



## A student's guide to scripting an audiovisual

NAFIS IMTIAZ ONISH

In recent years, AVs have transcended beyond just the commercial sphere. Students are more and more involved in making AVs for academic purposes. Applying for higher studies abroad often requires video essays. Furthermore, the rise of student-level branding competitions ushers in creative submissions which more often than not require making ads, team videos or campaign videos.

So, if you are seeking some tips for making an AV for that upcoming competition or trying to stand out for scholarships with a unique video essay, this is a good place to start.

### 1. UNDERSTAND THE TONE

This is undoubtedly the most important thing to remember before even starting to draft a script. Every AV is different from the other. Based on the purpose, it can be cheerful, morose, formal, descriptive, dramatic, playful, inspirational etc. It is essential to understand which tone the AV demands. For instance, AVs for products that are already well known can be playful and catchy to make them more memorable. On the other hand, new products need to be more to the point and should give the audience a brief summary of the product. Similarly, some AVs dwell on nostalgia, while patriotic ones possess an inspirational or motivational undertone with a call to action. Every different tone has a different writing and structuring pattern. So, the first thing to figure out is what tone you want to resonate through your AV. Once you have figured that out, we proceed to the next stage.

### 2. VISUALISE THE STORY/NARRATIVE

The second most important stage is to visualise the story or the narrative. There are several aspects that you would need to "visualise". Firstly, figure out which perspective you want the AV to be from. Will it be from a first-person point of view i.e. fixed on a specific character, or will it depict the events from an omniscient perspective. Secondly, decide which medium you want to use i.e. whether it will be a live action AV, a stop-motion, an animation or a combination of multiple media. A helpful thing to remember is that emotion-invoking scripts tend to work best when the audience can actually relate to a character. Therefore, a filmed first-person AV works best in this case. Omnipotent POVs generally help link multiple characters together set in different environments. Informative AVs are retained better when they use savvy eye-

catching techniques with animations. A good writer can see the entire story unravel inside his head. The better you visualise, the easier it becomes to flesh out a detailed script.

These two stages of planning are keys to the script as these set the foundation for the written monologue. Once you are effectively done with planning, you can now move on to scripting the dialogues and narrations.

### 3. KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS

A classic rookie mistake is penning down the script without keeping your limitations in mind. You can write a science-fiction epic but unless you have a high-end device, the skills and good funding, it may as well turn out to be worse than '80s CGI. Remember, words hold more power than merely audacious shots. So, when you write the script, know what you are capable of executing and what you are not in the specified duration. If the script is

good enough, even a mediocre phone camera can produce a fulfilling AV.

### 4. FEEL THE RHYTHM

Every script needs a certain rhythm to it. Long complex sentences often make it sound unnatural and make it a mouthful when narrated. The best way to connect with the audience is through short precise sentences. Incorporating independent clauses or phrases help in keeping the script short, all the while adding a dramatic tone to it. For example, instead of writing, "She was like no other girl, rather, she was an enigma and a mystery that no one could discern" you can break down the sentences as such: "She was like no other girl. She was an enigma, a mystery that none could discern." See the difference? It is highly recommended that you read whatever you write aloud to listen to the rhythm of the script. Make it sound as natural as you can; the closer to an actual dialogue it sounds, the better is its ability to be relatable. Try to avoid too many clichés. Use appropriate punctuations to help the narrator understand how you paced the script.

### 5. STRUCTURE THE SCENES

The final step is to break the scenes down and write short notes for the cinematographer. It helps others see the script through your eyes, the way you visualised it. Be as detailed as you can be to ensure an accurate depiction of your vision.

Hopefully this guide will help you with your first steps in a journey of creativity. Remember, the more you practice, the better you get.

*Nafis Imtiaz Onish believes grinning is the answer to everything and avidly loves art, astronomy & all things nerdy. Send him Carl Sagan fan art at [nafisimtiaz17@gmail.com](mailto:nafisimtiaz17@gmail.com)*

