

Trimming Tricks of the Trade: Pseudo-Slugs

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Another way to cut back page count.

#4: Pseudo-Slugs



Technically when you use a Secondary Slugline (or Shot), you need to provide a line-space, then go to scene description. For example:

OUTSIDE THE DOOREve uses her body as a barricade.

In the past, I have gotten away with this:

OUTSIDE THE DOOR – Eve uses her body as a barricade

Note how that potentially saves 2 lines. I call it a *pseudo-slug* and it can not only save you lines, it also reads really well in action scenes.

Here's an example from a script I co-wrote "Stalemate," optioned several times, but as of yet unproduced:

SNIPER P.O.V. – THROUGH RIFLE CROSSHAIRS
Focuses :
A bullet bites dust... where Marty was standing.
QUICK CUT TO:
Sniper, who swan dives into the dust...
The BOXCAR I...
away with an Ingram machine gun... a trail of slugs
GUNS the engine...
MARTY darts behind his Porsche... r...
the car.
THE LIMO spins away...

The beginning of each sentence, when capitalized, gives the same effect as a Shot, but because the scene description begins on the same line as the pseudo-slug, the version above saves about 14 lines of space.

Nowadays the concept of using lines or short paragraphs to 'direct' the action, suggesting individual camera shots, is pretty standard, so you don't even need to cap the object of attention, the line itself can indicate the point of focus, but that's basically a stylistic choice for the writer.

Granted, all these tips are pretty mundane stuff, but when

you're looking at a script that clocks in at 130 pages and you knew there were tips like these that combined could knock off 7–10 pages without having to change the substance of the story, the mundane transforms into mighty helpful.

I leave you with an editing quote from the aforementioned Paddy Chayefsky:

"If it should occur to you to cut, do so. That's the first basic rule of cutting. If you're reading through and stop, something is wrong. Cut it. If something bothers you, then it's bad. Cut it. If you can cut inside the speech, you're really cutting most effectively. It's purifying, it's refining. Making it precise. Precision is one of the basic elements of poetry. My own rules are very simple. First, cut out all the wisdom; then cut out all the adjectives. I've cut some of my favorite stuff. I have no compassion when it comes to cutting. No pity, no sympathy. Some of my dearest and most beloved bits of writing have gone with a very quick slash, slash, slash. Because something was heavy there. Cutting leads to economy, precision, and to a vastly improved script."

And with that...

CUT!

[Part 1: Lose the orphans](#)

[Part 2: Minimize parentheticals](#)

[Part 3: Cut transitions](#)

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