

# Joining, Creating, or Running A Screenwriters' Group

By Alexis Niki



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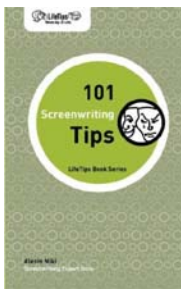
## A Word from the Author

Hello, and thanks for downloading

### **Joining, Creating, or Running a Screenwriter's Group.**

Before becoming a screenwriter, I translated dozens of scripts and subtitled close to 100 films for television and cinema in all genres—from documentary to horror, from romantic comedies to children's films. My customers included Columbia TriStar, Warner Brothers, and German national and private television. It wasn't long before I caught the bug to try screenwriting myself.

Since then, I've made considerable headway in my quest to break into screenwriting even though I live miles from L.A. One of the many ways I've improved my writing and advanced my career was through joining writers' groups. Having a weekly submission requirement to meet helped me stay on track. Thanks to the discipline my writing groups provided, I now have several scripts under my belt—all while working a day job, like many of you.



I am also the author of **101 Screenwriting Tips**, published by LifeTips.com and available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

I hope you find this ebook useful. May it guide you in finding or starting your own screenwriters' group. And may your own writer's journey be full of success.

Alexis Niki

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## What is a Screenwriters' Group?

Simply put, a writers' group is a group of peers who gets together on a regular basis to exchange writing, critiques, information, and support. Some groups write during a meeting. The moderator sets an exercise and allots a certain amount of time for people to work, and afterwards people read their scenes out loud. Other groups ask members to send one another their writing before the meeting and expect everyone to come prepared to give feedback.

A good screenwriters' group has a clearly defined objective. A beginner's group might concentrate on learning the craft, with the goal of every member completing a first script. A more advanced group might focus on breaking into the market and landing agents.

## Why Should I Join a Screenwriters' Group?

### **To get feedback and improve your writing**

Once your scripts are selling, you'll be getting plenty of feedback from the industry. Until then, constructive feedback is hard to come by. Yet receiving feedback and being asked to critique the work of fellow writers is one of the best ways to hone your craft. You may get loving support from your mom or your best friend, and that's well and good. Besides and beyond validation, however, you need clear-thinking readers who can give you the kind of candid feedback that helps you grow. That's where a screenwriting group comes in. The right group challenges you to surpass yourself and helps catapult you from novice to pro.

### **For motivation**

The path from wanting to write to having written is in the writing, not in the dreaming, planning, researching, or otherwise procrastinating. When faced with the daily demands of your hectic life, it's easy to come up with reasons not to write. But when you know a bunch of hard-working writers are waiting for you to show up with scenes in hand, you'll be much more likely to put pen to paper. A writing group helps you make a commitment to yourself and keep it.

### **For encouragement and camaraderie**

Writing can be a very lonely business. Friends and family members may not always understand the struggles and doubts writers face—but your fellow writing group members will. On days when you feel like giving up, a little encouragement and support from your group may be all you need to stay in the game. It's a great feeling to know an understanding ear is only a phone call or email away.

### **For information and networking**

Making it in Hollywood takes talent and skill, but also business sense and the ability to make connections. By sharing their experiences in the Hollywood trenches, members help educate one another about the industry. And when one of you breaks through, you can help the others get a leg up. Your writing group can be a fantastic source of contacts and information.

## **The Qualities of a Good Group**

Not all writing groups are created equal. If you've had a bad experience with one group, you may want to try a different one before giving up on them forever. It could be you haven't found the right fit yet. This section will teach you what to look for—and what to avoid.

**A caveat:** If you've tried several writers' groups and still hate it, you're not alone. Some people simply don't like group dynamics or prefer to fly solo. Joining a writers' group is not a requirement for making it as a screenwriter. Don't feel obliged to do something that's not right for you.

### **The Goals**

Writing groups thrive when members share the same goals and work ethic.

If you're concentrating on the basics, look for a group that welcomes beginners. A group made up of only beginners can succeed, so long as you're all dedicated. You can take workshops and work through screenwriting books together, and support each other in completing a first script. Or you might prefer a mixed group. Experienced writers have a lot of knowledge to share, and they tend to work more steadily than beginners. They can provide inspiration, motivation, and comfort to

newbies struggling through it all for the first time. In turn, when advanced writers critique beginners, they clarify their own thinking and sharpen their analytical and teaching skills.

If you're an experienced writer actively seeking an agent or a sale, however, a group open to beginners may not be your best choice. Look for a group whose members have several scripts under their belt and their eyes on the marketplace. The focus will most likely be on elevating your work to pro level, exchanging information and contacts, developing your marketing materials, and working on your pitches.

Whatever you do, be wary of groups with vague goals or ones that allow lurkers or wannabes. Many people are enamored with the idea of being a writer. They love to hang out with writers and to dream about the scripts they'll write some day. They may be well-meaning people, but if they have no intention of getting any work done, they'll only slow down the group.

### **The Group's Requirements**

A good writers' group requires its members to share their work on a regular basis. Requirements range from minimal to quite demanding. Some groups ask for a certain number of pages or scenes each meeting. Others have a per-month requirement. Still others take turns reading one writer's full script at a time. In addition to submission requirements, a good group also has critiquing requirements. This ensures that everyone receives their fair share of feedback, and it helps keep the group actively humming. Again, requirements vary widely. Carefully consider your time constraints and your own ambitions before committing to a group whose requirements you're not prepared to keep.

### **The Frequency of the Meetings**

Think about your goals and the level of your writer's discipline. As a beginner, I needed to overcome my fear of the blank page and to stop procrastinating. I joined an online group with a strict weekly requirement. I stuck with it for three years. Thanks largely to the no-nonsense attitude of the group, I'm a much more disciplined writer today.

If your level of discipline is already high, then a group that meets once or twice a month is fine. But if you need help staying on track, join a group that meets once a week.

## The Feedback

There are groups that offer genuinely honest critique, and then there are groups who only tell you how wonderful you are. Hollow praise might stroke your ego, but it won't help you improve your writing. Don't mistake fawning for genuine support. A group that oohs and ahs will only support you in staying at the level you are right now. A truly supportive group tells you when your writing needs improvement—and helps you acquire the tools and learn the techniques to advance.

Some groups suffer from the opposite extreme. Their members love cutting each other down, making personal attacks, and fighting with each other. Writers who behave this way are probably insecure about their own writing, or they subscribe to the school of thought that writing can't be taught and that honesty and brutality are one and the same. Avoid this kind of group.

Look instead for a balanced group. Feedback should be objective, constructive, and specific. It should include comments on what the writer did well, and it should never be brutal or attacking. Sometimes good feedback *feels* like an attack, particularly when it points to major flaws. With time and experience, however, you'll learn to distinguish helpful comments from mean-spirited ones and to value honest feedback—even when it hurts.

## The Dynamics

Every group has its dynamics, for better or worse. Groups whose members write regularly, strive to give constructive feedback, and support one another exhibit the best aspects of group dynamics. They tend to:

- keep social chit-chat to a minimum during the meeting and focus on the work.
- respect their members and nurture an atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual support.
- provide opportunities for members to socialize outside of the meeting.
- encourage members to keep the discussion on-topic.
- expel members who slam other members or pick fights.
- bond—but never allow feelings of friendship get in the way of giving or hearing honest feedback.

## Finding a Screenwriters' Group

Now that you've determined your goals and have a better idea what to look for, there's one last question to ask yourself before launching your search.

### Live or Online?

Some screenwriters' groups meet in person, some are exclusively online. Still others use both live meetings and an online group for keeping in touch on a day-to-day basis.

You'll have to decide for yourself which format suits you better, but here's a table of pros and cons to help you:

Online		In Person	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Not restricted by geography. You can join no matter where you live. Opportunity to make connections in Los Angeles and elsewhere.	Online groups tend to be larger than live ones. Some are huge. They can become impersonal.	The face-to-face contact.	Depending on your personality, the face-to-face contact.
Flexible. Can respond to submissions whenever you want as long as you do it within the agreed-upon timeframe.	It's risky to share your unregistered work with strangers, especially in a public group.	The discipline of meeting at a given time each week or each month.	You may have to sacrifice other things to make the meetings. Alternatively, it's easy to find excuses to skip meetings.
You can still keep up while on a business trip or on vacation.	If not properly moderated, online groups can quickly lose their focus.	A strong bond may develop.	If the group becomes too chummy, meetings might turn into social occasions.
No need to find a new group if you move.	If the group is public, lurkers, spammers, and troublemakers will pop up periodically despite the moderator's best efforts.	You can learn a lot about the local scene from fellow writers.	If you're not in L.A., you'll need other ways of making contacts in Hollywood.

## Finding an Existing Group

Finding an existing group can be easy or frustrating depending on where you live. There are more screenwriters per capita in New York or Los Angeles than there are in Lincoln, Nebraska. But all you need is another two to three people to make up a group, so keep looking.

Go where writers hang out. Group moderators often post notices in bookstores, cafés, libraries, or the local art house cinema or film school. If you don't see a notice, post one of your own.

Check out screenwriting websites, like [www.Screenplayers.net](http://www.Screenplayers.net), or do a Google search for your area. Another good source is [www.Meetup.com](http://www.Meetup.com). Go to <http://screenwriters.meetup.com/about/?country=us> to see a map of Meetup's screenwriting groups across the country.

Here are some more sources:

<http://dvshop.ca/dvcafe/writing/groups.htm>  
<http://www.keepwriting.com/allwriters/sgroups.htm>

Here are two of the online groups I belong to (stop by and say hello!):

### **ascreenwritersworkshop:**

<http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/ascreenwritersworkshop/>

### **screenwriting:**

Not really a critiquing group. Nevertheless, you'll find a wealth of information here. <http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/screenwriting/?yguid=252133336>

### **Still no luck?**

The tips on page 10 under **Look for Writers** will help you with your search.

Even if you have to join a group of non-screenwriters, you can still make it work. I was a member of a mixed group of writers for a long time. At first the other fiction writers were uncomfortable critiquing a screenplay. They felt out of their depth despite the fact that they had an excellent sense of well-paced, dramatic stories. I wrote a screenplay-critiquing primer and introduced them to the screenplay format and its conventions. Our subsequent exchanges were much more fruitful for all of us. Although novelists and screenwriters work in different formats, they still have a lot to offer one another.

And if all of that fails, you have one last option: start your own screenwriters' group.

## Starting a Screenwriters' Group

Starting a writers group on your own may seem like a lot of work, but with some planning and a good set of guidelines, it doesn't have to be.

### Set Your Purpose

The first step is to determine your goal. Do you want to include writers of all levels, or do you want to restrict it to just beginners or advanced writers? What would you like your group to accomplish? Do you want it to get you writing? Or are you more interested in creating a network?

### Keep it Small

It's a good idea to keep the group small (four to seven members) in the beginning. A core group has a better chance of gelling and working together to establish guidelines. And a small group is easier to run. After the basics are ironed out, you can decide to expand membership if you like. Try not to go beyond 12 members, however. In a bigger group, writers are less assured of receiving equal time. (If your group is wildly successful and mushrooms, consider splitting it into genre subgroups.)

### Look for Writers

Once you have a clear idea of the kind of group you'd like to create, start looking for other members. Here are some ideas for finding fellow writers:

- Attend writers' conferences and workshops, and film festivals.
- Hang fliers at libraries, cafés, and bookstores, and even your local photocopy place.
- Contact writing instructors at your local college or adult education center and ask them to announce your group in their classes.
- Post "writers wanted" notices on bulletin boards and on the Internet.
- Place a "writers wanted" ad in newsletters and screenwriting magazines.
- Place an ad on [www.Craigslist.org](http://www.Craigslist.org) for your area.
- Through word-of-mouth. Let your friends and colleagues know you're forming a group and still have some openings.

Next, invite the new members to a brainstorming session. Your objectives are to:

### **Choose a Moderator**

Among other things, the moderator is responsible for:

- keeping track of members and communicating with them.
- running the meetings and making sure they stay on topic.
- making sure everyone has equal say.
- troubleshooting glitches.

As founder of the group, this job might automatically fall to you. Or you could split duties or decide to take turns moderating.

### **Set a Collective Purpose**

Now that you have other members on board, write a purpose statement that you can all agree to. This helps the other members feel their needs are being met and their opinions are being respected.

### **Decide When and Where to Meet**

Will you hold meetings in someone's home or in a public space such as a library or coffee shop? Consider issues such as privacy, noise, and convenience. Try to meet at the same place each time. This minimizes the chances of scheduling mishaps.

Establish a frequency for the meetings and stick to the same day and time—for instance, once a week on Thursdays from 6-8, or twice a month on Sunday afternoons. This helps create regularity, and members can plan accordingly.

### **Establish the Format of the Meetings**

Will your group include writing sessions, or will you focus on critique exchanges? Do you want to spend half an hour analyzing a scene from a produced movie? Will you ask members to give mini-workshops in their area of expertise (dialogue, writing a query letter, landing an agent)? My current writers' group collectively sets the next task at the close of each meeting.

### **Set Participation Requirements**

Set a minimum requirement for submissions and critiques, and define what you mean by each. Will a logline count as a submission? Or will your group require at least 10 pages? Will you accept broad comments on a scene as a critique? Or will you insist members be specific? How will writers exchange their work? At the

meeting? Or will they be asked to email their pages to each other ahead of time? If you agree to critique one writer at a time, what's your backup plan if the person who was supposed to submit his/her work can't make it?

Create a procedure for dealing with members who repeatedly fail to meet the requirements. A written warning often suffices to get someone back on track. But you should decide whether or not you'll ask a repeat offender to leave. If so, establish a procedure for doing this from the beginning.

### **Set an Application Procedure for New Members**

What if someone new wants to join? Are you open to all comers, or would you like to see a writing sample first? How is a new member approved? If the group is small, a majority vote is usually the best way to go. But if it's larger, you may want to create a membership committee to review applications and vote on new members.

### **Establish a Protocol for Decision-Making**

In a small group, all decisions can be made by majority vote. If your group is large, however, you might want to establish a committee. Or you could decide to give the moderator full decision-making power.

### **Establish a Way for Members to Communicate**

You could opt to stay in touch by phone or individual emails. Or you could look into creating an online group. This is very easy to do and can be set up in about 10 minutes. Yahoo (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>) and Google (<http://groups.google.com/>) both provide free group services, as do others.

### **Create an Open Forum**

A good group is open to feedback from its members. Make sure your members feel they can talk to you. Establish a policy for contacting you with suggestions or concerns. Decide if it's okay for members to bring things up at the meetings or if they should approach you privately first.

## **Group Etiquette**

### **DO attend meetings.**

Your regular participation at meetings shows respect to the other members and dedication to your craft. If you need to be away for a prolonged period of time, notify the group of your dates of absence.

**DO be reliable.**

Some people get so excited at the prospect of belonging to a writers' group that they join more than one. That's fine if you can keep up with the requirements, but be careful of overdoing it. If you stretch yourself too thinly, it's not fair to the others, who have a right to expect your concentrated efforts. If you've agreed to submit, submit. If you've agreed to critique, critique. No excuses.

**DO be constructive.**

It's not enough to say that you don't like something about a script. You need to explain why and suggest solutions. See the section **Giving Feedback** on page 15 for more details.

**DO be concise.**

Don't monopolize the meeting. Make your points clearly and succinctly. Give others a chance to speak, too.

**DO return the favor.**

If you've received feedback, courtesy dictates that you also provide feedback. Don't leave once your work has been discussed. If you have to miss a session when another person's script is scheduled for discussion, send your notes in writing to the person in question.

**DO respect confidentiality.**

Writers need to feel secure sharing their work, especially in the early stages before it's been registered with the Writer's Guild of America ([www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org)). Treat all submissions as confidential. Don't share or discuss scripts with non-members. And don't steal ideas or otherwise plagiarize another writer's work.

**DON'T be a bully.**

Never try to rewrite another writer's script. If you have a completely different take on their story, tell them how you see it—and then shut up. It's up to the writer to embrace your vision or not. Don't keep forcing the issue.

**DON'T socialize too much.**

Keep chit-chat to a minimum. If you want to hang out with your new buddies, do it after the meeting.

**DON'T focus on the small stuff.**

If you spot a typo, a grammatical mistake, or a formatting issue, don't take up too much of the group's time discussing them. Simply tell the writer you noticed some glitches and advise him/her to edit the script again. If you feel a writer needs a lot

of help in this area, point him/her to some resources or offer to sit down with him/her privately.

**DON'T slam fellow colleagues.**

Never attack the character, background, heritage, gender, sexual preference, politics, religion, age, or color of any other member. If you're the moderator, establish a no-tolerance policy for any member who intentionally attacks another member in such a fashion.

## A Critiquing Primer

Now that you've found a group or started your own, it's time to get down to brass tacks: the critiquing.

The process of giving and receiving feedback is what joining a group is all about. It's often easier to see where someone else has gone wrong, but harder to spot the same weaknesses in your own writing. By taking on the challenges of critiquing, you open yourself up to an incredible learning experience.

But if you haven't had much experience critiquing, you may feel intimidated at first. What if people hate your script? Will you ever live it down? Equally, giving feedback can be scary. What if you hurt the writer's feelings? What if you don't feel qualified to give your opinion?

Relax. Take a deep breath, follow this Critiquing Primer, and dive in:

### Receiving Feedback

**Make a distinction between your work and yourself.**

When someone points out a problem in your script, it doesn't mean there's a problem with YOU. Try to stay objective.

**Avoid the temptation to shut down or to argue.**

Listen to what the reviewer has to say without explaining yourself. Remember, you have ultimate control over your script. Only you can decide what works for your script and what doesn't. You don't lose anything by listening. The best response to a review is, "Thank you."

**Listening to others is different from implementing every suggestion.**

Some reviewers give you terrific suggestions that fit your story perfectly and take it in the direction you want it to go. Great! Use those. Others give you terrific suggestions—for a completely different story. Hmm. Skip their suggestions, but do

look at your story again to see if it could have possibly led them astray. Learn to differentiate between useful suggestions, suggestions that aren't very useful but point to a problem, and totally useless suggestions.

**If the feedback isn't clear, ask questions.**

Keep the questions pertinent and focused on the work. Suppose the reviewer says, "The scene between George and Becky is confusing." Don't ask, "What do you mean it's confusing!?" That sounds defensive and gets everyone off track. But it's okay to ask exactly where in the scene the reviewer got confused.

**Avoid asking for feedback if you already know what's wrong with your script.**

Fix any problems you are clear about first. When you ask for feedback, you're requesting someone's time and attention, so be considerate of them. Don't make them do unnecessary work.

**Pay special attention to problems that multiple readers point out.**

If only one reader out of many mentions a problem, you can probably chalk it up to personal preference. But if several readers bring up the same issue, then be sure to address it.

**Listen to praise as much as you listen to criticism.**

We tend to focus on the negative to such a degree that we don't even hear the positive things people say. If you find yourself falling into this pattern, ask your group if you can record their comments. Then once you get home, listen to them again, this time focusing on the positive aspects. Train yourself to accept the strengths in your work.

## **Giving Feedback**

**Keep your comments friendly and encouraging.**

Critique the writing, not the writer. Focus on improving the *script*, which is helpful, not on improving the *writer*, which is insulting.

**Look at things from the author's point of view.**

Try to figure out the story the writer is trying to tell, and keep your comments focused on that.

**Start with the positive.**

No matter how bad a script is, find something nice to say, even if it's just complimenting the writer for finishing the draft. Preceding a negative comment with a positive one softens the blow.

**Two positives to every negative.**

Point out parts that are working well as you search for problems. Keep the ratio as close to two pluses for every minus as possible.

**End with the positive.**

Close your critique with one last positive, encouraging comment. Think of it as a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down.

**For positive comments, use the pronoun "you."**

"The way you got Sally out of that bind was really original."

**For negative comments, avoid using "you."**

Instead of saying, "You lost me in the next scene," say "I got confused," or "The next scene was confusing."

**Start with the big picture.**

If the story isn't working, address structural problems first. Don't overwhelm the writer with details. See the **Screenplay Critiquing Checklist** on the next page.

**Point out a problem, don't offer a solution.**

"I'm having a hard time understanding why Joe loves Clara" is helpful. It lets the writer know what is unclear. "I think Joe should be in love with Clara's sister instead" is less helpful. It's okay to point out a problem and *then* make a suggestion—if you keep your suggestions pertinent and leave plenty of room for the writer to find his own solutions.

**Frame your comments as follows:**

- I don't understand who/what/when/where/why/how...
- This part feels slow/confusing/redundant...
- I had a hard time following when...
- This scene is very funny/exciting/moving...
- I really empathized with the hero when...

Giving feedback requires attentiveness, thought, and sensitivity. Learn to do this for others—and then apply your new skills to your own script!

On the next page, you'll find a Screenplay Critiquing Checklist. You can print out the checklist and use it to help you structure your feedback when reading another writer's script.

## Screenplay Critiquing Checklist

If you don't have a lot of experience giving feedback, you may be confused about where to start. Begin with the big picture, and work your way down to the details. Following this checklist will help you cover all the bases.

### 1. CONCEPT:

- Is the concept universal?
- Has the writer given the concept a unique twist?
- Does it have wide appeal?
- Is the protagonist likable? Does he/she elicit audience sympathy?
- Are the stakes high enough? Could they be elevated?
- Can this concept be summarized in a logline of 25 words or less? How would you pitch it?

### 2. STORY:

- Is the central conflict as powerful as it can be?
- What is the ultimate story question? Has it been answered?
- What is the story's theme? Can you articulate it?
- Does the story stay on track, or does it meander?
- Does the story have organic turning points (inciting incident, act climaxes)?
- Does the hero face ever more difficult obstacles? Does the plot build momentum?
- Is the hero the best hero for this story? Is his goal clear, does he drive the story, and does he have a character arc?
- Is the antagonist the best antagonist for this story?
- Are there any plot holes?
- Are the subplots working? Do they contribute to the story by supporting or contrasting the main theme?
- Does the story have an ebb and flow of tension that keeps the audience permanently interested?

### 3. SCENES AND SCENE SEQUENCES

- Do each scene and each scene sequence have a dramatically compelling conflict and goal?
- Has the writer chosen the right characters for this scene?
- Is it clear who drives the scene?
- Does the character succeed or fail in achieving his goal?
- Does the scene start and end at the right places?
- Is the setting the best possible setting?
- Are the actions visually compelling and in character?
- Does the scene have a beginning, middle, and end?
- Do the complications get progressively harder?
- Do they build to a turning point?
- Do the scenes flow naturally and logically?
- Are the scenes in the right order?
- Is the main conflict sustained throughout?

### 4. CHARACTER

- Do the characters have clear agendas and goals? Is their primary conflict external?
- Does every character in the script have a story purpose? Are they the best characters for this story?
- Do you have two or more characters that are too similar? If so, can one be eliminated combined with the other character?
- Do the characters have inner conflicts and character flaws?
- Are the characters drawn into relationship through rapport and conflict?
- Do all major characters have a character arc?

## 5. DIALOGUE

Does the dialogue:

- propel the action forward by anticipating the future through predictions, warnings, or implication?
- deliver emotion (funny, threatening, evasive)?
- stay in character?
- have subtext?
- allow for moments of wordless communication, such as silence or action in place of words?
- use metaphor, irony, and sarcasm?
- generate unexpected responses?
- contain slang or jargon?

## 6. CLICHÉS

- Point out clichés, formulas, gimmicks, and anything that is overused and misused.

## 7. THE FINAL EDIT

Has the writer:

- chosen the most descriptive verbs ("flee" instead of "run")?
- eliminated adverbs and adjectives?
- used specific nouns ("mansion" instead of "house," "rust bucket" instead of "car")?
- made spelling, grammatical, or formatting errors? (See the heading **DON'T focus on the small stuff** on page 13 for more on this point).

## Activities for Your Screenwriting Group

Sometimes when a group has been together for a long time, people settle into predictable patterns. You may suddenly find yourselves on a collective creative plateau. Broaden your horizons and stir up the creative juices with these suggestions.

- Make an outing to a movie currently playing and discuss it over drinks or dinner.
- Read and analyze the script of a produced movie, and then view the movie together as a group. Compare the finished product to the script. (Try to get a shooting version of the script if you can. Visit these websites for free downloads: [www.iscriptdb.com](http://www.iscriptdb.com) or [www.simplyscripts.com](http://www.simplyscripts.com).)
- Sponsor a screenwriting contest for teenagers in your area.
- Have a "rejection letter" evening. Ask everyone to bring in their rejection letters as well as the query letters that inspired them, and see if you can learn something from studying them.
- Practice pitching your projects to one another. Have one member act as the studio executive while the other members coach the writer on presentation, clarity, and body language.
- Attend a workshop, pitch fest, or film festival together, preferably in Los Angeles.
- Create a lending library. Have each member subscribe to a different screenwriting or film magazine, and share resources.
- Organize a screenplay reading. This can be as simple as picking a member's script and reading it out loud together, or as complex as staging it in a public venue with actors, rehearsals, and a live audience. (Check my website, [www.TheThirdDraft.com](http://www.TheThirdDraft.com), for my upcoming ebook, *How to Organize a Screenplay Reading*.)
- Have a "web resources" evening. Ask members to come in with a list of their favorite screenwriting links to share.
- Stage a screenwriting challenge. Choose a month and commit to writing a full-length script in 30 days. The first person to finish wins a small prize.

- This is a great way to just let the ideas flow. Don't worry about structure or quality.
- Break out of your genre ruts. Do the screenwriting challenge mentioned above, but work in a genre you've never tried before.
  - Take turns teaching a specific element of the craft. It doesn't matter if you've heard it all before—if you've never TAUGHT it before, it'll be a new experience. Teaching forces you to clarify your own thinking. One person can do dialogue, another can talk about the three-act structure, and someone else can talk about genre.
  - Invite an established screenwriter, actor, or director to talk to the group. You may be surprised at how generous some experienced professionals are with their time and expertise. But if that doesn't work, try a budding actor or director, or a local acting teacher or film school instructor.

## Closing Words

I hope the tips in *Joining, Creating, or Running a Screenwriters' Group* have inspired you to go out there and create your own thriving community of writers. If you enjoyed this ebook, you'll also enjoy *101 Screenwriting Tips*, available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). Just scroll down to the next page to learn more.

If you'd like to receive announcements of upcoming ebook releases and other news, sign up for my mailing list at [www.TheThirdDraft.com](http://www.TheThirdDraft.com).

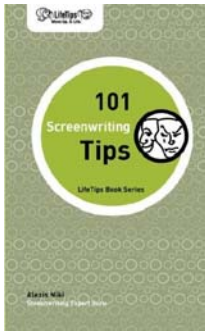
Thanks again for reading. And if you have any questions, comments, or feedback, just drop me a line at [alexis@TheThirdDraft.com](mailto:alexis@TheThirdDraft.com). I'd love to hear from you.

Best of luck with your writing. See you at the movies!

Alexis Niki

## 101 Screenwriting Tips

by Alexis Niki



### *Answer Your Screenwriting Questions at a Glance*

I know how hard it is to break into screenwriting. That's why I gathered the most helpful lessons I learned on my own screenwriting journey and put them into an easy-to-browse book. **101 Screenwriting Tips** contains the practical advice you want to know right now, such as:

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-- Author/Writing Coach Janet Skeslien Charles

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-- Screenwriter Mary V. Dunkerly

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