

# The TV-Series Cookbook

by

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This is a manual for creating a bible for an original tv-series.

## **On the Cover of the Bible**

### **Title**

Come up with a catchy and intriguing title for your TV-series.

Titles are hard. A trick is to make up stupid, silly and wrong titles for fun, maybe that will trigger your imagination and you will come up with a great one.

### **Tagline**

A clever statement that describes the idea or the philosophy of the series. Or use some known saying.

### **Format**

What kind of TV-series is it? A long running show, a mini-series, a web-series, or something else? State how many episodes and seasons.

### **Genre**

To avoid misunderstandings be clear about the genre. Is it a well-known one, a mix, or something new?

### **Credits**

The names and the titles of the people who created the bible.

### **Draft and Date**

The number of drafts of the bible and the date.

### **Contact Info.**

Contact information of the people who are in charge of answering questions.

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## **The Bible**

### **Index**

Make an index with page numbers and headlines, so the reader quickly can find what he/she is looking for.

### **Welcome**

Write an introduction where you welcome the reader and tell him/her what to expect - and introduce him/her to the team that created the bible.

### **The Idea**

What is the basic idea of your TV-series - and how did you come up with it? What is the main conflict?

Why is it an idea for a TV-Series and not for a movie?

Is it a long running TV-series, a mini-series or something else? Is it episodic, is it one long story, or a mix?

### **Logline**

Write a short and clear logline for your tv-series.

### **Story World**

Describe the world the story takes place in. What is new and exciting about it?

### **Your Reasons**

What are your personal reasons for wanting to make this TV-series. Why is it interesting and important to you? Why should you be the ones telling it? It doesn't have to be deep, intellectual, or clever, just be honest.

### **New and Unique**

What is the old and well-known about your TV-series and more important, what is the new and unique? What haven't we seen before?

## **Genre**

What is the genre of your TV-series - and why have you chosen this genre to tell your story? How do you use the clichés of the genre and how do you twist them? You have to guide the reader, so they don't read your tv-bible wrong and misunderstand it.

## **Inspiration**

What existing TV-series, movies, novels, comics, plays or other works of art have been inspirations for your TV-series - and how have they influenced your idea?

## **Broadcaster**

Before you make your Tv-bible, you should think about which broadcaster you want to pitch it to. Watch some of the broadcaster's TV-series and research what they are looking for in new shows.

## **Rating**

Is your series mainstream, kid friendly, or R-rated? Broadcasters and producers want to know if they could show your series, and if it fits their TV-station.

## **Target Audience**

Who are you telling your story to? Broadcasters want to know who your main audience is and why, and what it is you want to tell them.

## **Research**

What research have you made? Who have you interviewed or followed, and what locations have you visited, and how have they influenced the plot, conflict, characters and locations of your TV-series?

## **Philosophy**

Is your TV-series based on some philosophy or some way of thinking about life? If yes, why have you chosen this philosophy, and how do you use it in your series?

## **Theme**

What is the main theme of your TV-series? Is it love, fear, freedom, coming of age, greed, forgiveness...? Write about

something that you know well and that really matters to you. How does the theme show in your TV-series?

### **Message**

What do you want to say with your TV-series? What is the message to the world? Why is it important to you? How does it show in your TV-series?

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In the beginning you may not know your theme or message. Just write a story about someone doing something that you find fascinating and interesting.

After some time, the theme will become clear to you - and you can rewrite and strengthen the theme and message of your story.

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### **Main Characters**

Role in the story. Name (and nickname). Age. Profession. Residence. Look. Personality. Backstory. Passion. Fear. Secret. Virtues and Vices. Most important relationship. Enemies. Want/Need !!

### **Supporting Characters**

Name. Age. Profession. Personality. Who are they supporting and why? Why do the main characters need them?

### **Mentor**

What is the relationship between the main character and his/her mentor, and how does it develop? What does the main character learn - and what does the mentor learn?

### **Oddball**

A clown, a jester, a madman - an unpredictable character who tells the truth and who is not afraid of the consequences. The writers can voice their view of the world and its people without subtext through this character.

### **Character Arcs**

Make a graph that shows the inner and outer development of the main characters. Beginning, middle and end, with the major turning points. How do the characters change during the season and why?

### **Relationship Arcs**

Make a graph that shows the development of the relationships between characters. Beginning, middle and end, with the major turning points.

All drama is about relationships. The plot is only an excuse for the characters to meet, go on a journey and change.

Make it clear what the development of the relationship between the main characters is.

Like in the first season of the HBO show, "True Detective": the two cops go from strangers to co-workers, to friends, to enemies, to "brothers".

### **3 Questions**

It's always interesting to hear your characters talk. It shows a lot about their life, intelligence, background, beliefs and values and so on.

Give the main characters the same 3 questions and see how differently they answer. The questions should be relevant to your story, theme and conflict.

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### **Main Locations**

Describe in detail the main locations of your TV-series and how they are used and how they change during the season.

Choose locations where the characters would meet on a daily basis without too much explaining to do.

Have locations with very different functions, atmospheres and styles. Let them be special, memorable and iconic. Locations should tell a lot about the characters who live/work there.

## **Other Locations**

Make a list of all the other locations used in your TV-series and their functions.

## **Map**

Make a map of the town, city, street or country where the TV-series takes place. Put in key locations.

A map is useful to get an overview of where your characters live and how the locations can be used to make the drama more intense, fun and exciting.

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## **Format**

Is your TV-series episodic like a traditionally sitcom, or is it one long story (like "Breaking Bad"), or is it a mix?

## **Number of Episodes**

How many episodes has the first season of your TV-series? It is a good idea to know the midpoint of your season.

## **Running Time**

How long is an episode of your TV-series? Are they all the same running time?

## **Storylines**

How many different storylines are there in each episode? And how do they connect? Are there the same number of storylines in each episode?

## **Structure**

Does your TV-series use a traditional 3-act structure, or something else, or something new and different? Is the structure the same in every episode?

## **Pitches**

Write short pitches for each episode of the first season. The pitches should all have a beginning, middle and an end.

## **Synopsis for the Season**

Write a three-page synopsis for the whole first season with a beginning, middle and an end.

## **Synopsis for Episodes**

Write a two-page synopsis for all episodes of the first season. If your TV-series is one long story, each episode must have a satisficing ending with a climax, but at the same time have a great set-up for the next episode.

## **Script**

Write the script for the very first episode of your TV-series. Make sure it is very exciting and grips the readers and leaves them wanting more. This episode should be typical for your whole TV-series, so the readers/audience know what to expect.

## **Time**

How long is an episode in fictional time (a day, a week, a month...)? Is it the same in every episode?  
Is it told in real time?

How is time used as a dramatic tool in your TV-series?

If people are under pressure and in a hurry, they tend to make more mistakes/bad decisions and that is good for drama.

## **Story Elements**

What repeating story elements do you use in your TV-series? The weather. Day/Night. The four seasons. Animals. Symbols. Things/tools. Costumes. Food and drink?

The cat in the HBO crime-show "The Night Of" is a great example of how to use a story element.

## **Storytelling Check List**

Who is telling the story and why?  
Point of View.  
Multi-plot.  
Voice over.  
How do you create tension?  
How do you create momentum?  
Contrasts stories to the main story.  
Mirror stories to the main story.

The 5 fatal elements (Life, Love, Money, Family, Career).  
Suspense - Mystery - Surprise.  
Dramatic Irony.  
Set-ups and Pay-offs.  
Dead-lock/Time-lock.  
Flash-back/Flash-forward.  
Dreams/Fantasies.  
Deus Ex Machina.  
Red Herrings.  
Cliffhangers.  
Surprises.

### **Sex and Violence:**

What is the level of sex and violence in your TV-series? Is it shown, or just suggested? How is it used and what is the purpose?

### **Religion/Spirituality**

Are there any religious and/or spiritual elements in your TV-series? How are they used and what is their purpose?

### **Humor**

How is humor used in your TV-series? Black, sarcastic, parody, irony, childish, intelligent, warm? Even the most serious, realistic, deep and dark TV-series needs some humor, so it doesn't become too serious, dry and lifeless.

### **Sentimental**

How sentimental is your TV-series? All stories are sentimental in nature, because they are about situations that have happened and are worth remembering. It is important to have a lot of heart in your TV-series, but not overdoing it so it becomes cheesy.

### **Ideas For The Next Seasons**

What are your ideas for the next seasons? Show that you got a lot of ideas - for many seasons.

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### **Style and Design**

Make pictures (drawings or photographs) for all the important characters and locations and for the style, atmosphere and mood of the TV-series.



## **Colors and Light**

Is it a cold (blue) series, or a warm (red) series? How are colors used to tell the story?

## **Title Sequence**

Make the title-sequence of your TV-series to show us how the series begins and what the style, tempo and mood is. Drawings, photographs, animatic or film - maybe with music/songs.

## **CGI**

Are there any computer effects in the series? And how are they used?

## **Sound**

What is the sound universe of your TV-series, and how is it used to tell the story?

## **Music and Songs**

What type of score do you want in your TV-series? How are music and songs used to tell the story and make it more dramatic, fun and emotional?

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## **Production**

Make a production plan for the first season.  
Cost pr. minute.  
Location vs. studio.  
Pre-production. On set. Post-production.

## **Budget**

Make the budget for the first season.  
Costs and salaries and so on.

## **Cast**

Make a list with pictures of your dream cast from known and new actors. And write why you want to use these actors.

**Crew**

Make a list of your dream crew from professional TV and movie people. And write why you want to use them on your TV-series.

**Timeslot**

What day and time should your TV-series be shown on TV and why? Or are all episodes of the season to be put on the internet all at once (like some Netflix shows?)

**Hype**

How do you want to make the audience aware of your new TV-series? How can you create hype? Internet, games, contests, apps, quiz, talk-shows, happenings, on the news.

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**Goodbye**

Say goodbye to the readers. And give your thankyou's to the people who helped you make the bible for your TV-series.

**Your Contact Information**

Give the contact information of the team behind this concept, so broadcasters, directors, producers, actors and investors can contact you.

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