

YOUR SCRIPT SUCKS

A Practical Guide to
Writing Cinematic
Audio Roleplay

BY ESCAPED AUDIOS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome writers, new and seasoned! The purpose of this guide is to give creative insight and provide a practical guide into writing audios in the style of cinematic, action-oriented, plot and character-driven narrative roleplay. I bring this up to distinguish the cinematic style from styles of Audio Roleplay that most people may be more familiar with, such ASMR roleplay, sleep aid roleplay, comfort audios, or boyfriend/girlfriend experience Audio Roleplays.

I deeply appreciate plot-driven Audio Roleplays, and want to see the community flourish. As it stands, the most popular and well-known style of Audio Roleplay is boyfriend/girlfriend experience roleplay. Making and enjoying that style of audio is perfectly valid, but I'm invested in the growth of cinematic Audio Roleplay and want to help cultivate it as much as possible, so I'm creating a practical guide to navigate the complexities of creative writing for that style of Audio RP. Despite the focus on cinematic audios, I feel that most writers (and even actors) have something to learn from the perspectives in this guide. If you want a guide meant *specifically for comfort audios*, I suggest supplementing this guide with [Cardlin Audio's Script Guide](#).

Audio roleplay is capable of telling stories in a unique way that traditional mediums cannot. The use of sound combined with dialogue allows audiences to use their imaginations in an especially immersive fashion, which uniquely facilitates and enables the first-person narrative perspective of Audio Roleplay. Every year more and more voice actors and writers push the boundaries of storytelling depth within audio, and create imaginative narratives that couldn't be accomplished in any other medium using nothing but a microphone, open source editing software, and sound effects.

I'll detail the entire writing process, from the very start of the creative process to the end. I will also clarify how and when the creative process for writing Audio Roleplay differs from traditional mediums such as literature, films, and even traditional audio dramas. I'm writing this guide under the presumption that most readers are already familiar with Audio Roleplay, but for the sake of clarity I'm going to define a few Audio RP-specific terms.

- **Listener:** The self-insert first-person point of view character that your audience members are roleplaying as. In this guide Listener (with a capital L) refers to the POV characters in a roleplay, and audience/audience member refers to the real-life people listening to the audio.
- **Main Character/MC:** The primary **speaker** character. Your audience's main window into the setting and the story, and usually (though not always) a love interest in Audio RPs involving romance.
- **Speaker:** any fully voiced character, including the MC and the supporting cast.
- **Implied Dialogue:** The unspoken dialogue that the audience members must imagine the Listener is saying. Implied dialogue is presented in audio with brief pauses and gaps in speech of about 1.5-2.5 seconds (written in script samples as "[BEAT]"). Implied dialogue is sometimes explicitly stated by having speakers repeat the dialogue back at them, but it is usually inferred by interpreting the context of the speaker character's dialogue and actions.
- **Implied Action:** Actions by the Listener that are never verbally acknowledged but only presented through sound effects for the audience to interpret.
- **Sound Effects/Foley:** Any sound edited in post-recording used to express interaction with an inanimate object, such as footsteps, gunfire, or the whirring engine of a smoothie blender, or a chainsaw cutting your face off.

- **Ambience:** Continuous background sound that is meant to establish or characterize the immediate setting in which a scene takes place, as opposed to action sound effects that correspond to individual and defined actions in the script.
- **Cinematic Audios:** Audio Roleplays that involve a cast of multiple speaker characters, take place in a broad setting across multiple scene locations, and have a defined plot with conflict, stakes, and resolution. This style is distinct from the other (more common) styles of Audio RP such as comfort, relationship experience, and ASMR focused Audio Roleplay.

I'll touch briefly on formatting here in the introduction, but I won't discuss it again because formatting isn't terribly important. I prefer to write in a style resembling a modified version of screenplay formatting. Throughout this guide you will find a handful of samples showcasing writing in my formatting style, but I'll describe the formula here. To indicate lines, I center align the character names and write them in upper case. Dialogue is written indented and left aligned, with inflection and tone directions as parentheticals at the beginning of their lines. Non-dialogue vocalizations (such as sighs, grunts, or deep breaths) are also written as parentheticals.

When introducing characters, I write their name in the scene description in upper case and give a brief summary of the character with an emphasis on how they speak and sound. This part is optional, and can instead be accomplished by including a list of characters and their descriptions/speaking styles in a separate section of the script. It's entirely up to you how you present character information as long as your VAs have some fundamental understanding of the character's attitude and vocal style. Gaps and pauses for Listener implied dialogue are marked in center alignment within brackets as either [BEAT] or [PAUSE], depending on the length. [BEAT] represents a gap of 1.5-2.5 seconds within a naturally flowing conversation, and [PAUSE] is used for gaps longer than 2.5 seconds, often indicating actual Listener silence.

All scenes begin with establishing the scene location (with the location name written in upper case) followed by a description of the setting as described through ambience and other sound effects. I usually put actions/stage directions in left-alignment and in bold, and typically separate them from the character dialogue. This is somewhat different from standard screenplay format. I format my scripts this way for ease of both performing and editing because **unlike in films or plays, the stage directions are usually only relevant during the editing process**, and only exist in the form of sound effects that are added after the dialogue is recorded. Stage directions with sound effects that overlap or take place in quick succession are single spaced, and actions with sound effects that take place independently from each other are double spaced. **All stage directions must be paired to a sound.** Word count requirements are very loose, but cinematic scripts should be between 2,000 words (light, 15-20 minutes) and 10,000 words (heavy, over an hour). I also use Courier New as my preferred font, but only because I think it's cool and looks professional, font doesn't really matter.

In terms of release order and episode structuring, I advise writing individual episodes that are intended to tell a self-contained story, while being designed to have a seamless transition into one another. This allows you to later compile them together into a single movie-like experience for a definitive cinematic experience. This is a very loose guideline, but for a maximally cinematic experience you should plan your series to have a total compiled length between 90-210 minutes, split into 3-8 individual parts that are between 15-45 minutes in length. Ensure that all your series have a well defined climax and conclusion. The goal is to make your audience feel like they just experienced a movie when they complete a playlist.

Please note: going forward, this guide will be heavily informed by my subjective opinions. None of the rules I mention in this guide are absolute, and not all of them may apply to your favored style. They are merely instructions for writing in one particular style. You are free to take what you find useful and ignore whatever you think doesn't apply to your style and personal tastes. I will also be writing this guide in my own voice, partially for entertainment's sake but also because I can't bring myself to write nine chapters in a sterile textbook tone. Be warned, I will use occasional foul language, and you will see some very blatant disrespect toward writing practices that I hold a low opinion of.

This guide is about 30% general creative writing advice and 70% writing advice specific to the needs and challenges of writing Audio Roleplay. To set expectations about this guide, I've written a quick bullet list of what to expect and what not to expect going forward.

This guide is:

- Useful for cultivating a strong and dedicated core audience
- A guide for telling complex stories with well-structured narrative within the audio medium
- Useful for integrating action and dialogue into an immersive combination
- An effective guide for worldbuilding in a medium where you are restricted only to sound
- Good for helping you to write varied, engaging, and unique character dialogue
- Helpful for writing and integrating action, ambience, and other non-dialogue into your script
- Helpful for dealing with common challenges and pitfalls, and working around the limitations of the audio medium

This guide is not:

- Clickbait friendly or a guide on maximizing views
- A guide for funneling people into your Patreon or other paywalled subscription content
- An acting guide, though there is acting advice in [The Comprehensive Guide to Violence](#) (still in progress as of September 2023, will likely be finished by January 2024)
- Instructional for writing boyfriend/girlfriend experience, comfort audios, sleep aids, or other fluff scripts (Note: Romance and Boyfriend/Girlfriend Experience are two different genres entirely, I will discuss writing romance in this guide)
- An audio editing guide (though it will include advice and direction on how to write your scripts in a way that facilitates and organizes sound editing later on)

CHAPTER ONE: YOUR CHARACTER SUCKS

Within the medium of audio roleplay, prioritize the creation of your main character over setting, supporting characters, and even the plot. The main character in an Audio Roleplay is unlike the main character of a novel or film, because they are not simply meant to be passively observed. They are the Listener's companion and main window into the world throughout the duration of the story. You are therefore tasked with not only creating an interesting character that serves the plot, but a character that is endearing enough for the audience to want to experience an entire first-person journey alongside them.

Concern yourself with making a character that is both appealing and unique. Approach this methodically, and with actual creative inspiration. If the tags and titles on popular videos were to be believed, you may think that the best way to create a character is to select one of a limited number of popular archetypes and work from there. Audios with titles such as "[M4F] Dominant Tsundere Boyfriend Has a Confession [Vampire] [Possessive] [SPICY]" getting hundreds of thousands or millions of views may lead you to believe you should emulate this style. Don't be tempted by this, your audios will fall flat if you follow this template and you will blend into a sea of near-identical audios. Your character will be forgotten and discarded as soon as the audio is finished and you will retain a very small percentage of your audience. You'll be caught in a constant cycle of having to upload endlessly to keep up with the algorithm's demands with no core fanbase, and worst of all, you will feel creatively unsatisfied.

Discard all tropes, archetypes, and other popular cliches immediately. Clean them from your mind. Before you even consider their personality or role in the plot, **start with two simple fundamental questions; what does your character have, and what do they want?** As you begin pondering these two things, you will also begin passively creating a setting to suit them. For example, a character who has a stable job and degree but wants to fulfill their lifelong pipe-dream of proving the existence of ghosts would likely be in some sort of low-fantasy modern setting.

From this starting point, ask yourself the next question; why don't they have what they want? What is holding them back? Your character should never be fully self-actualized from the beginning. Starting them out unfulfilled gives them room to grow, and allows the story to cause the character to change and develop as it goes on. Make it so that your character's flaws, shortcomings, or lifestyle in some way prevents them from having what they want. Let's return to our ghost hunter stuck in an office job (let's call them "Hunter" for ease of writing). Why haven't they gotten what they wanted? What character traits made them give up their adventurous ambitions and dreams in exchange for a stable but unsatisfying life?

Perhaps it's something simple: they could be a coward who dreams of discovering ghosts but deeply fears the supernatural. Perhaps they found some evidence of hauntings in the past, but after presenting it they were humiliated for their theories and they lack the confidence to go against social institutions as an intellectual pariah. Perhaps a natural gift for communicating with spirits they once had was lost after they were scarred by a dangerous encounter with the supernatural. There are dozens of ways to do it, but the key is to always make it so that the character's own internal character traits and choices have put them in the unsatisfied situation they start in, so that the only way for them to get what they desire is to change and grow.

When planning their arc, note that **what your character initially desires does not always have to be what ultimately fulfills them**. You should also note that your character's initial desires or motives never have to be explicitly stated. As the story progresses and they form relationships with other characters, their focus in life might change. They may come to value new things that eventually come at stake, or they may develop a more complex sense of purpose over time.

Next, give them personality. What makes them laugh, what makes them cry. What are they proud of? What are they insecure about? How do they react to adversity? How do they speak? Prioritize these characteristics over backstory. I am of the opinion that backstory is less important than their present and future. As a writer you will likely put great effort into writing their backstory, but remember, only integrate the minimal amount of details regarding their backstory into the actual script. Keep some of it a mystery and leave it in your writing notes. I'll discuss backstory in more detail later. For now, let's focus on personality.

Your first priority when forming personality should be to give them a unique way of communicating. I don't necessarily mean their voice, (this is a writing guide, not an acting guide after all) but rather their choice of words. Are they a reserved character of few words? Do they swear frequently? Do they speak in fast, run-on sentences? Maybe they often trip and stumble over their words. Perhaps they have an affinity for creative word play. There are countless ways to color and characterize your character's personality through dialogue style.

To use one of my own characters as an example, I'll bring up Crow from *The Neon Barbarian*. He speaks in a peculiar fashion that makes him stand out. He uses very straightforward and literal language that leaves no room for misinterpretation. He also speaks in brief sentences where modern slang, contractions, or innuendo are never used. His thoughts are condensed into a short series of sentences where commas are rarely used. This gives the impression that he is different from normal people, that he was raised in unusual conditions, and that he is not accustomed to socializing. A great amount of character detail can be imparted through speech patterns without the need to explain it with action or backstory. I'll discuss dialogue (and characterizing dialogue) in more detail in chapter six.

The next step is to ask yourself what dynamic your character has with the other characters, and how this impacts them. During this step you should begin considering your plot, supporting cast, and most importantly, what role the Listener will play. Your first priority should be establishing the connection between the main character and the Listener. The medium of Audio Roleplay is unique in that **the connection between the audience and the main character is inherently more intimate and involved in an Audio RP than in traditional media**. Make sure that you can justify that level of involvement. Remember, your Listener will be accompanying your main character for (likely) the entirety of your story. You need a strong reason for not only the characters to be connected, but for the audience to be interested in their dynamic.

Remember, you are writing an adventure. The Listener character and the main character both have their own status quo. By meeting each other, they disrupt each other's status quo and begin their journey. To use an example from my own work, Alfonso's (the vampire slayer from *Matador Gothic*) initial dynamic with the Listener is that he sees her as a burden and a mistake that he has to undo, while she sees him as a glimpse into a mysterious world of supernatural danger. He behaves brashly toward her, giving her stern commands to protect her from the danger she has unwittingly found herself in.

This brings me to my next point; you should plan for the dynamic between the speaker and the Listener to change as the series progresses. Returning to my example of Alfonso from *Matador Gothic*, his dynamic with the Listener shifts over time, with him seeing her at first as a burden that annoys him, to a trusted friend he can emotionally confide in, to ultimately a love interest that he is so deeply entangled with that he would risk everything for her.

When making a Listener, you have a few challenges to face. The real-life Listener may want to project themselves onto the Listener character, or they may simply want to play a role and accept that the Listener character is unlike their real-life self. The best practice here is to cater a little bit to both styles of Listener participation. Allow the character to have enough ambiguous traits for the Listener to picture themselves in the story, but don't make them so hollow that you leave no room for the character to take action or have personality.

You can overcome this challenge by distilling the Listener character's personality down to a few bullet points. Make their traits broad but keep them clear. To use another example from my own work, The Asset from *Against the World* can be described as defiant, quick to forgive, and courageous. Throughout the series she defies the main character. Sometimes her defiance works out in her favor, and sometimes it doesn't. Because of this, her choices and personality affect the development of the plot in a dynamic way. There are many ways to implement Listener impact, but **the most foundational thing to consider is how the Listener's personality traits determine their actions.**

A common trap in Audio Roleplay is the creation of a Listener character that is entirely passive. A character who only ever gets talked at, and only ever observes actions while never taking any actions themselves. Avoid this trap at all costs, as it can entirely ruin the listening experience for your audience by defeating the whole purpose of creating a roleplaying experience in the first place. Make them feel involved. I will elaborate more on how to practically implement this in chapters three and six when discussing implied dialogue, but during character creation focus primarily on how the Listener character acts and reacts.

When outlining your listener, keep in mind that they are restricted to implied dialogue and implied actions. By their very nature they will take fewer actions and "say" less than the main character. Make sure that each action they take reflects their core personality traits in a way that is impactful to the plot and leaves an impression on the audience.

I'll be brief when discussing the creation of a supporting cast, because broadly speaking you will be following the same rules you would as though you were writing for traditional media. I'll only focus on how to balance character development as it relates to the medium of Audio Roleplay, and point out a few common pitfalls that can ultimately harm your script.

Typically in Audio Roleplay, the majority of the story takes place with only two characters "on screen" (the Listener and the main character). Becoming accustomed to this baseline dynamic can make it difficult to properly write scenes with three or more characters on screen. Make room for the Listener to interact with supporting characters. Do not allow your main character to be the Listener's only window into your world! By doing this, you make the audience feel constricted, passive, and you may lose their interest. Never let the Listener take the back seat. By *only* having the main character address and interact with the Listener, you make them feel invisible to the rest of the cast and by extension, not a part of the story as a whole. I'll explore this point in more detail in chapter six.

A useful (and fun!) exercise to avoid this issue is to temporarily separate your Listener from the main character completely. Your main character can be busy, sleeping, captured, or otherwise absent for a significant plot moment, giving your Listener a chance to interact with the rest of the cast. This also gives you an opportunity to let other VAs have a moment in the spotlight, which is fun and cool and also the real treasure is the friends we make along the way.

CHAPTER TWO: YOUR SETTING SUCKS

Creating an engaging setting is just as crucial to telling a good story as creating an engaging main character. Audio Roleplay is a uniquely immersive medium, creating a unique and immersive environment that your audience is curious about and engaged with should be a priority. Your setting doesn't have to be fantastical or have elaborate lore (though these things are welcome), but it does have to feel alive, interesting, and characterized.

First, establish the boundaries of your setting. How far will your characters go throughout your series? It can be as small as a single house, or as big as a whole galaxy. The important thing is to consider just how broad you want your series to be and ensure that you have enough space in your writing to fill this setting with characters, scene locations, objects, and other elements.

Give your setting character. Don't worry about writing tomes of JRR Tolkien-sized lore and history. Instead start small, through the use of a single character's perspective. Think about what your characters (both speakers and Listeners) will be interacting with and affected by, and decide how they feel about their surroundings. This allows you to give even mundane settings (like a modern-day city) rich and lively character.

Let's create some examples as an exercise! Remember our ghost hunter character from earlier on in the guide? It's time to give them a setting. Based on the nature of their character, you can infer a few things about the setting. Their immediate world is boring, bland, sterile, and defined by the conformity of academic and later corporate life. However, they believe that there is something more to the world, and that just outside the edges of their sterile comfort zone there is supernatural mystery, wonder, and even horror to discover. Following this, we can establish that the setting begins in a mundane modern world that eventually extends to an outer boundary of secret, surreal, and unexplored places.

Once you have a general concept for the reaches of your setting, it's time to put it into actual words. In our example the MC sees their life and world as boring, repetitive, and exhausting. To create this impression write dialogue, sound effects, and actions that reflect his point of view. Ambient sound should be repetitive and artificial. This could include office telephones periodically ringing, automatic sliding doors opening and shutting, the repeating back-and-forth movements of a printer inkjet. Characters speak to them using emotionless inflection and soulless corporate jargon, with little regard for their fantastical interests. No sounds of nature like birds or leaves in the wind can be heard.

When writing the ambience for your character's introduction, put as much care and detail into the description of your ambience as you would put into the description of a character. **Treat the environment as its own character, with something of its own to tell the audience.** Now let's write! An opening scene would look like this:

- BEGIN SAMPLE -

1. INT - OFFICE BUILDING

The clatter of a dozen keyboards fill the air and create a haze of white noise, with the faint indiscernible murmur of other coworkers audible in the background. Office phones ring periodically. The sound of a printer inkjet sounds repetitively, starting and stopping intermittently.

An automatic sliding glass door opens. Enter BOSS. BOSS speaks with a feminine but mature voice, with no discernable regional accent. She uses a stern and impatient tone, speaking in short, direct phrases.

The sound of high heels approach the Listener, loudly cutting through the repetitive buzz of the office as BOSS approaches the Listener.

BOSS's footsteps stop abruptly.

A heavy stack of papers falls onto the Listener's desk with the sound of a loud thud and ruffling pages.

BOSS

(commanding)

I'm going to need you to sign these papers from HR.

[BEAT]

BOSS

You're not getting fired. At least not today. These are video release forms. A video production team is visiting our office to shoot a Ghost Hunter show.

[BEAT]

BOSS

(condescending)

I'm not saying this place is haunted. I'm saying you need to sign these video release forms. Ghosts aren't real but money is, and they're paying us for use of the building.

An office chair creaks, and HUNTER leans in.

HUNTER speaks in a tired, jaded tone with the faint inflection of curiosity underneath their flat exterior.

HUNTER

(interjecting)

They're filming here? I'd think they'd pick somewhere more interesting, like Auroch's Canyon. Y'know, a place with history.

BOSS

(dismissive)

Focus on your work, Hunter. And stop Googling weird things on the company computer. You know HR can see your search history right?

- END SAMPLE -

In this short sample we established several things. One: the Listener and MC both occupy a painfully mundane environment, under the thumb of an unsympathetic employer. Two: there are other as of yet unseen characters outside of their immediate environment taking actions “off screen” that impact the characters. Three: there is a fictional location (Auroch’s Canyon) outside of their immediate environment that interests the MC and may foreshadow future events. Four: despite only two characters speaking, you have given the impression that there are many people in the Listener’s immediate and extended environment. The world feels big, alive, and in motion.

One of the worst mistakes you can make is to make the Listener feel like they are in a hollow room with absolutely nothing going on other than having the speaker ramble a one-sided conversation at them. Remember, it’s up to you to give your audience the input they need to paint a picture in their imagination. Don’t make them do all the work. A hollow one-dimensional script will result in your audience picturing a hollow one-dimensional setting.

Sometimes people accidentally create the impression of an empty setting by simply neglecting to characterize the scene’s environment. Other times they do it on purpose, such as with the atrocious “trapped in a closet” trope, a trope so unbelievably bad that it awakens a primal desire for violence within me. “Trapped in a Closet With Your Tsundere Rival”? No. They’re trapped in a bad audio with a boring setting. If I catch you doing this, I will tie a rope around your ankles and swing you around like a lasso until I feel that you have been sufficiently punished.

Once you’ve written and established the immediate setting, you should focus on building the broader world. All fictional writing involves some degree of worldbuilding, even if it takes place in a setting directly based on contemporary reality. With audio, it is challenging to worldbuild, because you can’t visually show the audience the world, nor can you describe things directly like you could in literature. You have to rely on sound and dialogue alone.

I’ll focus less on the details of creating your world (history, off screen characters, lore, fantasy elements, etc) and focus more on how to effectively *convey it* within the specific context of the Audio Roleplay medium. Start writing the details of your worldbuilding off script, the history, the lore, the major players and factions etc, and organize them into neat bullet points. Look at it, love it, and then take a deep breath and accept that the majority of those details will never end up in your actual script (and that’s a good thing). Some of the details will matter to the plot and characters, and they will end up in the script. The rest will be background information that you will use as a framework to build around.

Before I explain how to practically implement world building, I’m going to explain what NOT to do. **Don’t rely on exposition dumps.** You’re probably excited to share every detail of your world and its history with your audience but DON’T DO IT, they are boring as FUCK. Exposition dumps are not storytelling. They do not advance the plot, they do not develop character. They are a chore to listen to for everyone except a few nerds who like eating up lore, and parasocially brainrotted people who are just there because they like your voice and don’t actually care what you’re saying.

I cannot express how unfathomably boring it is to listen to a character spend twenty minutes explaining the technical minutia of how the magic system works as though they were reciting a textbook. Don’t waste time explaining how 5,249 years ago the demon lord Bingusbongus created ice wizards by sticking his dick in a glacier after his human wife Sarcophogina left him for a sexy biblically accurate angel. Your audience will sit there bored,

waiting for the plot to happen, and leave disappointed when said plot never comes. If it does come, they will be completely over it by the time something actually happens. Maggots will feast on your eyes and you will die alone and forgotten.

Remember, **just because Audio RP is a medium with no visual elements, that doesn't mean that the "show don't tell" principle doesn't apply.** If you ever engage in exposition dumps, keep them brief, integrate them into the ongoing story, and flavor them with some characterization from the character who's describing them. Let the character explain it in their own terms, and interject their opinions about the subjects into their description. Try as hard as possible to make the exposition feel more human, and less like a wikipedia summary. Don't explain every single detail either; it's usually better to leave something to the curious imaginations of your audience.

Now that you know what not to do, here's what you *should do*. Allow the world to build itself slowly throughout the course of the audio experience. Begin with the minimum needed to immerse the audience, and then let them discover it as the story unfolds. Let both speaker and Listener characters encounter, interact with, and react to elements of your fictional world.

In the interest of illustration, I'll make some samples of bad and good ways to depict the exact same lore elements. Let's create a scenario. Suppose we are trying to world-build a fantasy setting where an unpopular king controls a faction of metal-manipulating wizards called "alloymancers". Let's also suppose that we want to characterize the MC as being opposed to the king. How would we best convey that?

BAD EXAMPLE:

- BEGIN SAMPLE -

INT - MC's CHAMBER

There are four walls and a door. Everything is silent.

MC

The king is named Ornius III, he's reigned over this kingdom ever since Ornius II died in the war against the Ixarian Empire. He has a huge statue outside of his castle, it's even taller than the city walls. Normally it would take decades to build a statue that size, but he has alloymancers with the power to manipulate metal. They were able to use their magic to create that statue in just a few months. You'll know the statue when you see it, it's impossible to miss.

Personally, I think that statue was a waste of resources. Our cities are crumbling while he builds monuments to his own ego. He could have hired those alloymancers to repair the slums instead. Ornius III is a shadow of what his father was.

- END SAMPLE -

Holy shit that was boring. Can you imagine a guy actually saying that out loud and expecting the audience to stay engaged? If you write like this you had better have the sexiest voice in history, otherwise your entire viewership will mentally dissociate and be completely

fucking over your story by the time the actual plot kicks in. Let's try that again shall we? This time with a little more flavor and motion.

GOOD EXAMPLE:

- BEGIN SAMPLE -

EXT - BAZAAR NEAR CASTLE

Listener and MC walk down the streets, approaching the Castle of Ornius III. The chatter of a marketplace fills the air, horse hooves and wagon wheels bump noisily against the gravelly road.

MC

(sarcastic, disdainful)

By the Gods, would you look at that?

(balking)

I heard the statue King Ornius III commissioned was big, but this is disgusting.

MC and Listener's footsteps stop.

MC

(shouting aggressively at the statue, amplifying his voice with his hands)

Hey Ornius! Can you hear me from all the way up there? I bet your daddy would be real fuckin' proud of the way that statue casts a shadow over the slums!

Gravel audibly shifts and tumbles as MC crouches down to scoop up a handful of pebbles.

MC

(shouting at the statue)

Five hundred alloymancers in your kingdom and this is what you do with them!?

(MC grunts, hurling a pebble at the statue)

The pebble travels through the air and bounces off the statue with an audible metallic ping, followed by the sound of the same pebble landing on the ground.

- END SAMPLE -

Let's analyze the difference between these two samples. The first sample is simply a one-sided lecture about a feature of the fictional world's lore. It over-explains the history and over-explains the fantasy elements, leaving no room for curiosity. Even the character's opinions are presented as a bland and colorless matter of fact. No physical actions are taken, and there is nothing present to allow the character to envision the very world that is being described to them. The speaker drones on and on to the Listener without doing anything or even responding to implied dialogue from the Listener.

In the second example, the characters are actively participating in the world. There is ambience, and the audience has an opportunity to picture themselves encountering the statue rather than have it described to them second-hand. The speaker doesn't explicitly state how large the statue is, but instead *reacts* to its monumental size in a way that characterizes both him and the statue. He even physically interacts with it in ways that can be conveyed through sound. The nature of alloymancers is not explained, and is left for the audience to infer. This is engaging and makes the world feel bigger, more alive, and more intriguing than a much larger exposition dump ever could have made it.

CHAPTER THREE: YOUR LISTENER SUCKS

You might interpret the title of this chapter literally and think “How can my Listener suck? I don’t write their dialogue, the audience imagines it. If the Listener sucks, how is it my fault?”. It is your fault. Everything is your fault. Your Listener sucks because the script you wrote around them sucks.

Writing implied dialogue is the trickiest part of writing Audio Roleplay, and it is a unique challenge that is faced in no other medium. Those two seconds of silence between speaker lines absolutely can make or break your audience’s experience if you don’t properly construct good writing around it. Poorly written implied dialogue can slow the progress of a story to a crawl, make otherwise serviceable dialogue sound stiff and unnatural, or worst of all, turn your Listener into a passive cardboard cutout who has zero impact on the plot.

Good implied dialogue depends on the way that other characters react and interact with the Listener’s implied speech and actions. Their reactions should smoothly invoke the flow and feel of a dynamic conversation, worded in a way that allows the Listener to quickly infer what their character would have said. It’s important to make it feel as natural as possible, otherwise immersion is broken.

A common mistake that many Audio RP writers make is over-relying on repeating the Listener’s implied dialogue back to them in the form of a question. This method can be useful, especially in situations where exact details are crucial, but using it repeatedly makes conversations with the Listener slow, unnatural, and annoying to listen to. If you find that every single line of speaker dialogue seems to open with a question you are likely making this mistake and your script sucks.

To illustrate, let’s create another scenario. I’ll write two examples of the same scenario written two different ways, one bad and one good. In this scene, let’s suppose the Listener is a traveling mercenary in a cyberpunk setting, who recently traveled to California from New Mexico after being hired by a rebel group. They hold no loyalty to the rebels and are only in it for the money. Let’s also suppose that the rebel MC is characterized as being distrustful of the Listener. How do we convey this information?

- BEGIN SAMPLE #1 -

REBEL

Welcome to The Theta Brigade. I heard we had someone new, I hope I’m not barging in. Captain Harris says I have to keep a close eye on you, at least until we know we can trust you.

[BEAT]

REBEL

So you’re a Mercenary? I guess that means you aren’t exactly sold on our cause. I’m going to have a hard time trusting you.

[BEAT]

REBEL

So you're saying we can trust you to do the job as long as you can trust us to keep paying you? Typical. Who's to say that's even true? The enemy could be paying you slightly more to spy on us.

[BEAT]

REBEL

What do you mean you don't need a babysitter? (indignant) I'm not here to "babysit" you. I'm here to monitor you. We have security standards. I don't even know who you are or where you're from. You haven't even told me your code name.

[BEAT]

REBEL

So you're from New Mexico? And you go by the code name "Six"?
Alright, fine then Six. Welcome to sunny California.
(laughs)
Or at least it was sunny, until we polluted the sky into a permanent cloud of smog.

- END SAMPLE -

That was passable, but clunky. What mistakes did you notice? Based on some of the common mistakes I mentioned earlier in this guide, you should have noticed a few. Let's try to re-work this scene with a better flow of implied dialogue.

- BEGIN SAMPLE #2 -

REBEL

Welcome to The Theta Brigade. I heard we had someone new, I hope I'm not barging in. Captain Harris says I have to keep a close eye on you, at least until we know we can trust you.

[BEAT]

REBEL

(disappointed)

Oh God, not another Mercenary. The last thing we need is one more person in our rebellion who fights for money over ideology. Nothing personal, but I don't trust people who can be bought.

[BEAT]

REBEL

My point is that Merces aren't loyal. Who's to say you're not being paid slightly more by the enemy to be a spy for them?

[BEAT]

REBEL
(scoffing)
I'm not here to babysit you, I'm here to monitor you. I don't know
the first thing about you, I don't even know your code name. Where
are you from anyway?

[BEAT]

REBEL
Alright then "Six". (softening, more casual) I've never been to New
Mexico, but I can't blame you for wanting to leave. Not that being in
California is much better, at least not these days. (laughs) I guess
the whole world is fucked at this point, just look out the window.

- END SAMPLE -

The first sample has an extremely awkward flow of dialogue. It sounds unnatural, and uses more words to say less. Repeating the Listener's dialogue back to them practically word for word disrupts the fluidity of the conversation. The speaker repetitively opening each line of dialogue with a question that isn't meant to be answered is tiresome and hamfisted. By repeating so many words back it robs the audience of the opportunity to roleplay their Listener by imagining their own words. In the bad sample, the speaker starts most of their sentences with phrases like "what do you mean by" and "so you're saying". **Avoid both of those phrases and use them only in situations when you *absolutely must* explicitly state the implied dialogue.**

The second sample solves the problems of the first by **having the speaker respond by reacting to the implied dialogue, rather than repeating it**. Include a few key details of what the Listener was supposed to say in the spoken dialogue, and let the audience infer the rest through the context. Remember the key is "react, don't repeat". Burn that into your brain. REACT, DON'T REPEAT. Apart from improving the flow of the dialogue, this also gives the audience more room to freely interpret their Listener's side of the story.

Now that we have the basics covered, we can move on to the more complex task of characterizing your Listener through implied dialog, as well as through implied action. During the character creation chapter, I touched on the fundamentals of creating your Listener and how to give them traits and characteristics. Practically implementing those traits is an entirely different challenge. How do you give personality to a character that is both silent and invisible?

The first solution is obvious, and it lies in the ways that other characters react through spoken dialogue to the Listener's implied dialogue. Sometimes the reaction is in their words, but other times it's in the emotional expression of the speaker characters. Examples could include sounding shocked when the Listener says something inappropriate, or acting bashful when the Listener compliments them. Reactive dialogue is useful, but it's only half of your toolset for depicting your Listener. The rest lies within sound effects and implied actions.

Remember, keep in mind the fundamental traits your character has. Characters with different personalities will behave differently in the same circumstances. To illustrate, let's imagine two characters in the same situation, and build both implied action and implied dialogue around them. The first Listener character will have the traits of enthusiasm, risk taking, and impulsivity. The second Listener character will have the traits of caution, curiosity, and

politeness. We'll write two scenes for the same scenario using different Listener personalities. In this scenario, an alien bounty hunter is trying to teach a human Listener how to use a futuristic alien gun.

- BEGIN SCENARIO #1 -

An airlock sounds and releases pressure as a mechanized box unseals.

ALIEN

I think this weapon would be best suited to your anatomy. Its design is most similar to what human language would call a "rifle". Or at least something similar to that.

Heavy metallic and plastic parts jiggle against each other as the Listener lifts the rifle up. A loud rifle-racking sound followed by an electronic power-up can be heard.

ALIEN

Careful, careful! That's a very dangerous weapon. I know you're eager to try it out but take it easy, you could hurt yourself like that. I've seen humans shoot holes through their own feet because they got over-confident with these things. Follow my instructions closely.

A beep sounds, followed by the whirring noise of electric servos moving targets into place.

ALIEN

Alright, the targets are in place. Line up the front and rear sights, just like with a human rifle. The electronic aim assistance on the rear sight should help point you in the right direction. Keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to fire. When you're ready to shoot, brace for the recoi-

ALIEN has his speech cut off by the sound of three plasma beams firing in rapid succession. On the third shot, the sound of a wooden board splintering can be heard, followed by a smokey sizzle.

ALIEN

(panicked, speaking over the sound of sizzling wood)
What do you think you're doing?! I told you that thing was dangerous, could you at least let me finish explaining?!

(ALIEN takes a deep breath, cools down emotionally)

Well, I at least appreciate your enthusiasm. You shot three plasma bolts and hit... one target. That's a start.

- END SCENARIO #1 -

Notice how in this scenario the Listener had no implied dialogue at all. They communicated entirely through actions, and those actions were inferred entirely through sound cues. Now, let's run that scene again, with the second set of Listener personality traits!

- BEGIN SCENARIO #2 -

An airlock sounds and releases pressure as a mechanized box unseals.

ALIEN

I think this weapon would be best suited to your anatomy. Its design is most similar to what human language would call a "rifle". Or at least something similar to that.

[PAUSE]

ALIEN

Well? Don't just stare at it. (friendly, encouraging) Pick it up! I'll walk you through using it, don't worry, I've trained half a dozen people in the use of this exact weapon.

Metal-on-plastic jiggles and clinks can be heard as the Listener examines the plasma rifle in detail.

ALIEN

The technology is fascinating isn't it? I think it's interesting how practically all bipedal sapient species seem to agree on the same general design for arms. Line up the front and rear sights, just like with a human rifle. The electronic aim assistance on the rear sight should help point you in the right direction. Keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to fire.

A beep can be heard, followed by the sound of an electric servo moving targets into place.

ALIEN

See those targets? Take steady aim.

The rifle clinks and jiggles lightly as the Listener shoulders it.

ALIEN

Now take steady aim. Don't trust the aim assistance too much. Hold your breath between shots, and squeeze the trigger in as straight of a line as possible. Are you ready?

(pause)

Take the shot.

The sound of a heartbeat plays, and gradually slows until it reaches a crawl. All ambient sound is muffled to a near-mute for a second before the shot.

A single plasma burst fires. A target erupts into smoldering splinters, with the sizzling sound of smoking wood lingering behind. Ambience returns.

ALIEN

Not bad! Of course in combat you'll have to act a lot quicker than that, but I'm impressed. You know, considering you're human and all.

- END SCENARIO #2 -

Note how this scene plays out similarly, but with significant changes. The MC (Alien) is reacting to different actions, and as a result the outcome of the scene depends on the Listener's actions, based on the Listener's own unique personality. Keep this in mind when integrating your Listener into any scene. They should always have presence, and their personality and actions should always have at least some effect on the direction of any given scene.

CHAPTER FOUR: YOUR TROPES SUCK

The title of this section is very literal, it will contain a good amount of practical advice but also a heaping dose of disrespect to tropes that suck. I will be sassy in this chapter and you will like it. I am going to talk an unfathomable amount of shit. Some of it is probably going to apply to you, so if you feel attacked, understand that I want you to suffer. Normally my criticism is gentle and constructive, but in the interest of total and complete honesty I wrote this chapter while belligerently drunk. This chapter was sponsored by Kraken Black Spiced Rum.

Virtually all fiction uses some kind of tropes by its very nature, be they genre tropes, setting tropes or character tropes. Using some kind of trope is nothing to be ashamed of. The real question is not “do I use tropes?” but instead “do my tropes suck?”. The answer is likely yes, they do. The Audio Roleplay community has inherited most of its tropes from the culture of fanfiction writing, and the results are horrifying. Audios that conspicuously use trending and popular tropes in their titles often gain algorithmic traction, but do very little to build dedicated audiences. This is because their scripts suck.

You may be tempted to title your audios as mashups of the tropes involved, or summarize the plot in the title (and completely spoil it in the process) because you think it will get you views. If you’ve ever used a trope against your will because you wanted more reach and views, I see you. I acknowledge the suffering that came with feeling compelled to title your audio something like “[M4A] Forced to Share a Bed With your Tsundere Rival [Enemies to Lovers] [Spicy]”. A part of me pities you, the rest of me wants to trap you in a basement and bludgeon you with a bag of frozen lemons.

Don’t debase yourself with trope-centered titles like this. I will harm you both physically and spiritually, and you will deserve it. Have some self respect. Give your audios an actual self-respecting title. Why the fuck did you spend 80 combined hours writing, recording, and editing a seven-part series just to end up naming it “The Yandere Delinquent Series”? I can feel the guilt and shame in each syllable of that title. Your desire for punishment is only matched by my desire to enact it upon you.

But “Escaped!” you say, “I need to put those tropes in the title, otherwise no one will listen to my audios!”. I then beat you for three hours with frozen lemons. After the beating is finished, I show you this screenshot.



[ASMR] Starline Full Series (Alien x Listener)
[Strangers to Lovers]

2.3M views • 2 years ago

Wow. It’s literally just called “Starline” and it has 2.3 Million views. No hackneyed summary of the plot, no hamfisted list of trendy tropes. Just a real title and a couple of tags. If Gav can do it, so can you.

Listeners don't have to see a disgusting word salad of tropes and plot summaries to watch your videos. You know what gets you views? Writing scripts that don't suck. I have seen so many people wail into the void, asking why they can't build a following when they did everything "right" by hitting all the marks that tickle the algorithm. They rarely consider that they forgot to actually give a fuck when writing the script. I have talked enough shit (this is a lie, I will talk more shit), now it's time for some actual practical advice.

If you want your audios to be good, make sure they're original. The hard way to do this is to exhaustively listen to as many audios as possible and make sure you aren't doing something that hasn't already been done. The easy way to accomplish this is to just be creative. Achieve this by emptying your mind of all character tropes (NOTE: I didn't say genre tropes!) and start from the fundamentals. Use the guidelines I laid out in chapter one. A common mistake is to think something like "Oh, I want this character to be a tsundere, so I'll write this character to suit that trope". Why the fuck would you do that. You are forcibly restricting their development by committing to that character trope. Drop that approach, and instead think of what actually gives that character real personality beyond stock archetypes.

Don't reveal ANYTHING about your character in the title except for basic information relevant to the introduction of the plot (ex: if your character is an assassin, you may mention that in the title). By putting tsundere/yandere/dominant/whatever in the title you are not only degrading yourself (you whore) but **you are also spoiling the character's personal development before the story even started**. If you say your character is a "tsundere" you have already shown your hand and revealed that your character is (generically) mean on the outside and (generically) caring on the inside. Don't spoil their arc like that! Let your audience discover the character as the story progresses.

Let's talk plot tropes, setting tropes, and more! Committing to them is not nearly as detrimental as character tropes, because instead of spoiling your story, they can provide an easy shortcut for you to build off of. For example, medieval fantasy is a popular trope, and by establishing your setting as belonging to that trope, you give the audience a sturdy foundation that you can then play with and build upon. Same goes for all the other tropes that affect the setting (mafia, space opera, superheroes, etc).

When picking a plot or setting trope (if you want to), think about why you picked it. Did you pick it because it was trendy, or because you had an interesting take on it? If it was the former reason, don't bother. If it was the latter, ask yourself what you're going to do with it. Are you going to make the same formulaic audios that a hundred other people already made, or are you going to bring something of your own to the table?

Let's use some examples. In the void of the internet there exists a certified banger of an audio called "Stuck With a Rebel Spy" by Obsidian Lantern. What makes this audio interesting is not simply the level of production quality, but the fact that it was conceived as a play on the "stuck in a closet" trope. "Stuck in a Closet with [X]" is among the worst fanfiction tropes ever unleashed upon the world, but Obsidian Lantern managed to make it excellent because he brought something new to the table and presented it in a way that made room for storytelling. He gave the scenario stakes, established a bigger story outside the confines of the small "stage" the audio was set in, and wrote a character with unique personality and motives.

You can play with tropes too! Suppose you wanted to make something fresh within the Mafia trope. "Dominant Mafia Boss Boyfriend Takes you to Dinner"? Boring, uninspired, overdone. It might get some clicks from people who will forget you immediately after the video

ends. “Stressed Out Mafia Accountant Betrays His Boss With You”? Awesome. Fresh. Full of potential. Both would fall under the umbrella of the mafia roleplay trope, but one has a unique spin and the other appeals to no one other than the soulless monster that is the YouTube algorithm.

Forget what I said earlier about forgetting about character tropes. Let’s circle back around to character tropes. How do you make a character trope good? The answer is simple; by completely smashing the flat plywood cutout that represents all character tropes and re-constructing them into something with three-dimensional depth.

Let’s explore some of these tropes! If you want to base your character around a certain archetype, first ask yourself how that character would interact with their setting, Listener, and supporting characters. Do you have anything interesting? If yes, stick to that archetype. Just don’t commit yourself entirely to it, remember, character archetypes should be descriptive, not prescriptive. Make sure you have an entire, fleshed out character in mind and not just a trope before you start writing.

Let’s pick a trope to play with. I’m going to completely avoid all the “-deres” because my recommendation on how to best use -deres is to not use them at all. For our example, let’s go with something that fits the “bad boy” family of character tropes, such as supervillains, pirates, delinquents, etc. These are appealing tropes, and they are **useful because they can convey information to the audience without having to explicitly state their background**. The main use case for character tropes is to expedite the development of your setting and characters. Use this to get your characters in the right headspace, then start building up something that makes your character unique.

Let’s make a bad boy. How about a pirate? Awesome, he’s a pirate. By giving the character’s a pirate, you’ve already established that this is a nautical story set somewhere in the 17th to 18th century. You’ve given them an idea of your character’s role in this world, their general skill set, and most importantly, you let them know that your character is *bad*.

Now what is he going to do? Is he going to be the captain? Yes? You sure about that? I’m asking because a lot of the time writers of Audio Roleplays try to give their characters appeal by making them esteemed in their own world, at the highest position of power in their sphere. You’re free to do this, but avoid it. A character who already has more is going to want less. Remember, in chapter one I mentioned your character has to *want something* for both their plot and character arc to take place. If your character already has everything, is respected by everyone, and can’t go any higher, you end up making your MC into a Mary Sue, and we’re not trying to make a Mary Sue, we’re trying to make a bad boy.

Let’s give our bad boy something to desire. Let’s make him a relatively inexperienced pirate, who’s looking to prove himself. He wants the Captain’s approval and attention (for better or worse), he wants freedom from the “civilized” world he came from where he likely was doing poorly, and he wants to one day be respected and feared.

Now that we have our bad boy’s motives, let’s give him some personality. Remember, when you’re playing with a trope, keep the traits that initially interested you intact (at least at first, you can subvert it as the character’s arc progresses). In this case, we’re making a bad boy, and the most common mistake when writing bad boys is to forget to **ACTUALLY MAKE THEM BAD**. Make your bad boys BAD. Make them DO BAD THINGS. Give them hideous character flaws that make them behave in immoral and self-destructive ways. Don’t pussy out here. You

don't have to make them the devil, but don't soften the blow by making them victims of circumstance with no agency and no choice but to be bad. You might be afraid that you will lose points with the audience, but you won't. Trust me.

Let's give him some background. How about this? He tried playing by the rules, but wasn't succeeding entirely due to his flaws of ego, entitlement, and dishonesty. He gives into temptation at some point in his past by lying, cheating, stealing, intimidating etc for his own gain. After getting a taste, he starts to like it. When faced with the choice between giving up his life of petty crime or turning to the big leagues of piracy, he chooses the latter. Perhaps his life changed after an argument with an old lover who told him he either had to choose them or choose his life of crime. It's not very important how he got there, **the important part is that he chose to be what he is.**

Now that he has a backstory that stays true to the fundamental characteristics of his trope archetype, apply the methods from chapter one. Characterize his speech patterns, how he acts and reacts, give him secrets, likes and dislikes. Above all else, give him room to grow and change. And voila! We have created the foundation of a unique character by starting with a recognizable trope.

CHAPTER FIVE: YOUR PLOT SUCKS

I have bad news and good news. The bad news is that most plots in Audio Roleplays suck, for reasons I'll describe later. The good news is that you can stand out from the crowd by having a teeny tiny bit of self respect and taking your writing seriously. The fact that you're even reading this guide means you already care more about quality than 90% of voice actors, so you're winning.

The key to making a good plot is, very un-intuitively, to put the plot as a lower priority than the characters and setting. This sounds backwards, but there is a process to it. First use the techniques detailed in chapters two and three to create your setting and characters. What makes your setting unique? Your whole world doesn't have to be completely fantastical and elaborate, it could be exactly like the real world but with the addition of a fictional corporation or fictional global event. The important thing is that you have something to apply your imagination to. Now think, what sorts of problems might people have in that setting? How many people do they apply to?

At this point you should have at least your main character thought of, if not a whole cast. Take your character, whom you've already given personality and backstory to, and ask yourself what they would think of that world, its issues, etc. What does your character want out of that world? Why haven't they gotten it yet? Is something holding them back, are they lacking something? What would have to change in their lives for them to begin pursuing it? This information doesn't always have to be conveyed to the audience explicitly, or even be foundational to the plot, but it always helps you to organize your thoughts regarding your characters and their dynamic in the world they inhabit.

In terms of delivering the plot, you should start with a baseline status quo, and then a disruptive event that changes the main character or Listener's circumstances, which then sets them in pursuit of a goal or desire that they were previously not pursuing. The status quo can be established in as little as a minute and as much as an entire episode. The important thing is that the audience has some idea of what normalcy is in this world, and understands that the inciting incident is going to result in major changes to the lives of the characters.

In Audio Roleplay, I strongly *strongly* advise that you tie the inciting incident to the meeting of the Listener and the main character. This gives them a reason to be around each other for the duration of the story. To give an example, in my series *Matador Gothic*, the status quo is that the Listener is on vacation in a seemingly normal world with faint signs of danger and mystery under the surface. This is established in about two minutes. The inciting incident is that she is bitten by a vampire, and will transform in 30 days. The two characters have a new, shared goal: to find a cure before time runs out.

Once you have your inciting incident fleshed out, think about where it could go from there. Has the incident changed their desires and goals at all compared to what they wanted during the status quo? Has it opened a path for them to reach goals that they already had? What plot element is tying the characters together throughout their journey? Imagine yourself in their shoes, imagine what actions they would take, and then imagine all the ways things could go wrong. Put unexpected obstacles in their way, ruin their plans. Make them rethink things, and throughout the process solidify their bond.

Once your characters are sufficiently tormented, re-examine them. What has changed in them? How have they affected one another, and how have they grown? Now that they have changed, how will the new version of themselves be able to accomplish what they hadn't accomplished previously? To write this part of the process well, make sure not to focus too much on resolving the main conflict of the story, give the characters some time to reflect, speak to each other, and open up emotionally. It is during these quieter moments that their strongest bonds are formed. Keep the plot moving, but don't rush it. At this point in the story, your characters should be reaching the height of their emotional connection (romantic, platonic, or otherwise). They should have changed not only because of the things they've been through, but because of each other.

Most Audio Roleplays (my own included) involve an element of romance with the Listener and another character, usually the MC. When writing romance in an Audio RP, take your time. Slow burn is always best in a multi-part story. Don't just shove the romance in the audience's face either because you feel the need to include it before they get bored. Build the character's relationship up. Throughout the course of the story, they will have gained shared experiences that they didn't have before, learned things about one another, and changed the way they see each other as well. This attention to detail is the difference between true romance and some hackneyed bullshit that no one with a fully developed brain would ever buy.

Once your characters have fully solidified their bond, you should be ready for your plot-resolving climax. For a satisfying climax, everything your characters have been through should come together. Everything they've learned, every bond they made or lost, and every victory and failure they've faced should matter to why **your characters at the end of the story are able to accomplish something they could not have accomplished at the beginning**. In Audio Roleplays, always be sure to make the Listener's impact on the main character relevant to their actions in the climax.

As an example, in my series *The Neon Barbarian*, the main character Crow starts out as an emotional brick wall with almost no sense of morality, etiquette, or intimate connection to anyone. He had accepted that his death could come at any day and never thought it would be meaningful. Throughout the story he develops a close relationship with the Listener, and begins caring about other people. He experiences guilt when he plays a role in the capture of someone he once cared for in his past. He grapples with the idea of injustice, a concept he had never before considered. In the process of trying to do something just, he puts a friend of his in danger and loses them. He both gains (a sense of justice, emotional connection) and loses (his best friend, his emotional shield). His character grows and changes as a result. At the climax of the story, all of these plot elements come together when he gains the emotional capacity to express love, heroically self-sacrifice, and finally feel a sense of purpose. In his last moments he laments the new life he'd never get to live, but dies fulfilled.

Once your climax is complete, resolve your story. Let them reflect on everything they've been through, and have them ask themselves what's in store for them now that the journey is over. You can take the classic "hero's journey" route and have them return to their old status quo as changed people, but I prefer to send them in a new direction. Give them a new status quo, leave the door open for more adventures, either in a continuation or in the audience's imagination.

For the sake of ease, I'll organize this process into a bullet list:

1. Status quo for the Listener is established

2. Inciting incident occurs, bringing the characters together
3. The characters' circumstances change, and they now must act to achieve a goal
4. The characters progress toward their goal, face their first challenges, and meet new people
5. They fail, are impeded, or are otherwise thrown off course
6. The bond between the MC and Listener strengthens, and they are both changed as a result
7. The goal or purpose of the characters evolves, by either changing course or gaining a deeper meaning than before
8. The characters face the climax
9. The conflict is resolved and the characters reflect on how they've changed
10. New status quo is established

When you're finished outlining your plot, ask yourself this question: would a person who's not in love with your voice still care about this story? Answer the question honestly. If the answer is no, your script sucks. Take it apart and start over. Look at the bare bones of the plot and ask yourself what it's missing. Is it too confusing? Too long? Too short? Is the conclusion too straightforward or anticlimactic? Does it not stand out as much as you had hoped? Sleep on it, go for a walk, and think about your story. There's no need to hurry. New inspiration can come at unexpected times.

Talk to people you know about your script, either offline or on. Pay attention to what grabs their interest, what seems to bore them, and work out your plot holes. And remember! None of these instructions are set in stone, you can skip certain steps, repeat certain steps, or add new ones entirely. Be flexible and be creative!

CHAPTER SIX: YOUR DIALOGUE SUCKS

I've waited until this point in the guide to go over dialogue because so much of this chapter hinges on principles laid out earlier in the guide (character creation, implied Listener dialogue etc). When making an Audio Roleplay, your primary goal should be to immerse your audience and make them feel like they are an active participant in a story filled with characters that they care about. Your primary tool for communicating with your audience is almost always going to be dialogue, so treat it with care.

When writing character dialogue, first consider the purpose of that line of dialogue. Is it a plot-relevant piece of information? Is it a character-building moment of insight into that character's personality? Is it simply meant to be a small moment that endears the audience to that character? Whatever the reason is, make sure that you have a defined purpose in mind when writing it. Don't spend too much time meandering around dialogue with rambling tangents, dragged-out greetings and goodbyes, repetitions of points already made, and other purposeless lines. Drop them before you even write them, and reduce or delete as many as possible during revision.

Once the purpose of your line is established in your mind, think about how that specific character would convey that information. A common mistake is to write all characters in a very indistinct and homogenous style, oftentimes one that resembles the writer's own real-life spoken or written communication style. If your character is non-confrontational or bashful, let them offer information in sugar-coated roundabout ways, if your character is brutally honest let them belt information out in a sudden and jarring way.

Consider the type of language they use or the cadence of their speech too. One character could be proper and speak using only complete sentences and correct grammar, while another may hap-hazardly drop words to shorten sentences down to snappy and quick phrases. Whenever possible make sure the defined purpose of their dialogue is shaped and changed by their personality, the type of relationship they have with the character they're interacting with, and their style of speech. To illustrate I'll write three lines of dialogue, all with the same purpose, as told by three different characters.

Example Line Purpose: Character is offering to treat the Listener to some ice cream.

Character A. Proper, considerate, confident: "I'm getting some ice cream, would you like some too? Don't worry, it's my treat."

Character B. Snappy, impatient, friendly: "Want ice cream? I'll cover you this time."

Character C. Loud, comically crass, bombastic: "Hey, I'm getting some ice cream and there's no fuckin' way that I'm going to go overboard on calories all by myself. I'll get another scoop for you, don't you dare think of paying me back for it."

The above example represents a very simple and straightforward scenario, but within the

context of a bigger story it could have another, deeper meaning that adds more to the development of the plot and characters. It can carry subtext that holds a greater significance to the plot, showcases growth and development of a character's personality, or symbolizes the themes of the story in a way that is visible to the audience but invisible to the characters saying the dialogue.

As an exercise, picture the ice cream scenario we used earlier, but this time as a part of a bigger story. Who is offering the ice cream? Why? What is their relationship like with the listener? How has that relationship developed over time? What is the character's relationship with just the ice cream itself like? Let's try and imagine a context that would give a deeper sub-textual meaning to the dialogue in the ice cream scenario.

We could imagine that Character C is the long-estranged older sister of the Listener, and that they had a rough childhood of great financial struggle. Let's also imagine that in another scene the Listener recounted to a third character that they never got to have ice cream or other treats growing up. Given this context, the offer of ice cream goes from being a very straightforward and simple exchange to a much more meaningful one that symbolizes the Listener and their sister reuniting as adults and making up for their childhoods through simple acts of kindness, re-defining the character's relationship and opening the door for the plot to move in a new direction.

When writing dialogue, keep in mind that the script is meant to be read aloud. Lines that look and sound good in your head or on paper don't always sound good when voiced. They can be clunky, awkward, and confusing to voice actors and audiences when actually recorded. Make sure to word your sentences with natural pauses, with meaning condensed into bursts of dialogue that can be read in a single breath. Make it natural and conversational, add in filler words or pauses if and when they suit the character to keep it flowing in an organic feeling way. If you want to go the extra mile, try cold-reading or fully acting your dialogue out loud before you finalize your script.

Whenever appropriate, put emotional tone or inflection instructions into the dialogue in parentheses. Don't count on every single voice actor to perfectly interpret what sort of tone or emotion they are based entirely on context. For example, if a character is asking a question, add a quick direction instructing the VA to perform the line as either confused, curious, sarcastic, or whatever other tone you think the character should be conveying.

When reading plain text, VAs can easily misinterpret the character's intended attitude. A line that was meant to sound genuine and curious would be ruined if the VA read the line sarcastically. Worse yet, they could go through the entire script with no emotion whatsoever. I have seen writers consciously hesitate to specify inflections because they think it's overbearing to the VAs. Trust me, you aren't being patronizing or annoying by adding parentheses with tone and inflection directions, you're being a good and diligent writer and it will show in the final product.

Remember, the more meaning you can put into a line of dialogue the better. Not every

single line of dialogue has to be a mind-blowing piece of highly quotable prose, or a multi-layered profound statement on the themes, but it should always have purpose. Audio Roleplay (more so than just about any other medium out there) has a common problem of VAs and writers dragging dialogue out way too fucking long while saying very little of substance. Sometimes this is intentional, usually done by an Audio RP YouTuber who is trying to drag out the clock so that they can qualify for another ad roll and get more revenue, or by someone making an ASMR sleep aid that is deliberately directionless so as to bore the audience to sleep. Most of the time though it's because your script sucks and that's all there is to it.

To avoid over-encumbering your script and audience's attention spans, go back and prune it a bit. Condense sentences down, strike entire lines of dialogue if needed. Keep everything as tight and as purpose driven as possible, all while maintaining your audience's sense of immersion and involvement. This part is hard because no one likes destroying their own work, but a bit of pruning will do you good in the long run. Deleted lines can still be scrapped and repurposed later if you think they're worth salvaging.

I want to take some time to discuss character interaction, specifically in scenes where there are two or more voiced characters. Writing dialogue between voiced characters is easier and more intuitive than writing scenes that account for the Listener's implied dialogue, so it's easy to get lost in the exchange between the voiced characters and neglect the Listener. I mentioned this in chapter two, but I'll go into more detail here. Always make sure the Listener has at least some involvement. Make sure that their presence is felt and acknowledged by the speaker characters, let them pause to ask the Listener questions or react to their implied action or implied dialogue, and make their presence affect the scene in some way, even if it's small. Total neglect of implied dialogue in conversations between voiced characters spoils immersion, as it reduces the listener from an active participant in the world to a passive and invisible observer.

When writing dialogue for multiple characters, make sure that they aren't always in total agreement. Even if they have shared goals, let them disagree, let them argue and debate, let them clash in some way based on their personalities. These conflicts of personality (be they dramatic or subtle) will turn a scene from an uninteresting and flat direct path to a more dynamic scene where the characters and their differing personalities matter. For example, a plan made by three characters in perfect agreement becomes an exposition dump paired with a bland to-do list. A plan made by a reckless Listener, a cowardly MC, and a pragmatic supporting character will result in a much more interesting scene if you allow their personalities to show and clash.

Get creative with your scenes, let their interactions get a little messy and chaotic from time to time. Don't be afraid to let characters talk over each other, cut each other off, ignore one another completely, or communicate through non-verbal actions. Not every single scene should follow a clean order of people taking turns speaking and communicating clearly. Just make sure that your chaos is organized in the script with clear indications of how the characters are behaving.

To simplify these instructions into a step by step guide, I'll present the process of writing

good dialogue as a list.

1. Determine the ultimate purpose of the dialogue. Decide what impact you are trying to make on the overarching narrative, what effect you are trying to have on the character's development, or what role the line will play in illustrating the themes of your story.
2. Determine the proximate purpose of the dialogue. Decide what immediate and tangible action you are trying to convey, or what immediate and defined information you are trying to reveal.
3. Characterize the dialogue to suit the character. Add inflection and emotion to the line directions. Give it flavor, make it distinct, and take into consideration what sort of relationship that character has with the character they are speaking to.
4. Revise your dialogue after the scene is drafted. Condense or remove repetitive, redundant, or purposeless dialogue from the equation. Re-write and modify certain lines to add subtext. If appropriate, possibly add new dialogue that you think may better serve the overall story or take the plot in a new direction that you didn't anticipate before you completed your first draft.

Remember, the above list is a simplified procedure. You can choose to follow that order, do it out of order, or do it in an entirely different way. Much like Pirate Code, these are more like guidelines than actual rules.

CHAPTER SEVEN: YOUR ACTION SUCKS

In this chapter I will discuss the writing of all physical actions. I'll discuss how to write to best facilitate action in the editing stage, but I won't be discussing editing or acting techniques. For tips on the technical side of editing, refer to my other guide, [Escaped Audios' Comprehensive Guide to Violence](#).

All movement creates sound, and on a conscious or subconscious level, people associate every movement with a specific sound. Because of this, a script with robust sound direction will result in the most immersive experience possible, with more life and energy than a purely dialog-focused script.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the worst things you can do in an Audio Roleplay is make the Listener feel like they are standing still in a lifeless empty space where they find themselves on the receiving end of a one-sided conversation. A few sound effects and some ambience go a long way in bringing an audio to life. Organize your writing around highly tactile actions, and picture each motion in your head.

Some sound effect choices are obvious, like the sound of gunfire or a car engine starting, but the smaller things are the ones that really immerse your audience. Think of things like the gentle clinking of a knight's armor as he walks or shifts his stance, a hot-headed secretary aggressively hanging up her phone before addressing the Listener, the sound of a chair being pulled out before the Listener takes a seat, or the sound of glossy paper sliding apart as a character shows the Listener a set of photographs. These small details might seem like a chore to detail in your script, but they can take an audio from good to great.

Your sound effects should be present, but don't always have to draw too much attention. Keep them subtle when possible, and layer them with dialogue wherever it makes sense. Excess attention on the sound effects will run the risk of making the final product sound cartoonish. On the other hand, don't limit or decrease the number of sound instructions you have for fear of it making the script too difficult to produce. If you happen to be a writer looking to publish public script offers, you may find yourself worrying that too many sound directions might chase off VAs who are intimidated by the task of sound editing. To that I say: fuck em. You don't want them filling your scripts. If your scripts scare away people who are unwilling to put effort into their work, good. There's a saccharine saying among audio writers that "any fill is a good fill" but that's some feel-good bullshit. A fill where the voice actor puts in far less effort than the writer is always bad, and you don't want your good writing represented by that kind of VA.

Write your sound effects in such a way that they can layer into the dialogue and ambience. In some cases, the sound effect will take the center stage (such as with the sound of a decisive gunshot). In most cases however, you should find a way to layer them with dialogue and ambience. For example, the sound of clinking plates and silverware throughout a dinner table conversation, the sound of footsteps while talking and walking, or the sound of tightening ropes and luffing sails as a pirate teaches a new sailor how to navigate. I will explain this in further detail in chapter eight.

Always pair actions/stage directions with sound effects. Remember, you are writing in audio format. You can't always write physical actions as straightforwardly as you would in a traditional screenplay or novel. For example, a stage direction like "MC leans forward" is useless. You should instead pair the stage direction with well defined sound directions. In this

case, “MC leans forward” would become “Wood creaks as MC leans forward on her desk. Her voice now sounds closer, and more intimate.”. This gives voice actors, editors, and even yourself (if you write your own scripts) a better idea of how to convey the scene in practical terms when it comes time to fully produce the script.

In regards to scenes with high levels of physical intensity, your sound direction and stage directions should increase in both quantity and sound detail. Expect to edit more than you normally do, particularly in fight scenes, chase scenes, or athletic competition scenes. Remember, virtually all motion has its own signature sound, and action is motion. A few extra edits will take your scene from flat, confusing, and un-engaging to thrilling and immersive. Write them into your script in clear and practical terms, whether you are writing the script for yourself or for a VA to fill. This will help organize the structure of the scene during the recording and editing process, and make the final product much more coherent.

I'll touch on the writing of violence in this chapter, but for a more in-depth guide, please refer to [The Comprehensive Guide to Violence](#). When writing an action scene, keep a constant sense of motion and urgency. Pay very close attention to how the characters are meant to be spatially positioned in the Listener's imagination, and do your best to convey that through the dialogue and sound effects. Have characters quickly describe what's going on, but don't linger too much or the sense of urgency will be broken. Maintain a constant sense of energy by keeping things moving. You should also be prepared to use significantly more stage directions/sound effects than you normally use. For every line of dialogue, there should be 2-3 lines of stage directions.

Make sure that every character in an action scene has physical presence. For example, when writing a fight against a monster with no dialogue, don't simply write that that monster growls followed by the MC swinging at it with a sword. Make the monster take action. Give it distinct footsteps. Make it touch, move, or break objects. Let it physically contact the other characters and the world around it. This gives presence to a character who lacks the main tool for communicating to the audience (dialogue).

As usual, pair every stage direction with a distinct sound effect. Pushing obstacles to the side as it moves, ripping the MC's clothes apart as it struggles with them, or letting them push the MC into a table that breaks with a loud splintering sound and a thud all give your creature presence. When fighting a human or speaking character don't just write dialogue for them. Include clear instructions for other vocalizations such as shouts and grunts to pair with their motions. The swing of a sword should have a shout to match it, a tackle should come with a grunt, and a change in environment could come paired with a quick comment by the character.

Below is an example of an action-focused scene featuring a sword fight against a fantasy monster that has no dialogue other than creature sound effects. I'll be using the methods detailed above. When reading the action scene, pay close attention to the way that stage directions, inflection, and sound effect instructions differ when compared to a normal dialogue-focused scene. In this scenario two survivors in a fantasy post-apocalypse are scavenging for supplies in a monster-infested abandoned town.

- BEGIN SAMPLE -

1. INT - ABANDONED TAVERN

The muffled and faint sound of crickets chirping can be heard from outside the walls. A light drip from a leaky pipe falls in a

constant rhythm. Footsteps lightly echo, creating a feeling of emptiness. The silence is broken by the occasional sound of dirt and dust spilling from surfaces.

A rickety wooden door shuts with a thud.

Two sets of footsteps enter the tavern. Their steps echo lightly and are muffled by the dust that has gathered on the ground

MC

(serious, focused)

Look for supplies. Water, preserved food, anything. Get it quickly, we don't want to linger. Trust me, other scavengers who got here first are the least of our troubles. Abandoned places like this tend to get infested by Blade Crawlers.

Footsteps split off

Liquid sloshes in a half-filled glass bottle

MC

(curious)

What do you have there?

A cork audibly pops off of a bottle, the liquid inside sloshes gently.

MC

(sniffing the bottle)

Hm. This won't do us any good, it's distilled alcohol. As much as I'd like a drink right now, we should only take what we need.

A heavy skittering sound breaks the silence in the background, then stops.

MC

(hushed)

Wait- hold still. Did you hear that?

Metal rings as MC draws a sword.

MC

(hushed, serious)

There's a Blade Crawler in here. Be on guard.

A light creak sounds on wood, followed by a brief pause for silence. A heavy thud sounds against the wooden floor, layered underneath a hideous screeching roar. Enter BLADE CRAWLER, a six legged monster with a heavy armored shell.

MC

(urgent) Get behind me!

BLADE CRAWLER lets out another screeching roar and charges.
Rapid and heavy footsteps sound in quick succession, each step resembling the sound of a blade sticking into wood.
BLADE CRAWLER impacts against MC with a heavy thud.

MC

(grunts painfully with the wind being knocked from his lungs)

MC collides against a wooden table under the weight of **BLADE CRAWLER**, creating the sound of breaking wood and falling glass.
BLADE CRAWLER lets out a scream and attacks.
Quick whooshing blade sounds swipe the air in rapid succession.

MC

(grunting, struggling against the weight of **BLADE CRAWLER**) Get it off of me!

BLADE CRAWLER swipes again, a quick whoosh sounds through the air followed by its claw tearing through MCs clothing and flesh with a loud rip of fabric.

MC

(urgent, struggling)
Push god damn it!

Listener pushes against blade crawler, it's body tilts over and impacts the ground with a thud.
BLADE CRAWLER lets out a more desperate, higher pitched screeching roar.

MC

(commanding)
Hold it down! Don't let its claws cut you!

BLADE CRAWLER shifts and thrashes on ground, its blade-like legs making whooshing noises as its heavy body loudly writhes on the wooden floor.

MC

(MC breathes in deeply)
(aggressive)
Die!

A heavy sword whooshes through the air and makes a killing blow on
BLADE CRAWLER with a gruesome sound of ripping flesh and dripping
blood.

BLADE CRAWLER lets out a weak, shaky exhale as its thrashing slows.
BLADE CRAWLER ceases its thrashing.

- END SAMPLE -

Note how this scene has multiple stage directions in close succession, usually overlapping one another or overlapping character dialogue. Also note that during the height of the action, the word count for the stage directions greatly exceeds the word count for the dialogue. Not counting monster vocalizations the fight sequence contained eighteen uses of action sound effects, with the fight taking an estimated two minutes on-screen. This is standard for action scenes, and necessary for writing an engaging and immersive action sequence. Editing these scenes will take much longer when compared to dialogue-focused scenes, but scenes like this should be relatively short and not over-encumber your editing time.

Always write your action scenes to clearly indicate when and how sounds should be layered. A single sound effect or line of dialogue should almost never take center stage. For example, if a character is trying to dodge gunfire during a car chase, your script should indicate that the sound of gunfire, tires screeching, the engine accelerating, and the character cursing and shouting all overlap. This will require a bit more work on the editing side, but the results are always worth it. I'll detail ways to effectively and efficiently edit this type of scene in The Comprehensive Guide to Violence.

CHAPTER EIGHT: COMMON MISTAKES, BAD PRACTICES, AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

This chapter is all about what NOT to do. Obviously, it's going to be a highly critical chapter by nature. It's important to remember that just because you (or one of your favorite writers) have made some of these mistakes it doesn't mean that the audio is automatically ruined. Most people have made at least some of these mistakes, including me. After all, much of the advice I'm giving is based on mistakes I've learned from first hand. **As always, these are all extremely opinionated pieces of advice so feel free to cherry pick which ones you actually take into consideration.** Many of these mistakes have already been addressed in the guide, but I'm listing them here comprehensively for ease of reference.

1. Leaving in repetitious or drawn out dialogue that takes too damn long to get to the point. Over-encumbered dialogue needs to be revised and edited into something much shorter and to the point. After you've written dialogue, revise it, and cut out anything redundant. People will lose interest. Repeating yourself, or making pointless statements that don't actually advance the plot or develop the character will make the audience space out and lose interest.
2. Filling in implied dialogue by repeating the Listener's side of the conversation in the form of a question, often starting with the line "so you're saying..." or "what do you mean by..." or merely repeating their dialogue directly back to them in the form of a question.
3. Starting an audio with the Listener waking up. A screenwriting professor would tell you to avoid that and it still applies to audios. Yes this also applies to your yandere kidnapper script. If you open with the line "so you're finally awake", you will inflict psychic damage onto your audience from the sheer number of times they have heard that exact line in other audios (and also Skyrim). It's a bad look and a supremely boring way to open a scene.
4. Accidentally Mary Sue-ifying your main speaker character in the process trying to make them appealing. Let them be flawed, vulnerable, and not the most powerful or wealthy person in every room they enter. In fact it is much more interesting to make them a complete loser if we're being honest. There's much more room for storytelling and character growth if your character starts out as an absolute nobody.
5. Writing shy, submissive, or nervous characters as actual literal pathetic children that stutter and stammer and talk like toothless babies. If you make an adult character do straight up baby talk to appear shy or submissive I actually think God should kill you.
6. Yandere. Tsundere. Kuudere. Dere anything. Grow up, have some self respect. Don't do it. Please for the love of christ, do your part and let these goddamn anime fanfic tropes die. Also if you **insist** on doing Yandere, remember that their trope belongs to the horror genre and not the fluffy romance genre (I have no idea how people keep making this mistake).
7. Making wolf-less Werewolf audios. If you make a werewolf series or have recurring werewolf characters, don't forget to make them wolf the fuck out a reasonable amount of times. Don't let your werewolves get watered down into just regular dudes who call themselves "alphas" unironically. That shit is so fucking WHACK I cannot even begin to describe it. If I catch you engaging in this sort of false advertising I'm coming into your house and stealing something.
8. Making your Listener completely ineffective at anything, always needing to be saved, always needing to be helped, and always emotionally fragile. Don't give your Listener the emotional fortitude of a child, write them as someone a self-respecting adult would want to play the part of.

9. Keeping your characters completely still, or confined to one space. Make them MOVE. Give them some life.
10. Derailing a plot-driven series to make fluff content, sleep aids, and other bullshit with your established characters that the people actually invested in the story don't care about. If you want to make that kind of content, I advise you keep your plotless fluff and sleep aids separated from your ongoing stories and plot-relevant characters. They get views, but they alienate and frustrate your core audience. This practice also cultivates an audience of people that aren't interested in your plot-driven work, and your fandom will end up divided.
11. Writing monster characters that behave and speak no differently from a regular human character. I personally advise you avoid the monster person or anthropomorphic animal trope overall if you're going to just tack it on as a gimmick. If you insist on doing so, make sure that their status as a monster or animal hybrid or whatever actually impacts the character and plot.
12. Writing high school bully characters for yourself (an adult) or other (also adult) voice actors to perform. This shit is embarrassing, I don't have to explain why.
13. Neglecting to distinguish and characterize your character's speech patterns. Give each character their own style of speech, choice of words, and distinct literary voice. Don't let your characters sound like generic robots. Use some color!
14. Giving your Listener's names that are bound to their relationship with the speaker character only, particularly romantic pet names. Giving them a name like honey, darling, sweetheart, lovely, babe, etc. makes it so that only the speaker can directly address the character or refer to them. This limits their ability to interact with the broader world. It also works against slow burn romances (the best kind of romances) by giving the Listener no identity whatsoever before their romantic involvement with the MC. It's also corny as hell and unimaginative.
15. Neglecting to check the saturation of your story ideas. Listen to other audios that have similar themes to yours. Is your tsundere mafia boss ASMR series actually original? Probably not based on that choice of tropes, but if you think it may be, first check out some other related scripts and audios to make sure. Keep your finger on the pulse of the Audio RP community as a whole and try your best to be creative and original.
16. Fully writing the Listener's dialogue out instead of leaving gaps for implied dialogue. What the fuck are you doing. Literally what the fuck do you think you're doing. Leave that shit blank, it's not going to be in the audio and it confuses VAs.
17. Trying to turn a cinematic audio into an ASMR and vice versa. They're just not the same thing.
18. Chasing popular trends, tropes, and keywords. They get you easy views from algorithmic reach but don't build a dedicated or devoted fan base. If you do this you will one day find yourself looking at your analytics and asking yourself how you have 10k subscribers but only 400 views on your last video. The reason is that your script sucks.
19. Having inconsistent plot pacing. Don't stretch things out then suddenly make things happen so quickly that the audience is confused and doesn't have time to digest it. Keep a steady pace, and keep a balance between plot and character development.
20. Forgetting to fill in plot holes or check against your own lore. Don't accidentally contradict your own lore or continuity for the sake of meeting an imaginary deadline. The algorithm is not your boss, you have time to revise. We all make mistakes and forget things, so keep a quick checklist of plot-relevant information as a reference and bounce ideas off your friends who are familiar with the lore before finalizing anything.
21. Neglecting to give your Listener an impact on the storyline other than being a romantic partner to the main character. Give them purpose, give them characterization, and allow them to interact directly with the wider world outside of just their relationship to the MC.

22. Trying too hard to make your channel some kind of MCU-style extended universe. Tie-ins can be good, but not everything has to be connected to everything else and occupy the same setting. If you want to make a supernatural drama series AND a small town romance series, you don't need to force them into tying together. Let the stories have their own space, and let the audience discover a new setting. Bloated and excessively interconnected lore is frustrating to Listeners and an overrated gimmick. Each one of your audios (or at least series) should also be able to stand on its own and be satisfying to an audience with little to no background information.
23. Lore dumps. Just droning on and on about lore and not actually doing anything with it in the actual story is whack as fuck. Don't do it.
24. Over extending a series. When a plot or character arc has run its course, just let it go. Give it a satisfying ending and maybe leave the door open to continuation if and when you feel inspired by the story again. It's better to do this than to let your characters get stale and your story get bloated by re-visiting a storyline or group of character's whose story has already concluded naturally.
25. Laser-focusing on plot resolution. Give your character's some time to breathe, reflect, and talk to one another in a low-stakes situation. Just don't linger too long.
26. Forgetting to include implied dialogue for your Listener character in a scene where two or more speaker characters are interacting.
27. Not having a good time! Always have fun! This is important!

CONCLUSION

Congratulations, you should now have a solid foundation for improving your writing of cinematic Audio Roleplays! Remember, none of this advice is mandatory, and not all of it may apply to your specific style. I expect you to break some of the rules, it's part of creativity! Even I break my own rules all the time.

Audio Roleplay is a very nascent medium with a long way to go and an immense amount of untapped storytelling potential. Remember, by being a part of this medium you are a trailblazer in a new and exciting form of art, storytelling, and self expression. Give yourself credit! You are an artist with a story of your own that needs to be shared.

Always put your own self-expression above all else. Expressing yourself the way you want to be the one thing in the world that no one else can do for you. Get creative, be inspired, develop your own signature style, and tell the stories you want to tell about the themes that interest you most. Always try your best! Your passion will always pass down to the audience, and your work will always reach the right people eventually as long as you're true to yourself. Have fun! I'm rooting for you, I hope this guide was helpful and I can't wait to see all of the amazing and inspired work you create with your writing, your voices, and your extensive collections of footstep sound effects.