This is a standard script **title page.** The title is generally written in all caps, underlined, and centered on the page.

The screenwriter(s) are then centered under a Written by credit.

<u>WELCOME HOME, SYLVIA</u>

Written by

Jacob Lee Johnson

If your script is based on anything,
you can include that here

Address
Phone Number
WGA or US Copyright Registration #

FADE IN:

Most professional scripts begin with **FADE IN:** on either side of the page before the first scene.

INT. HOUSE – DAY

Now that the **scene heading** has established whether or not the scene is taking place inside or outside (INT. or EXT.), the location (e.g. HOUSE, YARD, CAR, etc.) and the time of day (e.g. DAY, NIGHT, etc.), we can start our action description.

These present-tense descriptions describe what the audience sees on-screen. Usually, they are concise and visual, providing necessary information without boring the reader.

If a character is introduced for the first time, they are typically written with all caps, followed by their age and a short description. For instance...

SYLVIA (60s), enters through the front door. Sharp-eyed and silver-haired, she looks like she's already read your mind -- and judged it.

When you want your characters to speak, you create a line of **dialogue.** The character name should be in all caps, indented four inches from the left side of the page, with their dialogue centered beneath it. But no need to grab a ruler -- screenwriting software does this for you!

                    SYLVIA
          Is no one going to help me with my
          luggage?

Sylvia looks around the empty foyer.

Now, what if you want your character to say a line of dialogue in a specific way? Or you want to clear up who they are speaking to, or what they're referencing? Well, that's where a **parenthetical** comes in! These are small descriptions enclosed in parentheses that are indented three inches from the left side of the page (again, screenwriting software will help you here).

                    SYLVIA (CONT'D)
                (towards the living room)
          Is anyone home?

Confused, she moves towards the living room.

Uh oh, we're about to move locations, which usually means a new scene heading -- but we already established the HOUSE as the location.

Fortunately, there are many ways to introduce a new location that's in the same general area as the original location. Ultimately, it's up to the writer to pick which approach works best, but some options could include:

INT. LIVING ROOM / HOUSE - DAY

or

INT. LIVING ROOM

or even just

LIVING ROOM

Let's go with the first option!

INT. LIVING ROOM / HOUSE - DAY

No life in sight. Only a warm, inviting living room -- half cleaned, as if someone had just stepped away.

                    SYLVIA
              (calling out)
          Sarah?

What if you want a character who is not featured on the screen to say something? All you have to do is add **(O.S.)** after their name during that moment of dialogue, signifying "off-screen."

                    SARAH (O.S.)
          Mom!? Is that you?

SARAH (late 30s) walks into the living room. T-shirt stained from a morning of chores, she looks exactly like someone who finishes what others start.

                    SARAH (CONT'D)
          I told you Harry was picking you
          up.

                    SYLVIA
          Well, I landed, he wasn't there,
          the taxi driver was. What do you
          want me to say?

If you want a specific sound, action, moment, or object to stand out within the action description, you can write it in all caps. Some writers choose to get even more creative, bolding or italicizing certain words. However, too much flare can be distracting.

Sylvia stops herself from saying something, and instead lets out a deep SIGH.

>   SARAH
>   (defeated)
>   Where's your suitcase?

>   SYLVIA
>   Still in the taxi.

Sarah looks out the LIVING ROOM WINDOW towards the driveway.

>   SARAH
>   What taxi?

Sylvia spins towards the window with a GASP.

Sometimes, you'll find that a **shot transition** (like CUT TO:, DISSOLVE TO:, FADE TO BLACK., CRASH TO BLACK., etc.) can better communicate what you're envisioning on-screen. While they should be used sparingly, adding an abrupt cut to the next scene can capture the comedy of this moment.

These shot transitions are usually indented to the far right of the page, followed by a colon if the next scene begins right after, or a period if there's a moment of black.

>   CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Sylvia and Sarah bolt out the front door, spotting a GREEN TAXI far in the distance.

>   SARAH / SYLVIA
>   Wait! Come back!

But it's too late.

Unless...

>   SYLVIA
>   Where's your car?

>   SARAH
>   Harry took it to get you!

>   SYLVIA
>   Why didn't he take his car!?

>   SARAH
>   You called it a death trap!

                    SYLVIA
          Well, let's take his then! I need
          my clothes! My sleep apnea mask!

To show two characters speaking over each other, all you need
to do it put their dialogue side-by-side. This is typically
called **Dual Dialogue** on screenwriting software interfaces.

            SARAH   SYLVIA (CONT'D)
I can't drive stick! You --   I need my stuff -- I taught
no, you didn't teach me, you   you stick! In your dad's
yelled at me for a month   Camaro! It's easy, I'll show
until I was too traumatized   you!
to drive!

Bickering like old times, the mother and daughter duo rush
down the driveway towards Harry's stylish MAZDA MIATA.

Curious how to write a **voiceover**? It's pretty much the same
as writing (O.S.) dialogue, but you use the abbreviation
(V.O.) instead.

                    SARAH (V.O.)
          You know those people who create
          chaos everywhere they go? Like they
          need it to breathe?

Want to add a flashback? It's as easy as adding "(FLASHBACK)"
to the scene heading, and "BACK TO SCENE." when returning to
the present.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sylvia stands in front of a serious-looking JUDGE (40s) in
traffic court.

                    JUDGE
          Seeing as the parking sign was
          partially obstructed by a city
          tree, I'm comfortable moving to
          dismiss your $80 fine.

Sylvia smiles... for a moment. Then, it starts to fade.

                    SARAH (V.O.)
          Maybe it's not drama they crave —
          maybe it's just something to feel.

                    SYLVIA
            (to judge)
          Is there no justice anymore!?
                    (MORE)

                    SYLVIA (CONT'D)
          What's the use of laws if a leaf
          can get me off scott-free? Maybe I
          can rob a gas station at gunpoint,
          as long as I hide my pistol with a
          bush, you'll let me off with a
          warning!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

BACK TO SCENE.

The two pile into the car.

Formatting car scenes can get a bit complicated, especially
when the camera is expected to cut back and forth between the
inside of the car and the outside. This is where a dual
INT/EXT. heading can come in handy.

INT/EXT. - CAR - DAY

The car sputters past the driveway into the street, then
quickly STALLS.

                    SYLVIA
          Easy on the clutch--

                    SARAH
          If you yell at me, I swear I'll
          turn this car around.

Sylvia looks out the back window -- they've made it about
five feet. Six, if you're generous.

Sarah tries again, and moves the car to second gear.

Suddenly, her phone RINGS. She picks up.

If a character receives a phone call, you can format it in a
variety of ways. If there are just two people in the scene,
it's probably easiest to just write something like, *"The
following conversation takes place entirely over the phone,
alternating back and forth between locations,"* and then
format the dialogue as normal.

Others choose to use parentheticals, citing (into phone) for
the on-screen speaker, and (over phone) for the voice coming
out of the phone.

Another option is to simply write (V.O.) after the name of
the dialogue coming out of the phone.

For this exercise, let's do the second option.

                        SARAH (CONT'D)
                  (into phone)
            Hello?

                        HARRY
                  (over phone)
            Hey, did your mom text you?

                        SARAH
                  (into phone)
            She's here, she took a cab, and now
            we're chasing it down because it
            drove off with her luggage.

                        HARRY
                  (over phone)
            She just had to make things
            complicated, didn't she?

                        SARAH
                  (over phone)
            You're on speaker.

                        HARRY
                  (over phone, awkwardly)
            Oh... hey Sylvia, how was your
            flight?

            SYLVIA   HARRY (CONT'D)
       (into phone)   (over phone)
    When's the last time you   Oh no, I'm losing signal,
    cleaned your car? You have   I'll see you two at home,
    hot sauce packets all over   drive safe!
    your floor! With such an
    expensive car, why do you
    only eat cheap unhealthy
    food?

Harry hangs up the phone, leaving Sarah alone with Sylvia.

                        SARAH
                  (re: taxi)
            I don't know which way he went.

                        SYLVIA
            Maybe back to the airport?

                        SARAH
            Do you know the name of the taxi
            company?

Sylvia shakes her head, embarrassed. For the first time, she
looks weak... vulnerable...

                    SARAH (CONT'D)
                (clocking her
                 vulnerability)
            We'll find him.

There are a variety of ways to format a **montage.**

One way is to write "SERIES OF SHOTS:" followed by a bulleted
(or dashed) list of short shot description. You can also say
"BEGIN MONTAGE:" and "END MONTAGE." Let's see what that could
look like.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- The car arrives at the airport. Sarah and Sylvia peer out
their windows, no luck.

- The two drive on the freeway, looking around in silence.

- Sarah stands at a gas station, filling the car with gas and
looking for TAXI DEPOTS on GOOGLE MAPS

- Sarah pulls up to a parking lot full of YELLOW TAXIS.
Sylvia shakes her head.

END MONTAGE.

INT/EXT. CAR – NIGHT

Sarah and Sylvia drive in silence.

Until...

                    SYLVIA
            Do you miss him?

Sarah looks at Sylvia –– then at her thumb. She's gently
moving it back and forth against her WEDDING RING.

                    SARAH
            Of course.

A beat.

                    SYLVIA
            Oh well, I can borrow your clothes.

                    SARAH
            You sure?

                    SYLVIA
            Yeah... but before we go home...
            can we do something?

                         SARAH
          What?

                         SYLVIA
          Wash this car.

                         SARAH
               (annoyed)
          It's not that bad--

                         SYLVIA
          No, I mean... as a gift to Harry.
          For letting us use it all day.

                         SARAH
               (surprised)
          That's... a nice idea.

                                        DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR WASH - NIGHT

Mother and daughter sit side-by-side as the Miata drifts
through the spinning machinery -- noisily cleansing the car.

                         SARAH (V.O.)
          Some people carry chaos like it's
          oxygen.

Soap sprays against the windshield - a tapestry of color.

                         SARAH (V.O.)
          They drive you crazy. But they're
          yours. And somehow, that chaos
          feels like home.

The two grin at each other as the car pulls towards the exit.

                         SARAH
               (looking in rearview
                mirror)
          You gotta be kidding me.

Behind them, the GREEN TAXI trails along the track — unaware
it's the very car they've been chasing all day.

When it's time to end to end a script, simply write **FADE OUT.**
or **FADE TO BLACK.** on the right side of the page.

                                        FADE TO BLACK.