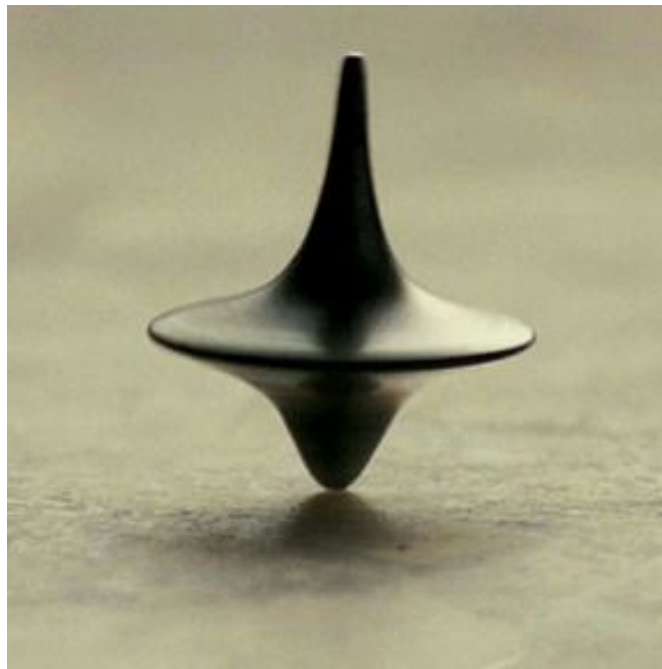


## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #1: Opening & Closing Images**

The first image introduces your story to your audience, so make it a good one! Ideally, the first image is a visual representation of your entire story, especially its theme.

Your closing image is your last contact with your audience, so make it strong. A good closing image, like the spinning top in *Inception*, can even change our interpretation of the entire ending.



*The closing image from INCEPTION is of this dream “totem”*

It’s probably best to decide what your opening and closing images are going to be *after* you’ve got a solid draft under your belt and have a clear understanding of the theme you’re trying to convey.

## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #2: Inciting Incident**

The inciting incident is that event that changes the course of your main character's life. If the inciting incident didn't occur, your main character would've taken another path...and you'd have an entirely different screenplay.

## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #3: First Act Break**

The first act break marks the end of your set-up: you've introduced most, if not all, of the key characters.

We know about your main character, his goal and the obstacles he faces. He's done his prep work, and now he's ready to go.

In a lot of movie plots, the main character has to go on a journey in order to achieve his goal. Because of that, often times, the first act break involves a physical location change.

Amateur screenplays are notorious for elaborate first acts that are simply too long. Although there are no hard and fast rules, this break usually occurs between pages 25-30 in your screenplay. Keep that in mind when you're fleshing out your script outline.

## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #4: the Midpoint**

The midpoint, as its name implies, is the at the middle of your screenplay's second act. It changes the entire direction of your story.

For example, in a “good vs evil” type story, the good forces have experienced setback after setback. But at the midpoint, something happens that changes their fortunes for the better. For the first time, success seems like a possibility.

In a comedy or drama where people of different personalities are thrown together, the midpoint marks the moment where they stop seeing each other as enemies, usually by accomplishing a minor, but important, goal together.

### **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #5: the Point of Commitment**

The point of commitment is where your main character reaffirms his commitment to his goal.

The point of commitment happens around page 60 of your screenplay. At first I was skeptical, but then I started looking for it – and lo and behold! – it was there, just as she said...usually clocking in 60 minutes into the movie.

I wouldn't spend too much time on this plot point when writing your script outline, but because I'm personally interested in psychology and human motivation, I think it's an interesting point to include. You'll often discover you already wrote in a point of a commitment in your screenplay, even if you didn't consciously intend to do so.

### **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #6: All Is Lost**

At this moment, your main character has experienced an extreme setback. He's the farthest he can possibly be from his goal, and it seems impossible for him to accomplish it. This moment usually marks the end of Act II.

## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #7: the Climax**

In the climax, your main character has gathered his resources (both internal and external). In this final showdown, he will test his mettle against [the antagonistic forces](#) that have thwarted him from achieving his goal.

If he has a tragic flaw, in the climax, he demonstrates that he has overcome it. All the lessons he learned during the second act will pay off in the climax.

## **Your Script Outline — Plot Point #8: the Resolution**

Ah, we're almost done!

If your screenplay has a happy ending, the resolution is the best part for your hero. He gets to enjoy the fruits of his labor. His world is in balance again.



*My kind of screenplay resolution...*

If your screenplay has, shall we say a more European ending, the resolution is bittersweet for your hero. He might not have accomplished his goal, but somehow he's still in a better place than when he began his journey.