



Narrative Structure

For Adventure Filmmakers



Why Structure Matters

1. Helps shape tension, pacing and emotional involvement.
2. Structure helps control of surprise, danger, discovery.
3. Gives meaningful escalation.
4. Clear Goals.
5. Strong inciting incident.
6. Defined plot points that turn the story's direction.

The 3 Act Structure

Act 1 - Setup (establish world, character, goal)

Act 2 - Confrontation (escalating conflict, obstacles)

Act 3 - Resolution (climax & aftermath)

Timing breakdown (5 minute film)

Act 1 - 0:00 - 1.00 (hook viewer, introduce protagonist and goal)

Act 2 - 1.00 - 3.45 (rising obstacles, midpoint twist, escalating danger)

Act 3 - 3.45 - 5.00 (Climax, resolution, final image)

Plot Points & Inciting Incidents

'The story begins when balance is disrupted' - Rob McKee (Story)

Timing Breakdown (5 minute film)

Act 1 - 0:00 - 1.00 (hook viewer, introduce protagonist and goal)

1.00 - 1.30 (1st inciting incident) ends act 1- Commits to Journey?

Act 2 - 1.30 - 3.30 (rising obstacles, midpoint twist, escalating danger)

3.30 - 4.00 (2nd inciting incident) ends act 2 - Highest stakes?

Act 3 - 4.00 - 5.00 (climax, resolution, final image)

Analyse - Black Hole (Short Film) Identify the 3 acts & plot points.



Analyse - The One Making Waves (Steven Clarey)



Linear Narrative

- Events unfold in chronological order.
- Clear beginning, middle, end.
- Easy to follow.
- Audience experiences the story as characters do.
- Common in adventure films, classic films, dramas.

Non-Linear Narrative

- Events presented out of chronological order.
- May include, flashbacks, flash forwards, parallel timelines, fragmented sequences
- Audience reconstructs the story
- Common in thrillers, mystery, art films, psychological narratives.

Further Reading

