

Tips on Formatting Stage Directions and Asides

	INITIAL STAGE DIRECTION	STAGE DIRECTION	ASIDE
USAGE	At the very top of a new scene - the FIRST stage direction for each new scene.	Every other stage direction that is not the FIRST one in a scene.	Most often right after the character name of who is about to speak; but also within the speech of a particular character, as a directorial note to that particular actor
INDENT	3" from Left	1" from left AND 1" from right	1" from left AND 1" from right
PARENTHESES	NO parentheses.	Enclosed in parentheses.	Enclosed in parentheses
ITALICS	NO	NO	NO
SENTENCE	Full sentences with initial caps and final punctuation.	Full sentences with initial caps and final punctuation.	NOT complete sentences; no initial caps, no final punctuation
SPACING	BLANK space ABOVE and BELOW	BLANK space ABOVE and BELOW	NO blank space above OR below
ACTIVE PRONOUNS	Use ALL CAPS for the name or pronoun of the character performing an action.	Use ALL CAPS for the name or pronoun of the character performing an action.	Not relevant. No need to name the character who is speaking. If you need to refer to an action for a character other than the one who is speaking, you should be using a stage direction, NOT an aside.

sample of an INITIAL STAGE DIRECTION:

ACT ONE

Scene 7

This is an initial stage direction. It is only used at the top of a scene. It is indented 3" from the left. It is not enclosed in brackets. If a character performs an action, their name must appear in all caps as in: JOE enters and hugs Jill.

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sample of a STAGE DIRECTION:

JOE

It is so awesome to see you!

(JILL pulls herself away from Joe and sits in a chair on the other side of the room.)

JILL

Wow. That was intense.

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sample of an ASIDE:

JOE

(hugging Jill; nearly knocking her over in his enthusiasm)

It is so awesome to see you!

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sample of an ASIDE DURING A SPEECH:

JOE

(entering excitedly)

Jill!

(nearly knocking Jill over as he hugs her)

It is so awesome to see you!

(beat)

Sorry, was that too much?

Sample of a stage direction within one character's speech

VERSION ONE (full sentence; reiterate character name):

JOE
It is so awesome to see you!
(JILL pulls herself away from Joe.)

JOE
What's the matter; not happy to see me?

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VERSION TWO (full sentence; do not reiterate character name):

JOE
It is so awesome to see you!
(JILL pulls herself away from Joe.)
What's the matter; not happy to see me?

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VERSION THREE (avoiding dissension altogether by converting a stage direction into an aside):

JOE
It is so awesome to see you!
(off of Jill's sour reaction)
What's the matter; not happy to see me?