TITLE OF SERIES
“Episode Title”

CAST

GAL               HALEY BERRY
GUY               KELSEY GRAMMER
NARRATOR          TINA FEY
CHARACTER’S NAME  ACTOR’S NAME

SETS

EXT. OUTSIDE LOCATION(S)

INT. INSIDE LOCATION(S)

EXT./ INT. USED WHEN SWITCHING BETWEEN THE TWO IN SAME SCENE

Some Formatting Conventions
(if you use scriptwriting software, this is usually the default format)

Margins:
left=1.25 inches; right=.5 inches; top & bottom=1 inch

Tabs:
scenes = ALL CAPS, across entire page.
action = Sentence case, across entire page.
character’s names = at 2.5 inches
actor’s instructions = 2.1 inches in (parentheses).
dialogue = 1.5 inches in 3.5 inch wide column down middle of page.

Other:
Words are generally capitalized to identify NEW SCENE HEADINGS, NEW CAMERA ANGLES,
SOUND EFFECTS, SPECIAL EFFECTS, and scene transitions such as CUT TO or DISSOLVE TO.
Use CUT TO or DOSSOLVE TO sparingly.
If a scene is continued on a new page, it may be indicated by “(CONTINUED)” at the bottom right, and
“CONTINUED” at the top left on following page (archaic, falling into disuse as a script convention).
If dialogue is broken at end of a page, it should end with a full sentence. Then “(MORE)” is added under
the broken dialogue and “(CON-TD)” typed on the following page after character’s name.
The names of CHARACTERS are capitalized to indicate who is performing in the scene and who is
speaking at the moment.
FADE IN:

EXT. FRONT OF BUILDING – MORNING, PRESENT

Every scene in the script begins with a SCENE HEADING, called a slug line. It identifies the location as EXT. (exterior) or INT. (interior), the specific location (e.g., PARKING LOT, RESTAURANT, APARTMENT BEDROOM), and the time of day (e.g., DAY, NIGHT, MORNING, AFTERNOON, EVENING, DUSK, SAME, LATER, MOMENTS LATER, CONTINUOUS, THE NEXT DAY). If appropriate, add the time period (e.g., PRESENT, WINTER 1890, THE YEAR 2350, AFTER THE APOCALYPSE). This information is necessary for the director and production manager to determine the set, location, and lighting requirements.

Next, you put the action, describing the characters and locale in the scene. Specify what the environment looks like and any characters or props. Double spacing between action paragraphs implies a new angle in the scene—you don’t actually have to label it. Particularly true if you are thinking of a related piece of stage action in a master shot or wide shot. This saves you from over-directing your script and permits ease of reading.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING LOBBY – MOMENTS LATER.

We’re in a totally different location now, so there is a transition “CUT TO.” Use this command as little as possible since it is implied. If you change physical locale of a scene, you must provide a new scene heading. When you describe your CHARACTERS or any information pertaining to CAMERA ANGLES, VISUAL EFFECTS, or SOUND EFFECTS, be sure to put the information in all caps.

Try to be as visual as you can in your description of the CHARACTERS: they’re age, name, appearance, and what they’re doing when we see them. Don’t forget to describe the setting with enough detail to give a clear picture of the mood, atmosphere, and dramatic action.

DISSOLVE TO:

You can also indicate transitions within scenes... again, do this as little as possible.

This is how you set up characters... GAL, mid 30s, slim, buxom and brunette, stylishly dressed, impatiently tapping foot. GUY, late 40s, medium build, balding, weekend casual, standing next to her looking at his watch.
GAL
(bored)
Let’s move on, ok? All this talk about setting up a scene is really boring... as you can probably tell from my short, parenthetical instructions.

GUY
(meekly)
The scriptwriter is a professor; he can’t help being long winded about script mechanics. Still, you’re right, he should get on with writing dialogue... Like this!

Another technique to keep the dialogue alive and the visuals wide open is the use of O.S. (OFF SCREEN) and V.O. (VOICE OVER).

GAL (O.S.)
So, can the audience still hear me talking while Guy is on screen?

We hear Gal PACING while Guy smiles and nods.

To indicate character (re)action, we put in a new action line.

Gal, after a BEAT, walks into b.g., sits hard in an overstuffed chair and pouts. A BEAT is a dramatic pause before a character (re)acts, “b.g.” is background, “f.g.” is foreground and are used to define zones of action.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
There is a difference between a voice over and an off screen voice. For example, a narrator generally uses the V.O. over some other visual action.

Guy self-consciously walks to b.g. and sits near Gal. Keep action moving and be sure your characters (re)act like real people.

GAL
(annoyed)
Sounds confusing, but the O.S. is used when one of the characters isn’t seen in the shot but we know she or he is in the scene. On the other side of the room perhaps... are we done yet?

Once the story is over, you can...

FADE OUT.