



HOLLYWOOD JARGON

Real Fast Hollywood Deal



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Hollywood Jargon

Back end: When all the expenses associated with a film have been paid off and the investors recouped, we've reached the back end. Which is where "profits" come in.

Character Arc: How a character changes from beginning to end is called the "arc." With a minor character, it can take as few as three scenes to define them. A major character makes slower progress along his or her arc.

Completion bond: A guarantor who takes the financial responsibility for completing the film on budget and on time. Though the bonding company works hand in hand with the producers and director, it holds the absolute power to take over the filming if necessary, to accomplish that goal. The takeover rarely has to happen.



Contingent Compensation: Your negotiated share of the profits of a film.

Creative Dialogue: The interaction between producers, actors, director and the screenwriter in which notes are proposed, discussed, and either implemented or put aside.

Development Hell: When a film languishes at a studio or production company and has yet to reach the day of principal photography (the first day of shooting), and that's gone on for a year or more, you're officially in development hell. One of our films had four sets of writers involved, four directors, two stars, and still hasn't made it to the screen...yet.



Domestic Distributor: A film distributor who places your finished film in theaters, or releases it television, or both markets, in the United States and Canada.

Equity: A term that in most businesses means a risk investment of actual capital into a project that has no guaranteed certainty of breaking even. In the film business, equity is structured as a loan to the film, repayable plus a fixed rate, from revenues.

Fixed Compensation: The contractual amount paid for the dramatic rights to an underlying intellectual property (I.P.), as opposed to "contingent compensation." The I.P. contracted for includes the script and every preceding form of the story it is based on or inspired by.

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Hollywood: “Hollywood” has long ago become the metaphorical word for referring to the entertainment business mostly centered in greater Los Angeles—ranging from Santa Monica to Burbank, from Beverly Hills to Valencia, but not really in Hollywood-proper. The actual Hollywood, where Hollywood Boulevard is, is where you find the tourist attraction Grauman’s Chinese Theater as well as Dolby Theater where the Academy Awards presentation takes place.



Intensity Rating: A graph used in *Writing Treatments That Sell* that charts the rise and fall of action in a story on a scene by scene basis.

Logline: A one-line pitch of your story, very much like the one-liners you would read in *TV Guide*. Also known as an “elevator pitch,” or “one-liner.”

Marketing Array: Various forms of the pitch for your story: treatment, logline, one-paragraph, etc.

Obligatory Action: The actions in a story that *must be physically shown* for the story to make sense.

Option Price: The price paid to a holder of underlying rights (treatment, book, screenplay, etc.) to allow the buyer a specified amount of time to set up all the elements required for the movie to be made.

Participation: Your share of the profits of a motion picture.

Pitch: A description of a story, intended to sell the listener on it immediately. A pitch can be oral or written.



Prep: Short for “preproduction,” the period before the actual filming of a movie begins, during which all facets of the production are brought to readiness for the filming.

Principal Photography: The day when the film begins shooting; when the cameras first roll.

Protagonist: The “first actor” in a drama, often erroneously called the hero. He is the prime cause of the action that unfolds, and the story is *about him*.

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Purchase Price: The price paid to a creator or holder of underlying rights, usually upon the first day of principal photography, to transfer all rights from the creator/holder to the buyer, thereby protecting the buyer's investment in the film.

Set Up: Usually means arranging for the financing of a motion picture, though it also refers to preparing a scene to be shot.

Scene: The unit of drama, like the letters of the alphabet are the units of writing.

Spec: A shorthand for "speculation," usually referring to work done without compensation but on the hopes that it will lead to compensation, as in a "spec script."



Star: A charismatic and box-office-successful actor whose mere involvement in a film gets it financed and draws audiences to the box office.

Start Date: The day on which everyone involved in the actual filming of the story is available to begin that crucial work. Start date usually refers to the commencement of preproduction.

Story Editor: The title given to industry readers, who read stories for their executive, agent, manager, producer, and director bosses and report the story's potential and its flaws.

Sympathetic: The word comes originally from ancient Greek, where it meant "to suffer along with" someone. Can we relate to him or her? If we can, he or she is a "sympathetic" character in our story.

Trackers: Independent contractors who hunt down those who control the rights to a given story, and report the information to their bosses (studios, production companies, directors, etc.).

Treatment: A treatment is a relatively brief, loosely narrative, written pitch of a story intended for production as a film for theatrical exhibition or television broadcast. Written in user-friendly, dramatic but straightforward and highly visual prose in the present tense, the treatment highlights in broad strokes your story's hook, primary characters, acts and action line,

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setting, point of view, and most dramatic scenes and turning points.

Ulmer Scale: A survey that ranks on a scale of 1 to 100 the influence of more than 1,400 actors worldwide to generate movie financing. Created in 1998 by entertainment journalist James Ulmer, the survey canvases sources that range from producers, entertainment agents and studio executives to international distributors, foreign sales agents and investment bankers. Taken into account are an actor's box office numbers, versatility, professionalism and willingness to promote films.



Underlying Rights; Underlying Property; Underlying Material: Legal terminology for the story you created in every format in which it exists (book, pitch, and/or treatment), which is intellectual property owned by you until you sell it or make your own film based on it.