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Screenwriting by Stukes

The Beginner's Screenwriting Guide

A Step-by-Step Manual to Formatting, Plot Structure, Keyboard Mastery & Professional PDF Delivery

Publisher: thestukescompany.com	Software: Screenwriting by Stukes
Author: Julius Stukes	Compatibility: Trelby, Fountain, FDX
Target Audience: Emerging Screenwriters	Industry Standard: Courier 12pt / 55 lines

"Screenwriting is the art of telling a visual story in present tense. If the camera can't see it or the microphone can't record it, it doesn't belong on the page."

Chapter 1: The Golden Rules of Screenplay Formatting

Welcome to screenwriting! Before writing your first scene, understanding screenplay formatting is essential. Unlike a novel, a script is a **production blueprint** read by directors, cinematographers, actors, and producers. Every page adheres to precise mathematical rules developed over 100 years of filmmaking.

Screenplay Rule	The Industry Standard	Why It Matters
The 1 Page = 1 Minute Rule	1 page of Courier 12pt ≈ 60 seconds on screen.	A 105-page screenplay will run approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes in theaters.
Fixed Courier 12pt	Exactly 10 characters per inch (10 cpi) and 6 lines per inch.	Proportional fonts (like Arial or Times) distort timing calculations.
Strict 55 Lines / Page	Max 54-55 formatted lines per physical page.	Guarantees consistent script supervisor page budgeting during shooting.
Present Tense Only	Always write in the active present ('Vance turns', not 'Vance turned').	Movies happen in real-time right before the viewer's eyes.

The 6 Fundamental Screenplay Elements

Every screenplay is composed of exactly six repeating block elements:

- 1. Scene Heading (Slugline):** Establishes where and when the scene takes place. Always ALL CAPS. Begins with INT. (Interior) or EXT. (Exterior), followed by location and time: INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY.
- 2. Action:** Narrative prose describing what the camera sees and what the microphone hears. Keep paragraphs under 3-4 lines ('white space is your friend').
- 3. Character Cue:** The name of the character about to speak, centered (indented 2.2" or 3.7" from page edge) in ALL CAPS.
- 4. Parenthetical:** Brief actor direction or tone: (whispering), indented 1.6". Used sparingly—actors prefer interpreting the line themselves!
- 5. Dialogue:** The spoken lines, indented 1.0" from the left margin with a max width of 35 characters.
- 6. Transition:** Camera or editing cuts: CUT TO: or FADE OUT., right-aligned or indented 4.0".

ROOKIE MISTAKE TO AVOID

Never write what cannot be filmed! Rookie screenwriters often write: *'Sarah remembers the traumatic childhood accident that made her hate water.'* A camera cannot photograph a thought. Instead write: *'Sarah stares at the swimming pool. Her hands tremble. She backs away slowly.'*

Chapter 2: Touring Screenwriting by Stukes & Smart Keyboard Navigation

Screenwriting by Stukes provides an authentic physical page layout directly in your browser or desktop window. Below is your writing workspace with live scene navigation and typography formatting.

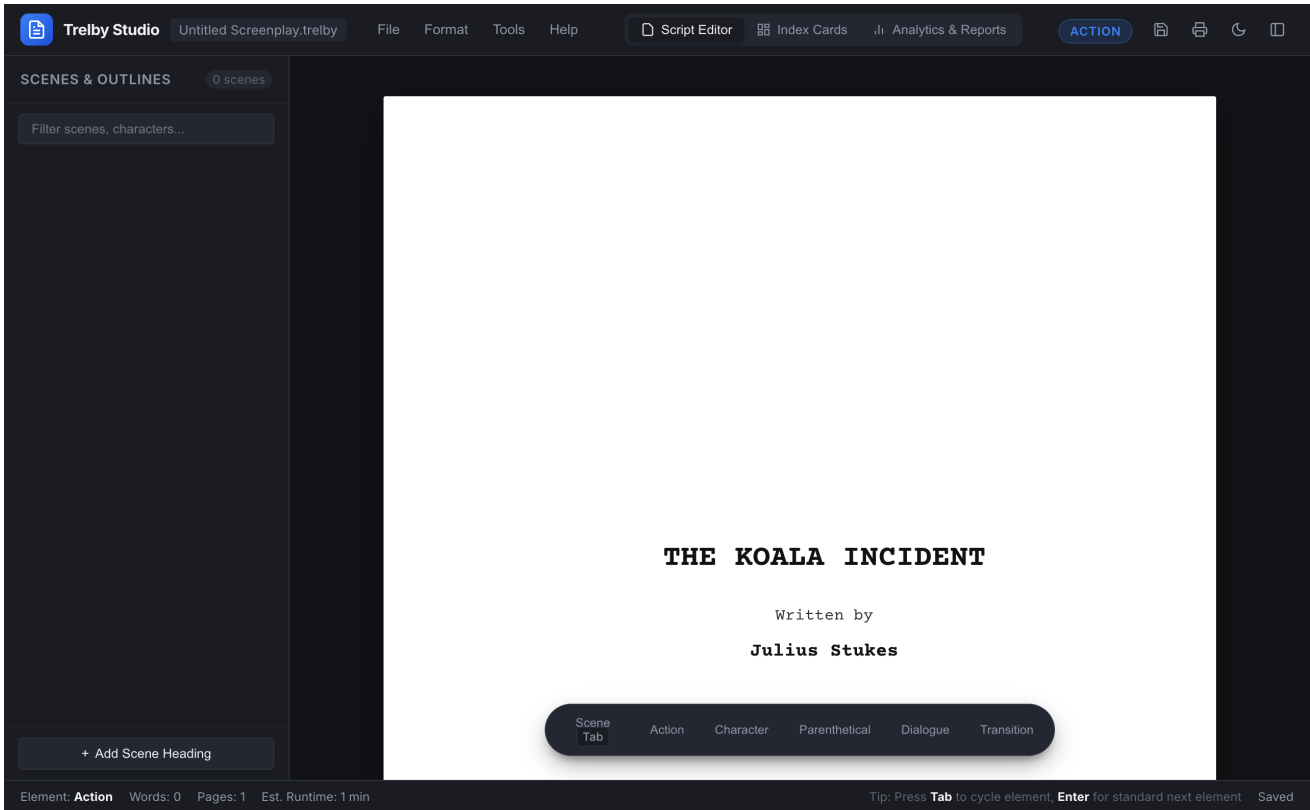


Figure 2.1 — Screenwriting by Stukes Workspace: Top Menu, Left Scene Navigator, Center Physical Page, and Bottom Status Bar.

The Screenplay State Machine (Tab & Enter Navigation)

Professional screenwriters rarely touch the mouse while writing dialogue. Screenwriting by Stukes incorporates a built-in **Screenplay State Machine** that automatically predicts the next element as you type:

Current Element	Press [Enter]	Press [Tab]
Scene Heading	Advances to Action description	Cycles to Action
Action	Creates next Action paragraph	Jumps to Character Cue
Character Cue	Drops directly to Dialogue	Cycles to Parenthetical
Parenthetical	Drops directly to Dialogue	Encloses with ()
Dialogue	Jumps to Character (for back-and-forth) or 2x Enter for Action	Inserts Parenthetical
Transition	Advances to new Scene Heading	Cycles to Scene

PRO-TIP: RAPID DIALOGUE FLOW

To write rapid dialogue exchanges between two characters, simply press **Enter** after character 1's dialogue to jump straight to the next character cue, type the second name, press **Enter** to speak, and repeat! You can write an entire scene in under two minutes without ever lifting your hands from the home row.

Chapter 3: Corkboard Index Cards & Story Structure

Before diving into dialogue, seasoned screenwriters structure their plot beats. Screenwriting by Stukes includes two visual planning tools: the **Index Cards Corkboard** and the **Save the Cat! Story Structure Analyzer**.

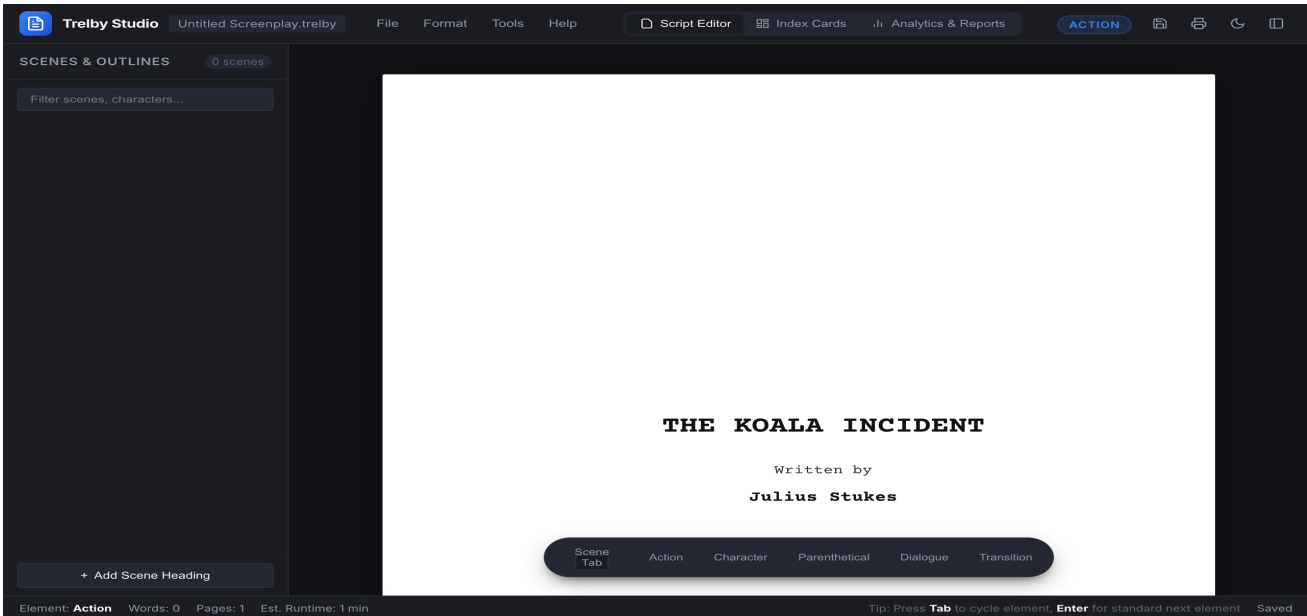


Figure 3.1 — The Corkboard Index Cards: Visual beat cards showing scene numbers, page lengths, character rosters, and editable synopses.

Blake Snyder's 'Save the Cat!' 15 Beats in Trelby Studio

In the **Analytics & Reports** view, Screenwriting by Stukes automatically maps your scenes against the industry-standard 15 plot beats and calculates an **Emotional Tension Arc**:

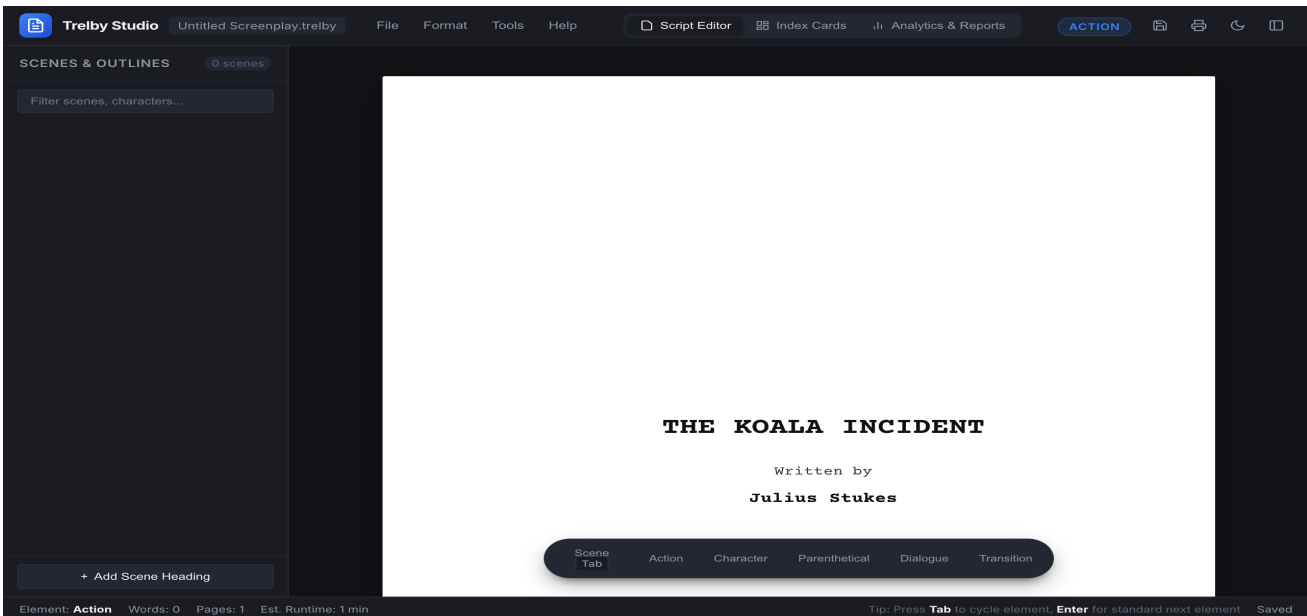


Figure 3.2 — The Story Structure & Tension Arc: 3-Act milestones, Save the Cat! 15 beats, and smooth cubic bezier tension curve.

Act & Percentage	Key Story Beats	Dramatic Purpose
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Act I (0% – 25%)	1. Opening Image 2. Theme Stated (5%) 3. Catalyst / Inciting Incident (12%) 4. Break into Two (25%)	Establishes normal world, disrupts it with an event the hero cannot ignore, and pushes them across the threshold into the adventure.
Act II-A (25% – 50%)	5. B Story (Love interest / Mentor) 6. Fun and Games (Promise of the Premise) 7. Midpoint (50%)	The hero explores the new world. Midpoint delivers a false victory or false defeat that raises the stakes from wants to needs.
Act II-B (50% – 75%)	8. Bad Guys Close In 9. All Hope Is Lost (75%) 10. Dark Night of the Soul	Antagonistic forces tighten their grip. Hero hits rock bottom; old ways of thinking die before rebirth.
Act III (75% – 100%)	11. Break into Three 12. Finale / Climax (High Tension) 13. Final Image (Contrast with Opening)	Hero executes new plan combining A & B stories, triumphs or experiences tragic catharsis, and demonstrates internal transformation.

Chapter 4: Character Dialogue Breakdown & The Screenplay Linter

Writing authentic dialogue requires monitoring character voice and line distribution. Screenwriting by Stukes provides deep analytics to track every speaking character's share of voice:

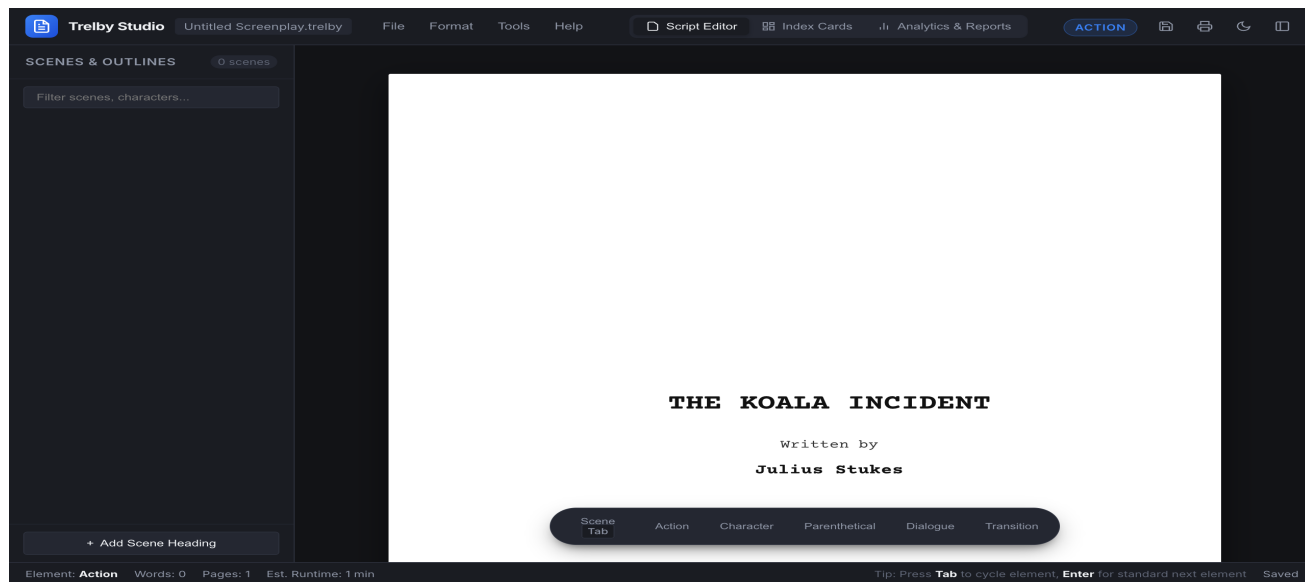


Figure 4.1 — Character Dialogue Breakdown: Speech counts, word counts, dialogue percentages, and scene appearance matrices.

The Screenplay Linter: Your Built-In Script Doctor

First-time screenwriters often commit subtle formatting mistakes that cause literary agents or contest judges to reject scripts immediately. The built-in **Screenplay Linter** scans your script in real time for 8 critical rules:

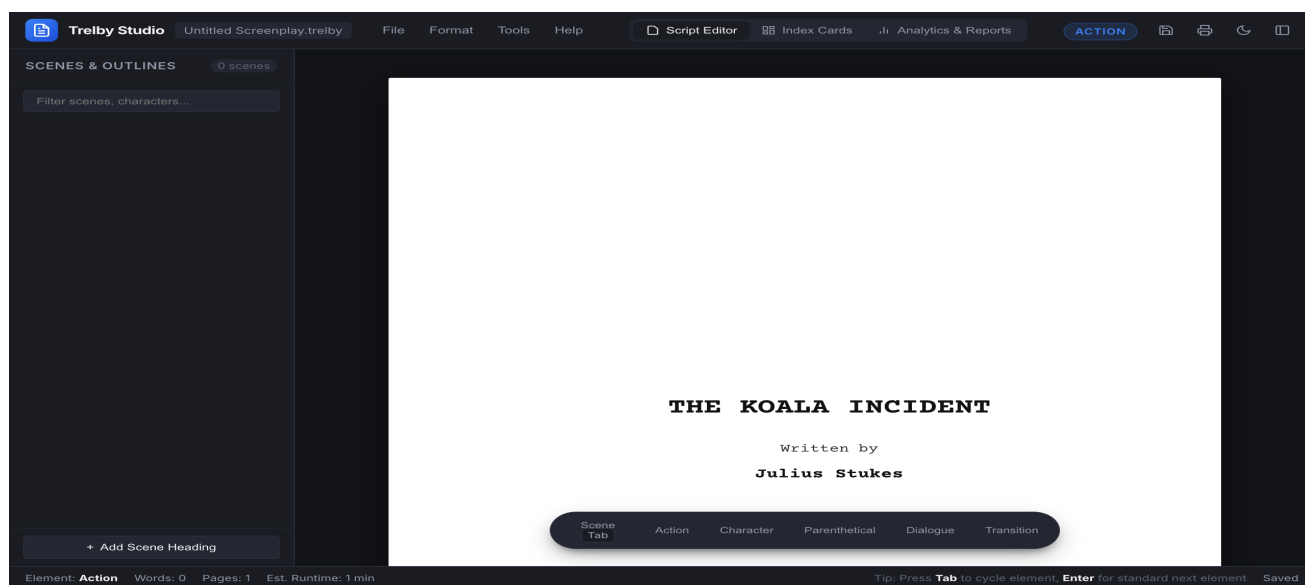


Figure 4.2 — The Screenplay Linter Diagnostics: Real-time detection of orphaned characters, wall-of-text action, and missing sluglines.

Common Formatting Violations Flagged by the Linter:

- **Orphaned Character Cues:** A character cue with no dialogue underneath. Occurs when you type a name and forget to fill in the line.
- **Wall of Text Action:** Action blocks exceeding 5 lines or 80 words. Reader eyes glaze over dense blocks of text; break them into 2-line punches.
- **Missing Slugline Prefix:** Scene headings that omit INT. or EXT.. Productions need to know whether to rent interior stages or exterior permits.
- **Unclosed Parentheticals:** Missing opening or closing parentheses like (smiling.
- **Industry Acronym Recognition:** Whitelists standard terms (O.S. Off-Screen, V.O. Voice-Over, P.O.V. Point of View, CONT'D Continued).

Chapter 5: Production Revisions, Name Generation & PDF Delivery

Screenplays undergo numerous drafts before principal photography. Screenwriting by Stukes incorporates production-grade versioning, character name generation, and client-side PDF export.

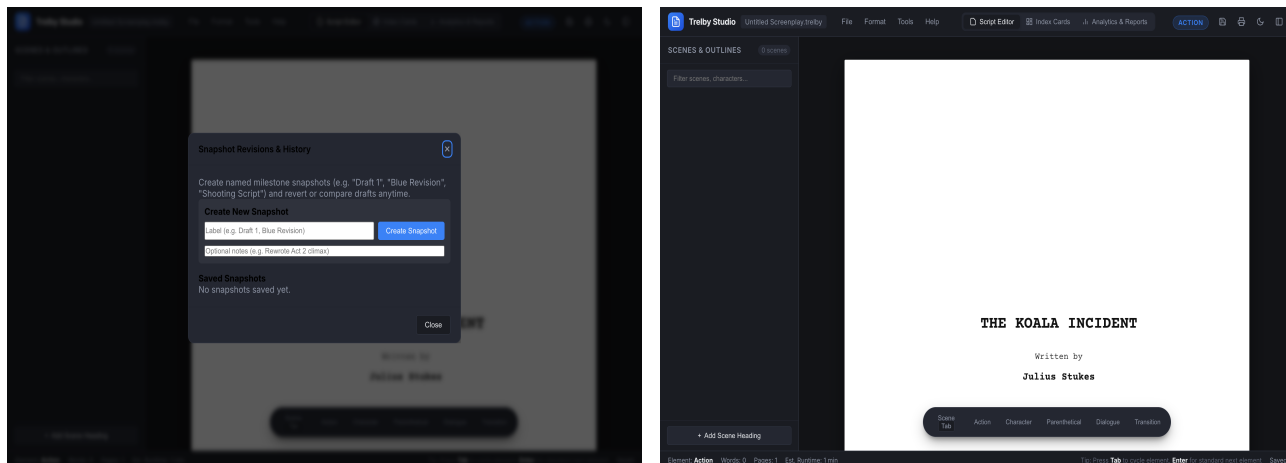


Figure 5.1 — Left: Revision History & Snapshots. Right: Trelby's Character Name Database.

1. Industry Production Revision Colors

In Hollywood production, revised pages are printed on distinct colored paper so cast and crew know which pages changed. You can label your snapshots using standard industry revision draft sequence:

White Draft (First Complete Script) → **Blue Revision** → **Pink Revision** → **Yellow Revision** → **Green Revision** → **Goldenrod Revision**

2. Generating Character Names

Inspired by Trelby's 200,000 name database, open **Tools** → **Character Name Database** to generate culturally authentic or genre-specific character names (Noir, Sci-Fi, Victorian, Classic American). Clicking any name inserts it directly into your script as an active Character Cue.

3. Exporting Studio-Ready PDFs with Watermarks

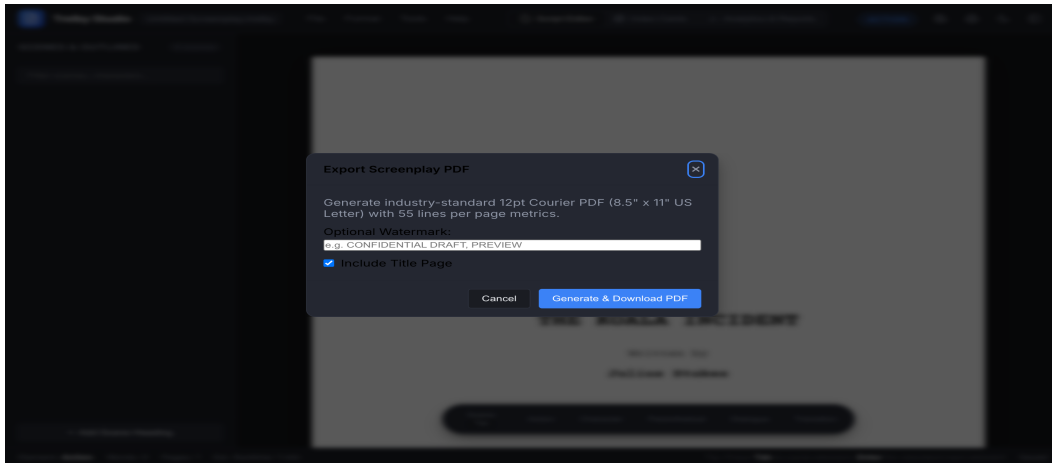


Figure 5.2 — Client-Side PDF Export Dialog with Watermarking and Title Page options.

When submitting your script to actors, agents, or festivals, click **File** → **Print / Export PDF** or press Cmd+P. The built-in PDF engine enforces strict 55-line pagination, handles dialogue page splits with (MORE) and (cont'd), and embeds optional diagonal watermarks (e.g. CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT) to protect your intellectual property.

Chapter 6: Keyboard Cheat Sheet & 10 Pro-Tips for Success

Keep this reference sheet handy while writing. Speed and muscle memory will keep you in creative flow.

Key Combination	Function / Action	Pro Context
Tab	Cycle Element Type	Action → Character → Parenthetical → Dialogue → Transition → Scene
Enter	Advance to Next Logical Element	Scene → Action, Character → Dialogue, Dialogue → Character
Ctrl / Cmd + 1	Scene Heading	Forces uppercase INT./EXT. slugline
Ctrl / Cmd + 2	Action	Standard narrative description
Ctrl / Cmd + 3	Character Cue	Uppercase centered character name
Ctrl / Cmd + 4	Parenthetical	Automatically encloses in (parentheses)
Ctrl / Cmd + 5	Dialogue	Standard 35-character indented dialogue block
Ctrl / Cmd + 6	Transition	Right-aligned CUT TO: or FADE OUT.
Ctrl / Cmd + S	Save Script to Disk	Native File System Access API save without prompts
Ctrl / Cmd + O	Open Local File	Supports .trelby, .fountain, and Final Draft .fdx
Ctrl / Cmd + P	Export PDF / Print	Generates 55-line Courier 12pt PDF
F11	Distraction-Free Zen Mode	Hides all headers and sidebars for pure typewriter flow

10 Habits of Successful Screenwriters

1. **Write every day at the same time:** Routine beats inspiration. Aim for 3 pages a day (a full draft in 35 days).
2. **Arrive late, leave early:** Start scenes as close to the emotional turn as possible; cut the instant the point is made.
3. **Kill your darlings:** If a brilliant line doesn't advance character or plot, cut it.
4. **Action verbs over passive voice:** Replace 'starts to walk toward' with 'stalks toward'.
5. **Dialogue is what characters don't say:** Subtext, glances, and silence are often more powerful than speeches.
6. **Every scene needs conflict:** Two characters who agree on everything make for a dull scene.
7. **Use the 10-page rule:** Readers decide whether to pass or keep reading within the first 10 minutes.
8. **Listen to your script:** Read your dialogue out loud to test cadence and natural breath.
9. **Respect the white space:** Don't choke the page with 8-line paragraphs; allow the reader's eye to breathe.
10. **Writing is rewriting:** Draft 1 is just shoveling sand into the sandbox so you can build castles in Draft 2.

Happy writing! May your story find its way to the big screen.