FREE FROM SECRET ACTOR SOCIETY

5 things every short film needs

From my class How To Create Your Own Content.

Hi, Kym here.

Stop waiting for permission. Making your own work gives you control over your roles, fresh footage for your reel, and a reason to be in filmmaker rooms.

Every short needs five things. If one's missing, it has to be a choice. Not something you didn't know about.

And your first project will probably suck. That's okay. Keep it short and cheap so it's a lesson, not a disaster. Over the page is why short means about six minutes.

Kym

01 **A character and a setting.**

Or a group of characters. Build it around what you can get: a farm, a workshop, a friend who makes incredible costumes.

02 **A goal.**

Something your character wants.

03 **An obstacle that stands in the way of that goal.**

The obstacle is his mum? Or his teacher? Or... the fish in his bedroom tank, talking him out of it. Now you don't even need another actor.

04 **Time pressure.**

It creates tension and keeps the story moving.

05 **For a feature: a second storyline.**

With the same theme, woven into the main one. I read a feature script recently with no subplot at all. That's why it was only 78 pages.

TEST IT

Write the whole idea in one to three sentences. Character, goal, obstacle, deadline. If it won't fit, it isn't clear yet.

STEAL THIS: 20 OPTIONS

For each of the 5, write 20 options. Fast. Terrible and awesome. Bad ideas are stepping stones. Even if you keep your first idea, you'll know it beat 19 others.

Why your first short should be about six minutes

The number that matters is budget per minute on screen. Every extra minute thins the money out. (Rough maths, fixed costs aside.)

SAME $5,000 SPREAD OVER	ON SCREEN PER MINUTE
A 6-minute short	About $800
A 15-minute short	About $330, barely a third
A web series of ten 6-minute episodes	About $83. You'd need around $50,000 to match the short.

DO MY MATHS

MY BUDGET	÷ MINUTES ON SCREEN	= PER MINUTE

> **THE "WE'LL FIX IT IN POST" TRAP**
>
> 10 extra pages is two extra shoot days. Write it tight from the start. And festivals feel it too: when we ran a film festival, choosing an 18-minute short meant saying no to two or three 6-minute shorts.

A story is as long as the story is. Just know the trade-off before you write page 16.

This guide comes from **How To Create Your Own Content**, one of the 18 masterclasses in The Journey at **secretactor.com**.