

Criteria for a short play. Use these to determine whether or not the text that follows is a short play. Make sure you refer to the text in arguing your point.

- 1) NO EXPOSITION! Just jump into your story. This presents a puzzle for the audience to unravel and allows them to play with you.
- 2) EVERY DETAIL MUST RELATE TO THE ACTION OF THE PLAY. There's no time for anything extraneous. Nothing is random. (Although at first it may appear to be so!) If you are writing a play about dogs, the curtain goes up, and there on the stage is a bone.
- 3) A CHARACTER SPEAKS TO GET WHAT HE WANTS. All characters have DREAMS. These dreams are what make him unique. Do these characters have dreams?
- 4) A CHARACTER SHOULD BE OFF-BALANCE IN SOME WAY. Real characters are excessive in some areas. Deficient in others. If there is no disparity between what your characters are saying and what they are doing, you probably aren't writing theatre.
- 5) DON'T WASTE TIME TALKING ABOUT ANYTHING YOU CAN SHOW. Images are more powerful than words!
- 6) EVERY GREAT PLAY HAS A POINT OF NO RETURN. The protagonist crosses the line. Now there is no turning back!
- 7) NEVER LET YOUR CHARACTERS OFF TOO EASY! If you do, what they've just been through won't have meant anything. They may escape with their lives—but just barely!
- 8) EVERY PROTAGONIST MUST HAVE A JOURNEY. He should end up someplace radically different from where he began. BIG THINGS HAPPEN—not everyday life with endless pouring of coffee and lighting of cigarettes. If your protagonist ends up in the same place he started, he must go through Hell and back to get there.
- 9) REMEMBER THAT THE CLIMAX IS WHERE A PLAY WINS OR LOSES! The audience is rewarded for their attention. (The big pay-off!) The test of a great play is SELF DISCOVERY.
- 10) EVERY DETAIL COMES TOGETHER IN THE END. (See Rule #2) Somehow or another, we come back to that bone. Always pay off the bone!

(Adapted from “How to Write a 10-Minute Play.” Web, http://www.10-minute-plays.com/how_to_write_a_10_minute_play.html)