

SHORE SCRIPTS

HOW TO USE A TV PILOT SCRIPT TO GAIN REPRESENTATION

MAKE SURE THIS IS A CAREER YOU WANT TO PURSUE

So, you want to write for TV, huh?

Well, lucky you! You'll be entering an exciting, continually evolving, creative medium where characters and stories can become so much bigger, more complex, and wonderfully developed than the more restrictive feature-length medium can be. You'll have the ability to reach a much wider audience here too, something that every storyteller should want to achieve.

You'll also be entering a life of fast-paced deadlines, highly competitive writing rooms, and pretty much working 24/7 while staffed on a show.

You'll need to be a team player. To learn how to write someone else's vision rather than your own. To quickly come up with new character arcs, concepts, and compelling dialogue. Working remotely isn't often an option even though COVID restrictions called for changes to be made, so be prepared to up sticks and leave to find work, meaning you'll also need to be in it for the long haul.

Writing tv is as tough as it is rewarding. It's a demanding beast, so now is the time to decide whether you have the determination, dedication, and passion to commit. If you can't imagine doing anything other than writing for tv, read on!

LITERARY AGENT VS MANAGER

Getting an agent for a long time felt like the first big step a writer needed to take in order to kickstart their career, but then managers began to filter into the process, both will take roughly 10% of your earnings, so who does what and which should you be approaching first?

Literary Agents

Agents are there to help get a writer's work into the hands of the people who can make it, so producers, directors, production companies, and studios. They're effectively brokers, making commissions by facilitating the transactions between buyers and sellers. Their primary focus is how they're going to sell your script.

They negotiate contracts, agreements, and fees for their clients, so are bonded and licensed and must know the laws of the state where they're negotiating said contracts. This also means that an agent has to work out of an office aka an agency that's licensed by the state, whereas a manager doesn't need to work for a company and can work from wherever they like.

Managers

In comparison, managers are there to help nurture a writer's career, as opposed to an agent, whose primary concern is the sale. They'll be able to advise on what to write next, they'll give you coverage notes to help develop your writing, and they can also co-develop projects with you, whereas an agent is usually only interested in the finished product.

They'll actively look for work for writers, negotiate commissions, try to promote you around town and a manager can also act in a producing role, whereas agents cannot.

There's no right or wrong when it comes to which one you acquire first (if any). Managers can be easier to obtain, and therefore you might get a manager before an agent, but while an agent isn't allowed to ask for more than 10% commission on any sale, a manager can ask for whatever they like (although it's usually around 10-15%). Managers usually have fewer clients too, which means that you get more attention from them. If an agent is juggling lots of different clients, it's easy to become overshadowed by more successful writers on the roster.

Consider what stage of your career you're at. If you believe you'd benefit from having someone help shape you as a writer and guide you through your career, sourcing a manager is probably best for you. If you feel that you are already very competent as a writer, have some experience in the industry already, and have a solid script to sell, then an agent is going to be more helpful.

WHEN TO SEEK REPRESENTATION

There's the temptation to seek representation as soon as you've finished your first, second, or third script. And why shouldn't you? Completing a screenplay is an achievement in itself, it's exciting, and naturally, you want to go out and share it.

News Flash: Your first (second, third, and probably fourth) screenplay is very likely nowhere close to being at the professional level it needs to be to compete with seasoned writers out there also looking for work.

Jumping the gun before you're ready is a risk. You don't want your first interaction with representatives to be a negative one, so it's pivotal that you and your writing are of standard before you begin to meet industry professionals and let them read your work. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't be putting yourself out there, meeting people, making contacts, and forging relationships. You absolutely should be doing that throughout your career. If someone asks to read your work and it isn't ready, explain that the project is still in development, but make a point of following up when the script is finally finished.

Getting peer reviews and coverage of your work is an excellent way to begin to gauge your writing level, collect valuable feedback that you can use to keep improving, and who knows, even that might be enough. Using coverage services that have the ability to pass on scripts that they deem of a high enough quality to their roster of production companies, directors, or literary agents (like we do at [Shore Scripts](#)), can be a quick way to bypass the query writing or contest-winning stages. It's all about polishing the script and putting it into the hands that can help most.

Having a portfolio of work behind you is important. No one's interested in a one-hit-wonder. Agents, and especially managers who want to build a long-term relationship, want to work with writers who can prove that they're committed, and having at least three well-crafted and polished screenplays behind you does this. This doesn't mean immediately shoving your entire back catalog of scripts into someone's face, but it does mean that when you get asked the inevitable "what else do you have?", you can pull something equally brilliant out of your sleeve.

This is where entering screenwriting contests can be extremely useful. Not only are you getting your work read by [industry professionals](#) (with optional feedback from them too), placing highly can be the validation that you need to prove that your writing is great, and it can cut out a lot of the work when it comes to finding representation too. If a contest sends out their winning scripts to their roster of [directors](#), [production companies](#), and [literary agents](#), as we do, it's going to save you from researching and writing all of those query letters. Winning contests could mean that representation comes to you, not the other way around.

WHY DO YOU WANT REPRESENTATION?

This is an important question to ask yourself.

It's not impossible to begin your career in television without a manager or agent. Yes, there are stories out there about respected writers, such as Lena Waithe, who didn't manage to

secure representation until after winning an Emmy, which just goes to show that there's no one-shoe-fits-all way in this business.

It does certainly feel like a catch-22 situation because you're told that you need an agent to get work but an agent wants to see proof of previous work in order to have the confidence to take you on. If anything, this should perhaps spur the notion that yes, agents are absolutely useful, but they're not the be-all and end-all.

There's a big leap from writing on your own to being part of a production, whether that's a theatre production, placing highly in a reputable contest, shooting a short film, writing a radio play, or acceptance into an established scheme, or mentorship program and agents are increasingly asking writers what they've already achieved out in the field, meaning that even they know that it's more than possible to create work without them.

Think of it as filling in the experience section in your resume in order to show a prospective employer that you're well-versed for the job at hand. If an agent or manager can see that you've already been proactive in advancing your career, they're more likely to have confidence in your capabilities and want to work with you.

Also, weigh up the time it can take to gain representation. Some writers take months, if not years looking for an agent, when perhaps that time could've been better-spent networking, making calls, and breaking in instead. There are companies out there who will take meetings and read unsolicited material out there if you look. Yes, having an agent can speed that process up, so it's a judgment call. You can certainly do both at the same time by networking, making contacts, getting involved in the industry, and becoming known.

WHAT AGENTS ARE LOOKING FOR

Before considering approaching an agent, let's discuss what they're actually looking for in both a potential new client and their writing. The more boxes you can check off on this list, the more chance of success you'll have.

A Finished Product

Agents don't have time to help a writer develop their work. They want a highly-polished script that's ready to go to market. If you're looking for this sort of support, consider finding a manager for this, but in general, an agent is there to close the deal. If they're enthusiastic about your product (yes, a script is a product that's there to be sold), but the script isn't ready to go, you could be risking them losing interest and moving on to someone else while they wait for you to finish writing the script.

A Fantastic Logline

Time is money and no one in Hollywood or the TV industry wants to spend more time than necessary gauging the potential of a project. The shorter your pitch, the better, and this often boils down to having a compelling logline that instantly tells an agent everything they need to know about your project. A logline that grabs is a must-have, but it can be a tricky skill to master. For more information on this, check out...

An Original Voice

Agents read a lot of scripts (or at least their assistants do), and while there are plenty of good scripts out there, it's very rare to find a great one. This can be difficult to hear for some writers, who are proud of their writing, and rightly so. Almost every writer thinks their script is original. Unfortunately, it's not usually the case. The majority of submissions are writers trying to emulate already successful shows, but agents aren't looking for writers trying to second guess the market. Write a pilot about something you want to watch yourself, that makes the reader as passionate about the story as you are, and that showcases your own original voice.

An Original Concept

Take a good look at what's already out there. Don't try to jump on the bandwagon. Because production times are so long, by the time you see something on screen, the industry has very likely moved on to something else. Don't waste your time trying to re-create what you conceive as currently popular. If you've already got a script that does this, it can still make a great sample piece, and who knows, maybe that trend may come around again or there's a smaller network out there who is desperate to jump on the bandwagon too, so don't think that a script is ever worthless. Everyone is looking for 'the same, but different', and that's a really difficult thing to pull off. Again, write the stories that you want to tell. Your passion is what's going to make those stories compelling.

Someone Who's Mastered the Craft

Television writing is arguably much more disciplined than any other form of screenwriting. Add to that the high-paced work environment, the tight deadlines, and the need to be able to perform consistently well, all of which are so much harder to manage if you haven't already mastered the craft. Your pilot script needs to display your knowledge of television structure, the ability to juggle subplots, to create engaging characters, and possibly most important of all, how to write great dialogue.

Potential for Additional Sales

As mentioned, agents aren't terribly interested in writers with only one script to their name, (but you're right, stranger things have happened). Managers equally want to know that

there's enough in you to span a long career. After all, they're only making money if you're making money. Having multiple scripts of the same genre is a good idea here, but it won't be a problem if you have a portfolio of work that can display how versatile you are as a writer too.

Projects That Won't Break The Bank

There's a limited number of buyers that can afford to produce material that requires a massive budget, so the less money it'll take to produce your project, the more available buyers there'll be. This applies more to feature scripts than to tv scripts, as the chances of selling a tv series are very slim, so take this piece of advice with a pinch of salt. A bold and ambitious piece may not get produced, but it could be enough to get you an agent. Try not to go overboard in your pilot script if possible, just to show that you can write with budget in mind when needed.

An Impressive Resume

An agent will also want to know something about the writer behind the script and reading a resume will help do this. Yes, it's hard to get other professional experience as a writer, but an agent will want to know how involved in the industry you've been while writing. List any contest wins, but only for reputable companies. Agents will be less impressed by a 'screenplay of the month' win from an unknown contest that gets a handful of submissions than placing highly in one of the top listed and highly competitive contests out there. If you have production experience, that's a great addition to your cv. Also list any short films you've had produced, fiction podcasts, student productions, or any writing programs, mentorships, or sponsorship funds you've won.

Although we're talking specifically about tv writing here, most of the above applies to any literary agent, whether that's screenplays, fiction, or other.

SPEC EPISODE OR ORIGINAL SPEC SCRIPT?

A spec episode is a "speculative" screenplay (i.e. no one paid you to write) written for an already successful tv show, ideally a critically-acclaimed one that's presently still on the air. A spec episode is to demonstrate that a writer can emulate the style, pace, and tone of an already produced creation as well as authentically capture the voices of the characters that the viewers all know and love.

You might want a *Reacher* spec episode in your portfolio if you really want to break into action/thriller writing, a *Better Call Saul* script if legal crime and black comedy is more your area, or an episode of *The Bold and the Beautiful* if you aspire to write continued drama.

One major point to explain is – Don't write an episode of a show you want to work on. Basically, this is to avoid any legal issues where a writer could claim that the show has used an idea they wrote in their spec as part of the show without permission. And no, the showrunners aren't going to buy your spec script either.

Choose a show that has run for at least two seasons or more, so that your spec script has more longevity to it. There's nothing worse than spending all that time learning how to craft an episode for a show only for it to be canceled and no longer be relevant.

Having two or three spec episodes in your portfolio won't do you any harm. If it's a show you're not overly familiar with (in which case you may need to ask yourself why you're trying to break into something similar), you're going to have to watch lots of hours of tv to get a feel for the show. It's a great way to learn how to quickly get in sync with a production, to understand when act breaks should occur, how many subplots will be expected, what type of stories the audience will be expecting, and if you're already a fan, it shouldn't be too hard to start writing character voices that are already familiar to you.

Also, try to find a published copy of earlier episodes online if you can, which will help you tailor the formatting to suit that specific show (every show has its own way of laying out a script).

The downside to writing a spec episode is that it can only ever be used as a sample (and shows only accept these scripts via an agent or manager, so you'll need to be repped before you can really even use these scripts), as opposed to an original spec script, which you can submit into screenwriting contests or pitch platforms, which is yet another way to help agents and managers find you.

At present, using an original pilot as a writing sample is often favored over that of a spec episode (this could change, of course), as it gives the reader (whether that's an agent, manager, or showrunner) a much stronger impression of what a writer has to bring to the table in terms of displaying their original voice and creative abilities, but don't get your hopes up that it will lead to a commission.

Sure, there are anomalies, but in general, your original concept for a series and the accompanying pilot script isn't going to be bought and turned into a tv show. That's the harsh reality. That pilot, however, can be a great writing sample that you can use to be considered for staffing, win you contests, and help you land representation, so in terms of which is more useful to have, the original pilot certainly feels more versatile, but don't discount the spec episode straight away. Writing one is by far the better way to learn the craft.

THE "EXTRAS"

Having just a pilot script isn't an option. You'll need some backup material to help promote both you and your work. Some of these documents are very useful to already have ready to go, some are more like optional extras should there be any further interest in your pilot script or series idea.

A Resume

This is a must-have. If you don't have enough content to fill out a one-page resume here, this should be a good prompt for you to go out and get some more experience in the field, and is probably a good indicator that you might not be ready to start finding representation just yet.

Include your name and contact details. If you don't currently live close to a tv production hub, such as L.A., New York, or London, it might be an idea to omit that from your resume until you do. Yes, the pandemic opened up the industry to working remotely, but this probably isn't going to be a continuing trend. You'll need to work onsite if you want to work in television.

Add any social media links you have including your LinkedIn Profile, Instagram, or YouTube Channel, etc., but really only add these if they're industry-related. If your Instagram is a collection of photos of your cat, then it's not going to be overly useful here. If your socials show examples of your work or can display whatever else you have to offer, they can be very useful.

An 'About Me' or 'Personal Profile' makes a good opener, especially for those lacking hands-on experience. You can talk about your passion for the craft, the medium/genre you write in (as opposed to what you watch), your aspirations, and why you're a writer worth investing in. This is where you should really pitch yourself.

You don't need a dynamic layout, but almost always, a reader's eyes are naturally going to be drawn to the 'Experience' section first. Use this area to list scripts you've completed, productions you've worked on, articles you've written, and any other experience you have. The more the better, but don't list anything that isn't industry-related. Detailing your work experience as a mechanic isn't going to help pitch you as a writer, for example.

Also, list any screenwriting or filmmaking-related education you've completed too. That could be anything from a creative writing class, an MA in Screenwriting, or any writing fellowships or mentored programs you've been part of.

If there's any room left, throw in a list of 'Additional Skills' that you can bring to the table. Using specific keywords connected to the industry might help here, such as 'proficient in Final Draft 12', 'can work to fast-paced deadlines', or 'excellent collaboration skills', etc.

As with everything you send out – proofread it thoroughly first!

A Logline

This is another must-have. Writing a great logline is an art, but even the best logline in the world might not be enough if the overall concept isn't original, interesting, or engaging enough, so it's worth checking out our [Testing Your Concept](#) workbook first.

There are several ways to construct an effective logline.

- Keep it short. 1-2 sentences max.
- Tell us who or what your show is about, not what the pilot episode is about.
- Avoid inserting character names. Use generic terms to paint a vivid picture of your protagonist(s).
- Describe the Inciting Incident. What happens to kick off the story?
- Who or what is the antagonistic force in your series? Telling us what's getting in your protagonist(s) way can help heighten the drama.

For a more in-depth look at how to construct a logline, visit the [Fast Track Your First Draft](#) workbook where there's a dedicated logline section to help you learn this essential skill using various different elements that you can mix and match to create the logline with the most appeal.

Practice!

Don't think that the first logline you come up with will do. Write out several versions just to be sure.

A One-Page Pitch

Having a one-page pitch to hand for anyone who wants a little more detail about your project but that's also presented in a quick and easy read is also a valuable document worth already having.

There's no absolute standard on what should be included in a one-pager and what shouldn't. It's all about standing out from the crowd, making your project as appealing as possible, but giving as many essential details as you can in as little space as you can at the same time.

Again, there are various elements you can choose to include. Select whichever elements help to sell your concept the most.

- Get creative. 1-page pitches no longer need to be bland and visually boring word documents. You can choose landscape or portrait, add color, have background images, use exciting fonts, etc. An eye-catching one-page can make your pitch more memorable. Just don't rely on the aesthetics. You need quality content on there too.

- Essential details are the series title, the format (6x30min sitcom or 10x1hr drama, etc), the logline, and a summary/synopsis of the series.
- Optional extras include short character bios, describing the series arc, short synopsis of future episodes, or talking about what themes will be examined throughout.
- Reflect the tone of the pilot in your pitch, so if you're writing a comedy, your 1-pager better be humorous to read, if you're writing a thriller, add mystery and intrigue to your pitch, etc.
- Avoid listing your ideal cast. This is going to be ignored completely.
- Always make sure your contact details are somewhere on the page.
- Always send in PDF form and name the file appropriately.
- Make sure to proofread before sending it out!

A TV Bible

This isn't an essential, so don't all rush out to write one of these. You don't need a bible to sell your idea or to get an agent, so it's only something to consider writing if you're using your pilot script to try and pitch your project to production companies and not if you're using it as a writing sample.

Bibles can be anything from 5-20 pages long, but again, always try to keep things to a minimum if possible. Think of a bible as an extended one-page pitch, meaning you can apply all of the same recommendations and more.

- Include your 1-page pitch as part of the bible in order to quickly really the essentials.
- A more detailed page of character bios can be useful. Who are all the major players in your series, what's driving them, what flaws do they have, and what conflicts are they in, etc.?
- You can also expand on the short summaries of all the episodes in the first season, providing a more fleshed-out short synopsis instead.
- More pitch material can be helpful, such as who your series is aimed at, why audiences will love it, what it's giving that's never been seen before, etc. There's scope to go into detail about which broadcasters would suit your project, why, and listing ideal time slots too.
- Concept art can help give the reader a flavor of what your show might look like.
- You can expand on the world-building aspect of your show if needed too.
- Producers like shows that have legs, so don't forget to hint at where else the show might lead if a second season is commissioned, or beyond.

Sample Scripts

We've already mentioned that you need to have more than one script in your itinerary if you want to be taken seriously. This doesn't mean that you should write every episode in your planned series, although having a second episode can be useful (it's also very likely to be the

better of the two scripts). Putting all of your eggs into one basket like that not only shows your naivety, it's not an effective way to spend your time.

Always lead with your best script. There's no point sending out your second-best script hoping to impress when asked to present more work. You risk never getting that chance.

If you want to know how many scripts you should have in your back catalog, at least three is a fair answer. Ideally, the more the better, but of course, they've all got to be polished and of a high quality. Some of your earlier work may not be as up to scratch as you thought it was, so don't ever send out a script just for the sake of it.

What type of scripts you have in your portfolio is up to you. There's no harm in being diverse, but if you've got your heart set on a specific type of television, such as sitcoms, procedurals, or continued drama, then focusing your work on one single area is well worth considering. Do you want to be a jack-of-all-trades or a master of one?

Always do a new pass on any subsequent scripts you're considering sending out. Looking back over your old work after significant time has passed with fresh eyes is bound to highlight some much-needed changes. This is simply because you've grown as a writer, which is a great thing! At the very least, give a script a new proofread. You'd be surprised how often you'll find an error you missed in the last five read-throughs.

FINDING THE RIGHT AGENT

Having an agent or manager is a working relationship that hopefully lasts for as long as you're writing, and just as much as agents are assessing whether they feel they can work with you over a long period of time, you too should be asking yourself the same question about whether you want to work with that person too.

In the early stages of your career, of course, you're going to jump at any offer you get from a willing agent. That's fine. Congratulations are in order. But don't feel that you have to be stuck with the same agent forever, especially if you feel that the relationship isn't working, and absolutely have lots of questions to hand during those first few meetings to gauge whether you're both going to be a good fit. You won't know whether you're going to have chemistry with an agent or manager until you meet them. Be yourself. If it doesn't work out, trust that your work was strong enough to garner attention from one person, so there are going to be others out there who feel the same way too.

Make sure you know exactly what your agent is going to do for you. Ask whether you're still going to have to put in all the legwork when sourcing future work. Ask how many other clients they have on their books. Ask how large their contact list is. Size isn't an indication of how well a manager or agent is going to be, by the way. Many established agents don't take on new clients as they already have a strong clientele and don't need any more, so it's easier

to find an assistant who's just starting out and beginning to build their own client list instead.

Do Your Research

If you're starting from scratch, have no contacts, and are blindly planning on sending query letters out to any email address you can find – Stop! – Almost 80% of query emails are disregarded because the sender did just this and never bothered to do any research on who they were contacting.

Look at what you're selling. If you have a sitcom script, there's no point in reaching out to an agency that only works with crime drama writers, as an example.

Look at who's sold similar projects to yours. Use [IMDbPro](#) to discover who represents other writers who have produced projects in the same genre and vein as yours and jot down their contact details if listed.

Trade publications such as [The Hollywood Reporter](#) or [Deadline](#) are also great places to research contact information, as are [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) where literary agencies often like to introduce new staff who might be open to building their client list.

Here's a link to our own [Definitive Guide to Agents and Managers](#), which lists both UK and USA agencies and managers who are open to accepting non-solicited material as well as many more.

Network

Ugh, that dreaded word again! Let's change that for those of you who are naturally intimidated by the notion.

Educate Yourself – Go to talks, screenings, online seminars, film festivals, etc. You're not networking, you're gaining more knowledge about the television industry that you can use. If you happen to start chatting to like-minded people there, great!

Follow - Use the safety blanket of social media to start following other people you admire, writers that you aspire to be like, shows you can't get enough of, or companies you'd love to work for. Join useful FB groups, Reddit Subs, online forums, or our awesome [Script Hub](#), to start connecting to other writers like you. It's okay to linger. You don't have to comment on every post or thread, but you may just find useful information or contacts that can lead you to gain representation, a contest to submit your pilot to, or filmmakers looking to produce your work.

Also, turn to your own group of writer friends. Reach out, can anyone put you in contact with an agent/manager or direct you to someone who can?

You may find it helpful to read our [Comprehensive Guide to Pitching](#) before heading out to network. Not that you should be instantly trying to pitch your project to anyone who'll listen! You absolutely don't want to be 'That Guy', but you never know when an opportunity might present itself. Be prepared.

Screenwriting Contests

As mentioned previously, why spend all that time researching and networking, when placing in an esteemed screenwriting contest can do a lot of that work for you. Of course, this route can be more financially costly, so it's a good idea to plan your contest submissions accordingly.

- Make a list of any potential tv pilot contests. [Here's](#) a really good one to start you off.
- Remove any that don't accept tv scripts in your chosen format (1hr or half-hour, etc).
- Narrow that list down by removing any that don't offer the chance for the winning scripts to be sent out into the industry.
- Consider removing any lesser-known contests from your list. Placing in one probably isn't going to impress anyone.
- Keeping your budget in mind, decide which of the remaining contests to enter.

HOW TO QUERY

You've done your homework, you know exactly who might be a good fit for you as an agent or manager, you've got the contact details, now it's time to make the first move.

Check submission guidelines

First off, always follow the submission guidelines to whoever you're considering contacting. If it's an agency, check their website to see what they will and won't accept. This is going to save you and all parties involved from wasting time. Any submission/query that doesn't comply with the guidelines is very quickly going to be dismissed. Don't be one of those people.

Writing a query letter

In most cases, this is going to be an email. We all know how easy it can be for emails to end up in the junk folder, so makes sure to clearly indicate you're writing a query in the subject header.

Address it directly

If you have the name of the person you're contacting, use it. If you're writing to a generic info@ or contact@ address, just use a general greeting.

Name drop

If you've previously made a connection to whoever you're writing to, make sure to mention it. "We met at...", "I spoke to you at..." etc. Equally, if you got the contact address from a mutual contact, add that in too. "I was given your details by..." or "I'm a good friend of who passed me your contact info" An agent is more likely to pay attention to an email from someone they're already got a connection to than a complete stranger.

Introduce yourself

You can write a short personal bio informing the recipient of who you are, what stage of your career you're at, list any relevant successes or recommendations you've had, and give the reason behind the email you're sending. This is also a good place to talk about what drove you to write the story you're telling, what personal connection or experience you bring to the topic, and why you've got a unique take on the world you've created.

Include a logline and short synopsis

Ideally, a well-crafted logline should hook the reader straight away and leave them wanting to know more about the project. Use a short, clear, and concise synopsis to keep feeding the interest. You're trying to pitch your project here, so use all of your writing skills to engage with the reader here.

Be confident

Agencies get query letters all the time, so you've got to figure out a way to stand out from the crowd at the same time as not coming across as being desperate. If you have a personal connection to the script you're pitching, such as experience with the subject matter, an original point of view of the topic, or how only you can tell this specific story, use that to help sell yourself along with the project.

Keep it short

You only get one chance to impress, and keeping your message short, punchy, and to the point will help get you off to a good start. No matter how interesting you think your pitch is, the less time it takes to deliver, the better.

Keep it polite and professional

No offensive jokes, no boasting, not too many informalities, and definitely no spelling or grammar mistakes. All of which will just create a negative impression. Making sure you've spelled the recipient's name correctly is another easy-to-miss mistake that could cost you a reply. Also consider creating a new email address specifically for your screenwriting career. It's maybe not a great idea to be contacting professionals with a silly email address you created when you were twelve.

Never attach any supporting material unless asked. Companies don't want to risk opening an email from an unknown source with an attachment in case it's a virus.

Create a Log

It can be very valuable to keep a note of who you contacted, when, and in regard to what, as well as whether you received any replies. It can become a long waiting game here, as answering query emails is likely at the bottom of the list of things to do at an agency, so don't be too disheartened if you don't get a reply straight away or never at all.

It's not personal. It's business.

If you haven't received a reply after a while, say 4-6 weeks, you can send a follow-up email, again, marking this down. If you don't receive a reply after that, it's probably best to spend your time following another lead than risk being perceived as overly persistent.

Researching and sending query emails can be time-intensive, so it might be a good idea to create a schedule for yourself where you can dedicate a certain amount of time to this task each week/month. Don't let this take precedence over your writing!

CONCLUSION

The main takeaways from this workbook should be:

1. Have at least one original tv pilot with a compelling premise.
2. Showcase your talent. Make sure all of your work is polished to a high degree and that your unique voice is a strong one.
3. Have at least three polished scripts in your portfolio before you consider seeking representation.
4. Placing highly in reputable screenwriting contests can be a worthy shortcut to gaining representation.
5. Have supporting material ready to hand, such as an engaging logline, a one-page pitch, and a resume that highlights everything that you have to offer as a writer.
6. Be proactive. Don't wait around for work to come to you, go out and get involved.
7. Do your homework. Discover which agents/managers are a good fit for you, know their past work, and know why you're the perfect client for them to take on.
8. Keep writing!