

Writing Advice from Matt Stone and Trey Parker

[Scott Myers](#)

A video from a surprise appearance at NYU Film School.



On a whim, I decided to check the Go Into The Story archives from October 2011. What was I writing about a decade ago. Here you go!

Takeaway quotes:

- "It's amazing how a deadline gets your creative juices going."
- "In our writers room, you never say 'no.' You almost never go, 'No, that won't work because of this.' You don't need that energy."
- "Each individual scene [in *South Park*] has to work as

a funny sketch.”

- “We found out this really simple rule... We can take these beats... of your outline and if the words ‘and then’ belong between those beats, you’re fucked. You’ve got something pretty boring. What should happen between every beat you’ve written down is the word ‘therefore’ or ‘but.’”

This last bit is a really nice way of thinking about transitions from scene to scene as well as establishing a narrative flow. “Therefore” suggests that what happens in the next scene logically and naturally flows from the present scene. “But” suggests that what happens in the next scene is not only logical and natural, but also a complication, roadblock or reversal. It gets at the flow of narrative where some things work out for the Protagonist, other things don’t, but there’s always this push forward into the next scene.

Stone and Parker mention the very first short film they did featuring what became the South Park characters, a 5-minute short called “The Spirit of Christmas.” I remember back in 1992 or whenever it was when the video first went viral, standing in my agent’s office as he forced me to watch the video. Evidently, he had done this with everyone he had seen that day he was so blown away by the humor in the piece. It’s that type of thing that can get you noticed in a big hurry. Here is that short:

Here is a 1995 sequel from the TV series *South Park*:

“Therefore or but.” Good insight because it speaks to the causality of one scene leading to the next.

And that’s what was happening ten years ago at my blog!