ELEMENTS OF A SCREENPLAY

SLUGLINES (Scene Headers)

Written in capitals and containing three pieces of information:

(1) Where
(2) Exactly where
(3) When

(2) and (3) are separated by a space, a dash, followed by another space. (1) can be INT. (interior) or EXT. (exterior); (2) is a short identification of the place; (3) can be either DAY or NIGHT.

Ex.
1. INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

SCENE DESCRIPTION (ACTION, what audience sees)

The screenplay's visual elements, where we show what is taking place on the screen. Character descriptions, what they are doing, the places, and everything the audience will need to assimilate visually. Try to create the experience of watching each scene, using only the information available to the movie-goer, in the order that he or she will be presented with it.

Some of the action is usually written in capital letters:

* CHARACTERS with speaking parts, the first time they appear in the script, or the first time they appear in each scene.
* the words ENTERS and EXITS
* those SOUNDS which require some kind of mechanical production, such as telephones ringing, gunshots, whistling wind, etc. There is no need to capitalize sounds made on the spot by characters smashing plates or slamming doors, and so forth.
* Important props.

PARENTHETICALS

Written in brackets on a line between the character name and his/her dialogue. These should be used very sparingly indeed, for two reasons. First, because actors don't like being told how to say their lines. But more importantly, if you find yourself needing a lot of instructions like (shouting), (crying), (to the waiter) etc., it's probably a sign that your dialogue isn't crystal clear in general.

DIALOG

The character's dialogue. If a speech is split by a page break, write (MORE) centered on a line underneath the dialogue at the end of the previous page, and start the next one with the character's name and (cont.). This is another thing you don't want to bother with until you're ready to print your script.

TRANSITIONS

Indicating how to cut from one scene to the next. Justification is always flush right, with one line separating them from the last line in the previous scene and from the slugline of the next.

CUT TO:
The standard transition. Present-tense segue.

DISSOLVE TO:
Self-explanatory. When the cut is a gradual fade.

MATCH CUT:
When, for example, we cut from a ring in a jeweler's window, to it being placed on a bride's hand in church.

FADE IN / FADE OUT:
The fade separates scenes and can add dramatic effect. This transition separates scenes whereas the dissolve or cut connects scenes.

FOCUS IN / FOCUS OUT
Sometimes used as a POV Shot indicating a loss of consciousness.

WIPE
Recalls the Hollywood Styles of the 30s and 40s and recalls a curtain being drawn. Ex. George Lucas uses angular wipes in *Star Wars*.

FREEZE FRAME
Used often in end credits for comic effect or to show viewpoint of photographer taking a picture.

SPACING

Single spacing for: names/parentheticals/dialogue; action;

Double spacing between: sluglines and action; description and names; dialogue and action; FADE IN and the first slugline; the last line and FADE OUT

Triple spacing between: action or dialogue and sluglines.

At the end – the last page.

After the last line of your screenplay, hit <Enter> twice and write the words FADE OUT.

Two more, and END, or The End, centered on the page.