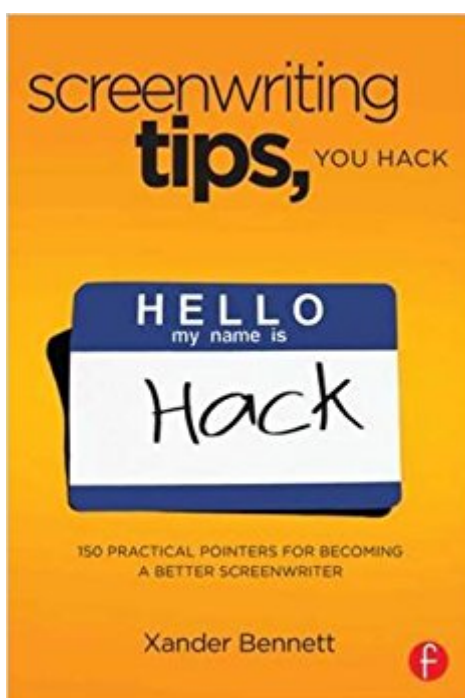


The book was found

Screenwriting Tips, You Hack: 150 Practical Pointers For Becoming A Better Screenwriter



Synopsis

Screenwriting Tip #99 Voice-over usually feels like scaffolding. You know - something you left in there when you were constructing the first draft, but really should have torn out after it served its purpose. Screenwriting Tip #120 Always remember that funny trumps everything. Your script could be written in crayon with your name spelled wrong on the cover, but if it's genuinely funny, none of that matters. Screenwriting Tip #156 The easiest way to write kick-ass protagonists is to make them incredibly good at what they do. Confused at the outline stage? Stuck in the swamp of Act Two? Don't know who your protagonist is or where she's going? You might feel like a hack. But don't worry - you're not alone. Even the most experienced writers feel like this at times. Sometimes we just need a few short pointers and reminders to set us on the path again. Xander Bennett worked as a script reader in the trenches of Hollywood, reading and covering hundreds of mediocre screenplays. After months of reading about heroic Sea World trainers, transgendered circus detectives and crime-fighting chupacabras, he couldn't take it any more. Xander started a blog called 'Screenwriting Tips, You Hack', a place designed to provide short, witty tips on screenwriting for amateur writers all the way up to journeymen scribes. This book is the evolution of that blog. Dozens of the best tips (along with many brand-new ones) have been expanded into bite-sized chapters full of funny, insightful, highly-usable advice. Let Xander's pain be your gain as you learn about the differences between film and television structure, how to force yourself to write when you really don't want to, and why you probably shouldn't base your first spec script around an alien invasion. Get valuable advice from inside the system, written by a former script reader. Go step-by-step through the entire process of writing a screenplay, from concept to first draft to polish to marketing your script. Expanded tips offer real examples of what works and what doesn't, written in a witty and conversational voice. Advice for all levels of screenwriter, from absolute novice to seasoned spec writer. A focus on Hollywood film, while also featuring extra advice for television and writers outside the US.

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Customer Reviews

Exclusive: A Letter from Xander Bennett, Author of Screenwriting Tips, You Hack Dear Readers, Thanks for checking out my book here on . Since you're reading this page, I already know a few things about you: You're interested in screenwriting, and you're looking for some advice, guidance, and encouragement. Here's where I convince you that you've come to the right place. Let's face it, there are a lot of screenwriting books out there. I've read them; you've probably read them too. Many of them are either very serious, woefully outdated, or chiefly concerned with format and structure. Some of the most popular ones offer readers a *one true way* --a supposedly foolproof formula for writing the perfect screenplay. My book is a little different. For starters, I'm going to call you a hack. I mean, it's right there in the title, so there's really no way around it short of covering the book with a paper bag. Why? Because I believe we're all hacks: you, me, and every hard-working writer out there. Even the most experienced writers suffer from anxiety, that feeling that we're not smart enough or strong enough to write the perfect screenplay that exists in our heads. Heck, even Shakespeare complained about how hard it was to be a writer. If we're hacks, then we're in good company. Let's wear it like a badge of honor. This book also breaks from the pack when it comes to content. Sure, I'll tell you the basics: how to write three-act structure, how to write a great logline, how to get an agent (although, these days, it's more likely to be a manager). But I'll also give you the kind of advice you can't learn anywhere else. For instance: How to get inside the mind of your script's villain. When to let your characters talk and when to shut them up. How to force yourself to write when you'd rather do absolutely anything else (e.g., fight bears or drink paint). Why the spec script is one of the most powerful weapons in Hollywood. How to steal dialogue and mannerisms from your loved ones like some kind of crazed, screenwriting Frankenstein. There are a lot of screenwriting advice books out there, but I think you'll find this one's a little different. It won't lie to you, lecture you, or sugar-coat the truth. What it will do is give you a broad range of tricks and techniques with which to tackle your next screenplay. Whether you're about to write your first spec script or your tenth, Screenwriting Tips, You Hack will help you on your

journey. Good luck and happy writing! --Xander Bennett P.S. I solemnly vow that this book contains none of the following words: "filmic," "diegesis," "mise-en-scene," or "auteur." And that's a guarantee.

Three Bonus Screenwriting Tips from Xander Bennett Not Found in Screenwriting Tips, You Hack

1. Stuck on characterization? Sample and remix. What's your protagonist's worldview, the unique way of looking at things that sets her apart? How do you make Minion #2 a different person from Minion #1? And what kind of quirk or mannerisms might you use to bring your secondary characters into the spotlight? Characterization--making fictional people seem real--is hard work. Or is it? If you're looking for the cheap and easy route to character, think remixing. Actors do this all the time ("I'm going to play this crooked businessman like early DeNiro, with a dash of George Bush") and you can do it too. Take a character you know, mix them up and drop them into a new role. Write your love interest as a female version of Gaius Baltar; your sidekick as a teenage Seth Rogen; your villain as "Julius Caesar meets my great-aunt Hilda." Don't worry, the Character Police aren't going to bust your door down for taking inspiration wherever you can find it.

2. Develop your voice. Writers are supposed to have a "voice," right? It's that inimitable style that sets you apart, that makes your scripts read differently from all the others out there. Having a voice is about letting a part of yourself shine through your screenplay... and screenwriting is about selling yourself (or so they say). So how do you get one? Do what all budding novelists do: start by emulating your favorite writer. This comes naturally to prose authors, but for screenwriters it's not so intuitive. Perhaps it's because we watch movies more than we read scripts, but for many writers their first script is written in a passionless, neutral tone. Well, that ain't going to stand out from the pack. Forget what they say about screenplays being "blueprints." Screenplays are symphonies... and you can't make music without passion and style. How do you find your style? Read a lot of scripts to see what the pros' voices sound like. JJ Abrams doesn't read like Aaron Sorkin, who doesn't read like Kurtzman and Orci. Analyze the speed of an Abrams script, or the patter of Sorkin's dialogue, and try to emulate it in your own writing. At first you'll just be copying. But then you'll see the underlying structure, the shape and cadence of a pro writer's style, and your own unique voice will start to take form.

3. Video game scripts benefit from mystery more than other screenplays. In game scripts, even more than other forms of writing, less is more. Partly this is because no player enjoys having control taken away from them--unskippable cutscenes, long intros and pages of elaborate backstory often feel like distractions from the gameplay. Trimming a few lines of NPC dialog, or shortening a popup text box by just a few sentences, can dramatically increase player engagement in the story. What they lose in understanding they make up for in, well, actually caring about your script. It's also because solving puzzles, exploring narratives and uncovering mysteries is what game players do. They're

among the smartest, most engaged screen audiences because they have a direct stake in the story: they're playing it! This allows you to create the sense of a vast world through judicious sprinkling of story clues (as in Bioshock) or through clever use of atmosphere and background details (see Amnesia: The Dark Descent). Portal tells a gripping, life-and-death story with only two characters (one of whom is mute); much of that narrative success can be attributed to never explaining the situation or talking down to the player. In video games, you can write a mystery and expect your audience to engage with it... and probably solve it.

"Bennett's pointers cover all aspects of the writing process, beginning with the mental preparation necessary before you ever put pen to paper, or, fingers to keyboard. He then leads us through the full arc of drafting, revising, polishing, and ultimately pitching and selling your screenplay. Like most screenwriters, Bennett is well-versed in pop culture, and his movie references are a geek's delight...Unless of course, you're too much of a geek, and you notice that his reference to Rocky III teaching us that there's no easy way out actually refers to Rocky IV. Hair-splitting aside, Bennett's easy-to-apply screenwriting tips can only improve your writing."--MoviePie "I've never written a screenplay, but I still believe that Xander Bennett's Screenwriting Tips, You Hack, has made me a better writer. I'm not being facetious here; Bennett's book has given me a much better appreciation for techniques of screenwriting and helped me ask questions about how I write my still-non-screenplay work."--review on DGSwartz.com "Screenwriting Tips, You Hack elaborates upon close to 200 tips from the popular micro-blog that's now under the umbrella of The Black List. These great tips are compiled into helpful chapters on outlining, characters, ideas, rewriting, etc., which makes the book great for referencing when you've hit a particular roadblock in your writing. It also features a ton of helpful real-life examples, from Top Gun and Forrest Gump to Groundhog Day and Breaking Bad. Bennett's experience as a reader definitely informs his effective prose, but the book is filled with suggestions as opposed to complaints. Screenwriting Tips, You Hack is definitely a book that can help you think about your script in a new way - or help you get started on your first script!"--AspiringTVWriter.blogspot "The book is an informative and easy read, but what makes it special is that it appears that every point that can be thought of was thought of and presented. Not only is the advice given sound, there is also support of each point. The way it was written was part of its charm. I found it very amusing and I can honestly say that I learned a few things that I will employ in my future screenplays. If you are a screenwriter, this book is a useful tool with advice that you can take and see how it applies to you and how you write and produce. If you are not a screenwriter, you can learn a great deal about the field and learn a lot about the process. I highly

recommend this book."--Newzbreaker.com "At the top of the top, I found Screenwriting Tips, You Hack; A snarky, witty, to-the-point tip-of-the-day written by Xander Bennett. If you're not familiar with Xander and his daily dose of screenwriting gold, you've been missing some of the simplest screenwriting instruction that the internet has to offer. There are some fantastic long form blogs that go into the weeds of writing or pull back the curtain on the process or chronicle the journey of a struggling writer - and I love all of these and still read them - but what I've really grown to appreciate about Screenwriting Tips is that it is short and to the point. In one sentence Xander can highlight a common mistake, provide an example and offer a solution. That's not easy to do. That's why his blog is a must read."--SteamMyScript.com "Just got my complimentary copy in the mail. Great book. I'd say that even if I hadn't gotten mine for free. Screenwriting Tips, You Hack. 150 Practical Pointers For Becoming A Better Screenwriter by Xander Bennett. It's a VERY useful book. Not as useful as mine, of course, but damn close. Plus, it has an index, which mine does not! He was a reader in Hollywood for a good while. Long enough to know the ins and outs of the business, not long enough to go insane. I am requiring the book for my screenwriting students, and that is a VERY short list."-YourScreenplaySucks.wordpress.com "Are you a screenwriter looking for a magic 8 ball of insider tips and tricks of the trade? Do you feel like a hack? Then you should check out Xander Bennett's hilariously insightful Screenwriting Tips... You Hack: 150 Practical Pointers for Becoming a Better Screenwriter. The book, an evolution of Bennett's infamous screenwriting tips blog, offers tweet-sized tidbits of priceless writing advice for writers at any stage in their career or writing process."--TribecaFilm.com

I am not a professional screenwriter, just one who wants to give it a try. Reading these tips may sound too obvious for the "masters" of screenwriting but yet they are the minimum tasks or advices to follow to get your screenplay written properly. Good for starters.

Are you working on a screenplay or a novel, right now? Then you will find this useful. It's not high-flown theory. This witty (sometimes snarky) book is a collection of 150 truly useful tips. (I suggest reading in brainstorming mode....Whenever something in Xander's text triggers a good idea in you, go write it down.)

Some great tips. Some are duh moments but duh moments we are often guilty of. Those little 'kicks in the pants' helps. Then there are those things that are perfectly acceptable in other writing forms but are screenwriting fails. Nice little 'heads up' all round. Enjoyable read even if you never plan to write

a screenplay.

The other one is *Writing Movies for Fun and Profit* by Thomas Lennon and Robert Ben Garant. Both riddled with good advice that isn't smothered in McKee flavored gravy and sprinkled with *Save the Cat*. (I actually like the cat book)Best thing is they're funny and quick, which means I can get back to writing, which is the important part.Buy this.

i got this on my ipadits kinda hard to follow because of the complexity of the "equations"that often require you to flip through the pages back and forth several timesso my advice to you, if your bookstore has this, better get the hard copybut it is indeed useful

Xander Bennett is honest, and approachable and clearly interested in providing useful information to interested writers.. His advice is to the point and has helped me navigate my way to a complete first draft. Thank You, Xander!!!

Such a helpful book

Want to be a screenwriter? Yeah? Have you sold anything yet? Yes? No? Regardless, you're a hack. Just ask Xander Bennett, author of one of my favorite blogs, *Screenwriting Tips You Hack* (yes the book and the blog share the same name). I've been reading Xander's blog for about a year now and it's by far one of my favorite blogs (ranking up there with *Scriptshadow*). Each day Xander posts a new tip. They're usually only a few sentences long, but they're quite useful, such as, "'Wise beyond his years' is a character description cliché" - and not a very useful or informative one." Xander is able to infuse humor into his short tips, and reading his blog may quickly deflate the ego of any amateur writer before proceeding to provide practical advice.Since I loved the blog I decided to give the book a try. I was worried that the book would be nothing but tips copied and pasted and bound together. What Xander smartly did was to divide the book into chapters about different ideas. There's a chapter on creating ideas, writing description, dialogue, rewriting, and much more. Within each chapter he presents a series of tips. Yes, all of the tips look like they came straight from his blog. But, most tips usually comes with a page or two of deconstruction. He offers more detail, offers up good and bad examples, and takes time to show us the right way and the wrong way. There are usually a few tips at the end of each chapter without the extra explanation, but they usually serve as a good closing to the idea.Having experience as both a script reader and a writer, I could tell while

reading that Xander definitely knows what he's talking about. His writing style is engaging, and given the way that he seems to understand screenwriting, I am interested in reading some of his writing. In fact, that seems to be the main thing lacking. In the bio, Xander is said to have written for TV, film, and video games. I was hoping to see some references to situations regarding these, or at least to see some of his works listed. When I didn't find any I checked the blog, but to no avail. While I don't doubt him, I thought this would've added a strong element to the book. It would also encourage readers to engage with stories he's written, and surely that couldn't be bad thing. Though some of the tips may seem obvious, or redundant from other screenwriting books, Xander manages to either put a fresh spin on it, or at least include bits of humor. This is a book I definitely plan to have ready as a reference whenever I am writing. The unique style both separates it from other screenwriting books and makes it easy to skim and return to points of interest. Since the blog still continues, with new tips being constantly added, I hope that he is able to publish another one. IF he does, there will definitely be a place on my bookshelf for it. 4.5/5 stars

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