

## Episode 66 – SHOWING VERSUS TELLING SHOW NOTES

### **SHOWING vs TELLING IN SCREENWRITING**

Film is a **visual medium**

If we can't **see or hear it**, it doesn't exist on screen

The audience should understand the story **without explanation**

### **TELLING (WHAT TO AVOID)**

Writing internal states

“She feels anxious”

“He is heartbroken”

Over-explaining in action lines

“He does this because he's insecure”

On-the-nose dialogue

“I'm really angry at you right now”

Backstory dumps

Characters explaining instead of revealing

**If it relies on explanation instead of behavior, it's telling.**

### **SHOWING (WHAT WORKS)**

Behavior over emotion

Subtext in dialogue

Visual clues (props, setting, habits)

Action reveals character

**We learn character through what they do under pressure**

### **PRACTICAL SCREENWRITING TOOLS**

#### **1. Cut internal language:**

Remove: feels, thinks, realizes

Replace with action + behavior

#### **2. Ask: “Can a camera capture this?”**

If NO → rewrite

If YES → you're showing

#### **3. Use physical behavior**

Fidgeting

Avoiding eye contact

Over-tidying

#### **4. Let objects tell story**

Messy room = emotional state

Unopened mail = avoidance

Packed suitcase = intention

#### **5. Use conflict**

Don't explain character

Force them to choose

### **BEFORE & AFTER SCRIPT EXAMPLE**

## **VERSION 1 — TELLING**

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

LENA (30s) is upset and frustrated. She feels like her partner doesn't care about her anymore.

MARK enters.

LENA

I'm really upset because you never listen to me.

MARK

That's not true. I've just been stressed.

LENA

You don't care about this relationship anymore.

MARK

I do care. I'm just tired.

They both feel hurt and distant.

## **VERSION 2 — SHOWING**

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

The sink is full. One clean plate sits on the rack. Lena scrubs the same spot on the counter. Hard. Mark enters. Drops his keys. They CLATTER.

MARK

Hey.

No response.

He opens the fridge. Stares. Closes it.

MARK

You eat?

Lena keeps scrubbing.

LENA

There's food.

Mark looks at the empty stove.

MARK

Right.

A beat.

MARK

I said I'd be late.

Lena stops. Doesn't turn.

LENA

You always say that.

Silence.

LENA

Did you even read it?

Mark freezes.

MARK

I will.

Lena exhales—almost a laugh.

LENA

Yeah.

She scrubs again. Same spot.

Mark sets the glass down. Too hard. It cracks.

### **WHY THIS WORKS**

- No one states their emotions
- Behavior carries meaning
- Environment reflects tension
- Objects (glass) express emotion

The first version tells you what's happening. The second version makes you sit in it. In screenwriting, you don't inform the audience, you involve them.