character Sheet, Movie List, or Coffee Shop Sheet.

SET UP.



Before you start, we need to establish a few things about your screenwriter, the coffee shop, and the screenplay you're going to write.

The Screenwriter

As a group, come up with a name for your Screenwriter and write it at the top of the Character Sheet.

Each player comes up with one movie the screenwriter loves and one movie that they hate. In a one or two-player game, each player comes up with two. Add them to the Movie List.

Each player then suggests a reason that the screenwriter didn't sleep last night. Then decide as a group which one to use and write it on the Character Sheet.

Coffee Shop

As a group, decide where the coffee shop is. (Is it in a city? On a beach? In an airport? On another planet?) Write it down on the Coffee Shop sheet.

Each player then comes up with one feature of the coffee shop (such as atmosphere, decoration, customers etc.). In a one or two-player game, come up with two each. Write or draw them on the Coffee Shop sheet.

Screenplay

Each player suggests a genre the screenplay should be (comedy, thriller, horror etc). Decide as a group which one you'll use, or maybe combine two of them (eg. comedy-horror, romantic-thriller etc.). Write the genre at the top of the Screenplay Sheet.

You're ready to play!

SCREENPLAY BEATS.



ACT ONE The Set-Up

You walk into the Coffee Shop and take a seat. You look over to the barista making coffee. What is their name? What is your first impression of them? Write your response on the Coffee Shop Sheet.

I.

Who is the hero of your story? (What is their name, age and occupation?)

2.

Where does the hero live? (What's their home like? Do they have family or are they alone?)

3.

What is the hero's occupation? (Do they work? Are they at school? Are they looking for a job? Are they happy there?)

4.

What is the hero's world like? (Do they live in an oppressive city ruled by a dictator? Are they stranded on a desert island? What year is it? Explain the world that the story takes place in.)

5.

How is the hero flawed? (Do they have a weakness? A fear? An addiction? Do they treat people poorly?)

6.

Something happens that pulls the hero out of their normal day-to-day life. What is it? (Maybe they meet a love-interest. Maybe a killer strikes. Maybe someone tells them that their partner is a spy. This is the beginning of the story).

7.

The hero makes a morally wrong decision because of their flaw. What is it and how does it affect the people around them? (Maybe they're greedy and steal someone's birthday cake. Maybe they don't stick up for a friend at work because they're more focused on their career than helping their friends.)

8.

Does the hero have allies or are they a loner? (If they have allies then who are they? If the hero is a loner then why are they a loner?)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Progress

You feel like you're making good progress. You start to think that it doesn't matter that you didn't get much sleep last night but then you suddenly remember something that happened last night that you had forgotten. What was it? Write it down on the Character Sheet.

9.

What is the hero's goal? (This is the main thread of the story. What are they hoping to achieve by the end of the story? To win something? To stop something? To save something? To deliver something? To escape?)

10.

Who is the hero's main opponent and what is their goal? (What are they trying to do? How are they standing in the way of the hero's goal?)

11.

The hero receives some new information that affects their goal. What is it? (How did they find out?)

12.

The hero comes up with a new plan to achieve their goal. What is it? (Why might this plan succeed over their original plan? Does it seem easier or harder?)

I3.

The hero uncovers a mystery. (What is it? How does it affect their goal and their plan?)

I4.

The hero starts to act on their plan but their opponent gets in their way. (How does the opponent disrupt their plan and how does the hero retaliate?)

I5.

The hero takes a shortcut and tries to achieve their goal sooner but something goes wrong and they fail. (What did they try to do and why did they fail?)

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

Complications & Higher Stakes

You start to feel a little stuck. The middle is always the hardest part to write. Just as you're about to have a major breakthrough something unexpected happens in the Coffee Shop. What is it? Write it down on the Coffee Shop Sheet.

I6.

An ally attacks the hero. Why? How does the hero react? (Maybe the hero has gone off the rails and the ally is trying to set them on the right path again. Or maybe the ally was secretly an opponent working against the hero).

OR

If the hero is a loner they hurt themselves as a result of their own action or inaction. (What did they do and how did they hurt themselves?)

I7.

It looks like the hero won't be able to achieve their goal. They give up. Why? (What happened? If they have an ally, how do they react?)

I8.

The opponent get's one step closer to achieving their goal. (What do they do? How does this affect the hero?)

I9.

The hero receives a new piece of information about their goal. (They realise that they still might be able to achieve their goal, even if the chances of success are razor-thin. What information do they receive?)

20.

The hero decides not to give up. (They're going to give their all and put all their efforts into one final attempt to achieve the goal. What changed their mind? What is their new plan?)

21.

Something terrible happens. (The main character must face death in the face [literally or figuratively]. What happens?)

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

The Climax

You're really getting into the swing of things. You can't remember the last time a story came so naturally to you. The barista sees that you're hard at work. They come up to you and offer you a coffee for absolutely free. What type of coffee do they offer you? Do you accept it? If so, increase your Caffeine Die by four without reducing your Money Die.

22.

The hero and their opponent meet face to face. (The opponent is the only thing standing in the way of the hero achieving their goal. How is the opponent preventing the hero from achieving their goal?)

23.

The hero and their opponent fight. (This is the hero's last chance to achieve their goal. What does this fight look like? It could be a physical fight, a chase, a competition, or even a battle of wits. Who wins?)

24.

The hero achieves their goal. (How did they do this? What does this mean for them now?)

OR

The hero fails to achieve their goal. (How does it turn out that their failure benefits the main character and their allies more than if they had achieved it?)

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

Aftermath

You're almost there! Just the final few scenes left to write. You're feeling so confident that you can finish this before the coffee shop closes that you take a minute to check what films are playing at the nearest cinema, so you can catch a movie when you've finished. What movie are you going to see? Is it a new one or a re-run? Add it to the Movie List.

25.

The hero has changed because of this story. (They have now overcome their flaw and make a morally right decision. What is it and how is it a positive result?)

26.

The adventure is finally over and the hero returns to their normal life. (How will things now be better for the hero? Do they go home? Do they return to work? What does it look like?)

END OF ACT FIVE

THE TITLE

You've finished your screenplay and you feel great about it. It might just be the best thing you've ever written. The only thing you have to do now is to give it a title.

As a group, give your screenplay a title. Write it at the top of the Screenplay Sheet.

Congratulations! You've finished your screenplay and your agent loves it.

It's sure to be a box-office success.

END OF THE GAME

SCORING.



The joy of **Coffee Shop Screenwriter** is all in the story you tell, and less about winning or losing. However, if you like to keep score, we've got you covered with two ways to score. One way determines how proud your screenwriter is with their screenplay and the other determines how successful their screenplay becomes.

Pride

Your screenwriter prides themselves on their originality. Count up the lightning bolts ⚡ on the Screenplay sheet (which mark all of your original ideas) to see how proud your screenwriter is with their screenplay.

- 0-3 Not at all.** Ugh...
- 3-7 A little.** There are a few neat ideas in here.
- 8-11 A lot.** So much originality in a single script!
- 12+ Incredibly!** This might just be their masterpiece.

Success

Audiences love films that are similar to other films that they like but if there are too many similarities you might have a lawsuit on your hands. Count up the hearts ♥ on the Movie List to see how successful your screenplay becomes.

- 0-4 Not at all.** It's so unique no one even produces it.
- 5-9 Cult hit.** Your film gathers a cult following.
- 10-14 Blockbuster!** Your film is a blockbuster smash hit!
- 15-19 Copycat.** Audiences feel like they've seen it before...
- 20+ Lawsuit.** Oh no! You're being sued for copyright infringement.



TURN REFERENCE.



Turn Order

1. Reduce the Caffeine Die by one.
2. Decide if you want to spend one pound to increase your Caffeine Level by four or if you want to leave the Caffeine Level where it is.
3. Read the next Screenplay Beat.
4. Check your Caffeine Level and resolve the Screenplay Beat. Write or draw your answer on the Screenplay Sheet. Fill in any relevant information on the Character Sheet, Movie List, or Coffee Shop Sheet.

Caffeine Level

Caffeine Level (Number on Die)	Inspiration		
6	Original Idea	-OR-	Life Experience
5	Original Idea	-OR-	Life Experience
4	A Movie	-OR-	Life Experience
3	A Movie	-OR-	The Coffee Shop
2	A Movie	-OR-	The Coffee Shop
1	A Movie	-OR-	The Coffee Shop

GAME SHEETS.



Print out the following four sheets: **Screenplay**, **Character**, **Coffee Shop**, and **Movie List**.

These are the four sheets you will be using to write or draw on during the game.

Depending on how much you want to write, you might need to print out more than one **Screenplay** sheet.

Alternatively you could even use blank sheets of paper, or even a writing program, to write out your answers. Just add the title to the top of each sheet so you can keep track of them.

SCREENPLAY.

A decorative flourish consisting of a thin, dark line that starts with a small circle, loops upwards and to the right, then curves back down and to the left, ending in a small loop.

ACT ONE.

A vertical line on the left side of the page, starting from the level of 'ACT ONE.' and extending down to the bottom. It has short horizontal bars at the top, middle, and bottom.

CHARACTER.

A decorative flourish consisting of a thin, dark line that starts from the right edge of the page, curves upwards and to the left, then loops back to the right, ending in a small circle. It passes under the word 'CHARACTER.'

COFFEE SHOP.



MOVIE LIST.

