

Giving feedback to clients

The following is a list of guidelines for providing feedback to my clients. Obviously each story is different, so in some cases these guidelines might not exactly apply. I'm flexible and I understand that each reader will have her/his own style and strengths and I'm open to that. But I would like to achieve a certain amount of consistency with the notes that we provide so if you're going to stray too far from the guidelines, please check with me first.

The service I'm selling is 2-3 pages of detailed notes. More is good, but please always try and provide at least 2 solid pages of constructive feedback so that people feel like they got their monies worth.

When pointing out specific details, problems, typos, etc. please note the page number. This is especially important for typos. For example if you wanted to call out a point in the script on page forty-two about half way down you might write something like this: "When Joe gets stabbed (pg 42.5) his reaction seems unnatural."

You do NOT need to write a log line for the script and you do NOT need to write a summary of the story. In fact, when I've paid for notes that's one of my pet peeves. I've had notes services provide me with 5 pages of notes but 3 of them are the reader simply recapping what happened in the screenplay. I wrote it. I didn't need a recap! So we don't need to provide a recap either. In some cases obviously you'll need to talk about the story to illustrate your point, that's fine, but the 2-3 pages of notes should hopefully be chalk full of constructive help for the writers not regurgitating what the writer already knows.

The notes should be provided in PDF format, please. If you're not sure how to convert a Word doc (or whatever you write them in) into a PDF, please let me know and I'll help you with this.

I'm a big proponent of offering ideas to writers to fix their story. Even if the ideas aren't good, they often help to illustrate the problem and give clarity to the notes. So don't be shy about offering ideas.

If you write a paragraph on each of the following eight points, you should have a solid 2-3 pages of notes.

Each heading has bullet points under it with questions. The questions are really just offered as a helpful guideline to make writing each section easier. All stories won't need all questions answered (obviously).

1. Overall
 - Keep this section mainly positive, please. Talk mainly about the strengths of the script. You'll get into the specific problems in all the other sections.
2. Concept / Premise
 - Is the concept original, fresh, and does it have a hook?
 - Did the writer get the most out of the premise or was it underdeveloped?
 - Is there a clear conflict in the story?
3. Characters
 - Are the characters dimensional?
 - Are the characters distinct with their own voices?
 - Does the dialogue work? Is it clever or dull? Could it be improved?
 - Is the protagonist likeable?
 - Is the protagonist someone who people will be able to relate to, at least on some level?
 - Does the protagonist have a clear goal?
 - Does the protagonist have a clear arc?
 - Is there a clear antagonist?
4. Structure
 - Is there a clear beginning, middle and end?
 - Does the script have a solid structure?
 - Does the story move forward? Good pacing?
 - Are there scenes that could and should be cut?
5. Marketability
 - Is this story marketable?
 - Does the screenplay have a clear audience?
6. Tone
 - Is the tone consistent?
 - Does the tone fit the concept?
 - Are there any scenes, dialogue, or characters that seem to shift tone?
7. Formatting, spelling, and craft
 - Are there any spelling errors or typos? List as many as you can find.
 - Is the script properly formatted?
 - Does the script read like it was written by a professional writer?
8. Closing Notes
 - Give every screenplay an overall grade of either Pass, Consider, Recommend and tell us what lead to this grade.
 - What are the key areas the writer needs to work on to improve the script?
 - What are the biggest strengths of the script?

The notes should look roughly like this:

---- Example ----

Script Title

Script Author

Date

Script Reader

Grade (pass, consider, recommend)

Overall

Your notes go here. Notes, notes notes notes, and more notes. And even more notes. Wow this is a lot of notes.

Concept / Premise

Your notes go here. Notes, notes notes notes, and more notes. And even more notes. Wow this is a lot of notes.

Characters

Your notes go here. Notes, notes notes notes, and more notes. And even more notes. Wow this is a lot of notes.

...

...

...

Closing Notes

Your notes go here. Notes, notes notes notes, and more notes. And even more notes. Wow this is a lot of notes.

---- END Example ----