

# "Don't think... feel"

[Scott Myers](#)

*With writing, there are times to think... and times to feel.*

*"I've had a sign over my typewriter for over 25 years now, which reads 'Don't think!' You must never think at the typewriter — you must feel. Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway."*

*— Ray Bradbury*



Ray Bradbury: "Don't think... feel."

When I stumbled across this quote, it struck me as profoundly right.

I do a lot of thinking about the craft of screenwriting. I come by it honestly. I never went to film school or had any formal training before I broke into the business, so I had to do whatever I could to get my act together to sustain a career as a screenwriter. Moreover, I had trained to become an academic, albeit in a completely different field, before I took my “year off from school” which subsequently became the rest of my life.

Put those two together and the result is applying a significant amount of my gray matter to reading, studying, analyzing, questions, concerns, ideas and concepts related to writing screenplays.

When I began teaching screenwriting in my spare time about a decade ago, that only intensified my thought process. Writing is one thing. *Teaching* writing is quite another. The former is pretty much just ‘doing.’ The latter requires one to... well... *think* about the doing, then articulate that process in a coherent form which can be conveyed to students.

In the ten years or so I’ve been teaching, I have created dozens of classes and taught well over one hundred of them to over a thousand writers. All of that required considerable thinking.

Yet while I’m proud of the approach I have developed which I teach — grounded in solid theory and years of experience working as a professional in Hollywood, not

formula, not pap, a comprehensive, character-based approach to the craft — when I send writers off to write their scripts or accompany them in workshops, I always make a point similar to Bradbury: No matter the books you've read or theories you've ingested, no matter what you've come up with in your prep work, whatever your *thinking* has brought you to, you must be willing to trust your characters, follow your *feelings* as you write. Because writing is a journey of discovery no matter how much thought you've put into it.

Now I would hasten to add a proviso: Bradbury was a genius. He was destined to be a writer, perhaps even born with a writer's soul. So it was probably natural and easy for him to 'cut off' his intellect and trust his gut when writing. Those of us who exist on a more terrestrial plane may not be so lucky and will have to rely at least somewhat on our intellect as we write.

But it's that last point that really grabbed me: *Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway.*

Wow. I love that. Because it describes in succinct fashion the very process I try to convey here on the blog, in my teaching and in my own writing.

Learn the craft as best you can through study and analysis. Immerse yourself in your story universe during prep-writing. Brainstorm. Character development. Plotting. All of it. That should engage both your intellect

and your heart.

But when you hit FADE IN, default to your emotions. At the end of the day, you want a script reader to feel something. What better way to ensure that than by feeling something ourselves?

Look, as I say *ad nauseum*, there is no right way to write. But consider the potential of Bradbury's imperative when you launch into writing page: Don't think! Feel. If you've done sufficient prep work, the intellect will be there as a sort of 'subtext' to your feelings.

And that combination could be the ideal one for your creative process.

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