Some supplemental information in how I make my prompt copies digitally and the stages I follow. Any questions, please do get in touch. Remember, your book should be clear but work for YOU. You don't need to copy my styles, this is just a guide to help you create your own

Step 1 – Make Symbols Document

I created a document consisting of most if not all of the symbols I use to create a book. Every time I make a new book I use this as a basis and if that show requires something new, I add it to the document, then carry it on to the next. My symbol document has evolved a lot over 15 years!



2 – Create your rehearsal script

Most of the time you will now be sent a rehearsal script electronically (not always though). This might be sent as a PDF – there are plenty of websites that will convert this to a word document.

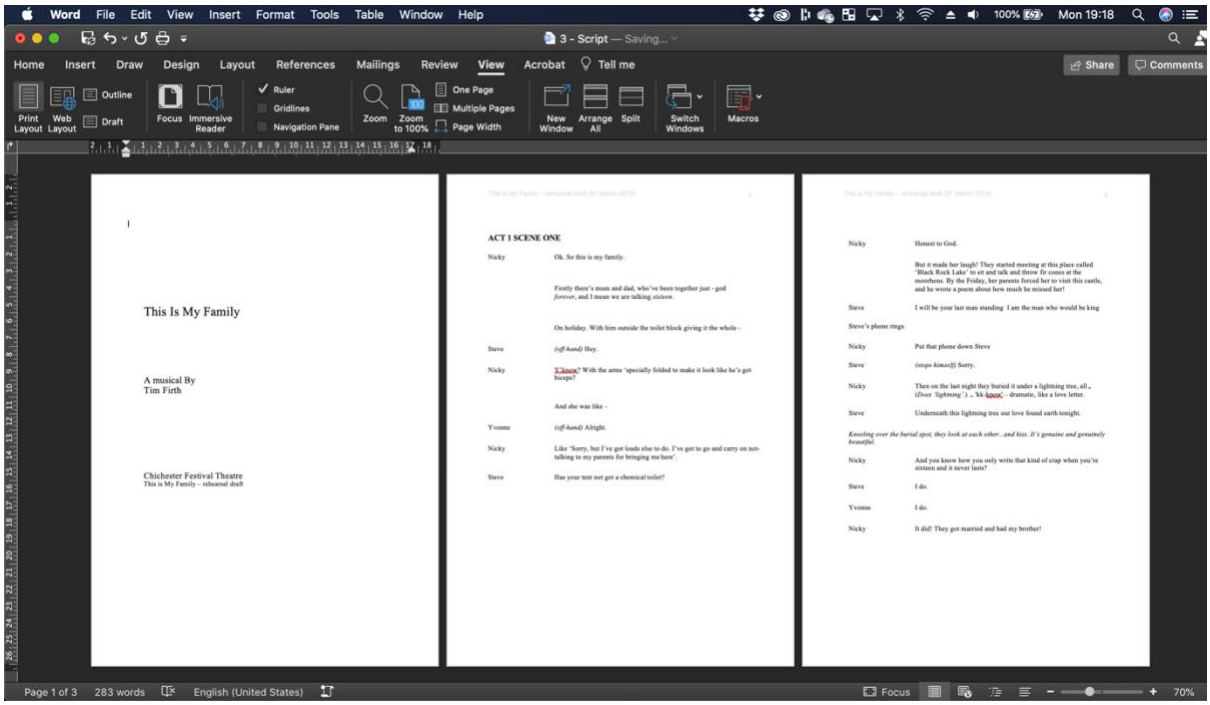
If you're unlucky you might just be sent a photocopy of the script (I'll come to this later).

This is what will take the most amount of time, but it is something you can (and should) do before rehearsals start. I go through the following stages

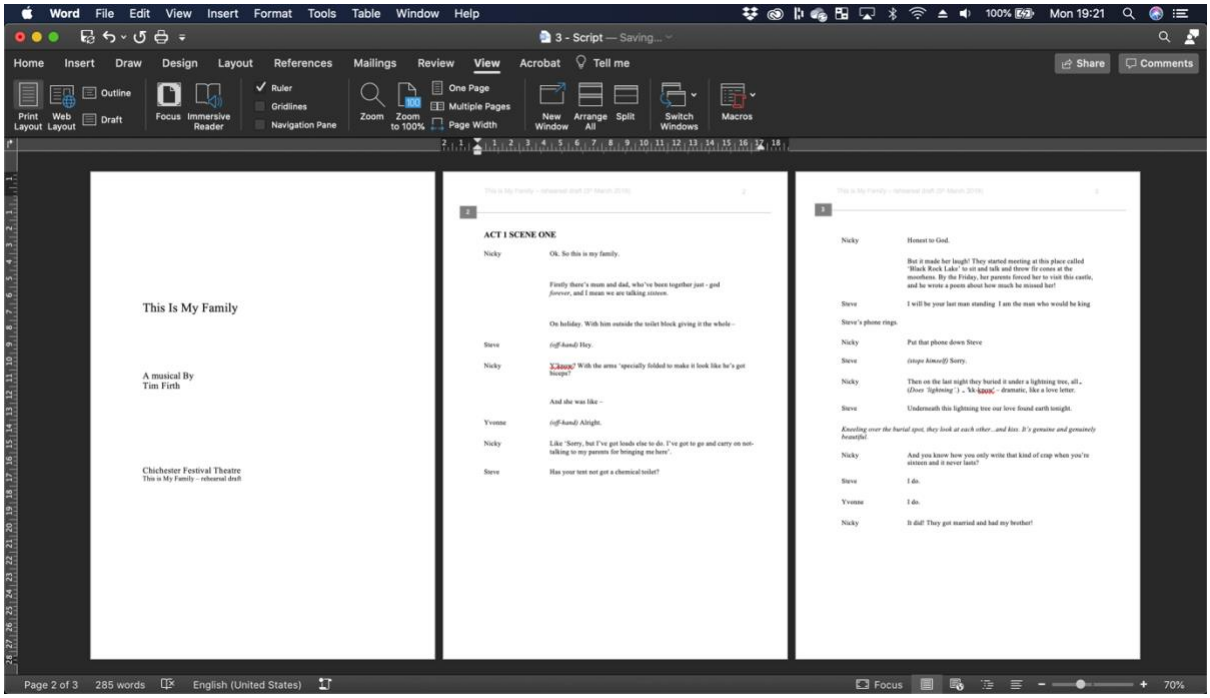
2.1 – Add page numbers

Copy the 'page number' symbol from the symbols document and then add it to the top of every page. It is VITAL that this is the first thing you do, as once you start moving things around the page numbering will all go awry.

Plays use page numbers constantly as a reference. This doesn't happen so much in musicals, as they tend to use the song names or scenes as a refence, so a director in a play might say 'we're going from the top of Page 9' but in a musical they're more likely to say 'we're going from the top of the kitchen scene'.



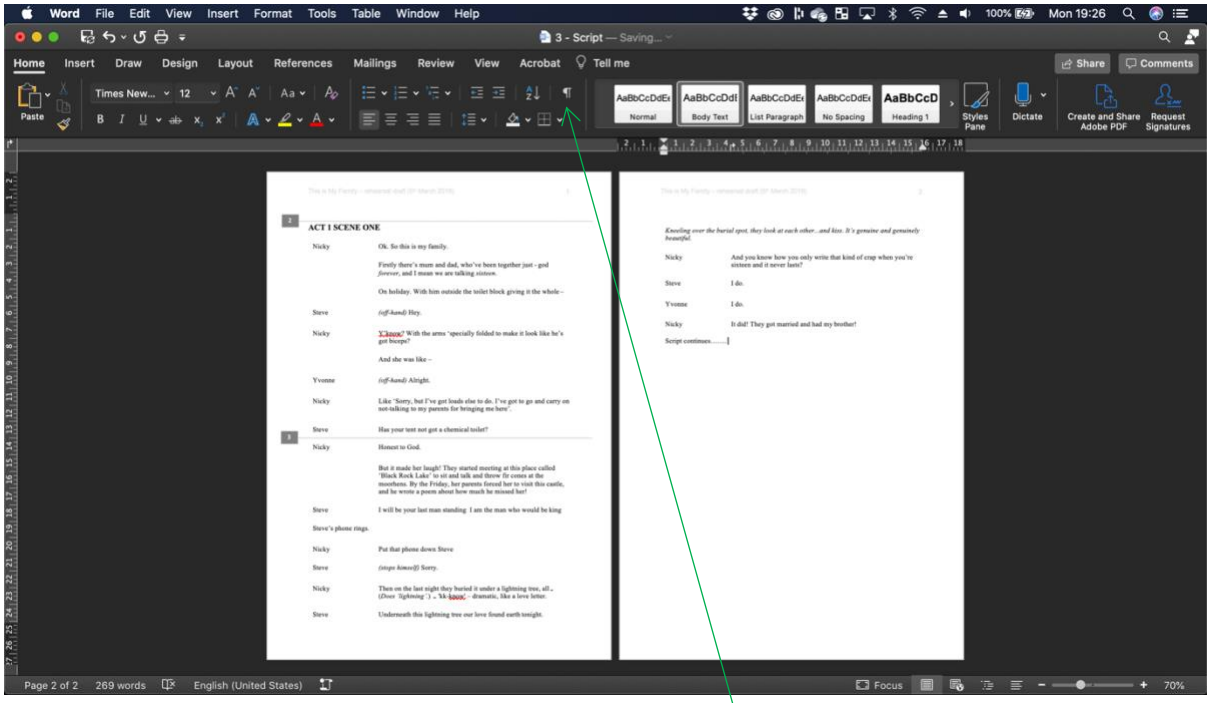
Basic script without any amendments



Script with page numbers added

2.2 – Remove 'white space'

The next stage for me is to remove any 'white space' this can be extra line breaks between dialogue or title pages etc etc.



Script with all white space removed

NB – Sometimes it can be tricky to remove lines use the '*Show/Hide Formatting*' option in word which might show if there are some hidden section breaks and you can delete from here.

2.3 Move the margins of the text

Now that you have the page numbers added, you can move the margins of the text to allow space on the left of the dialogue to add Q's. If the ruler isn't visible, select *VIEW* and make sure *RULER* is ticked.

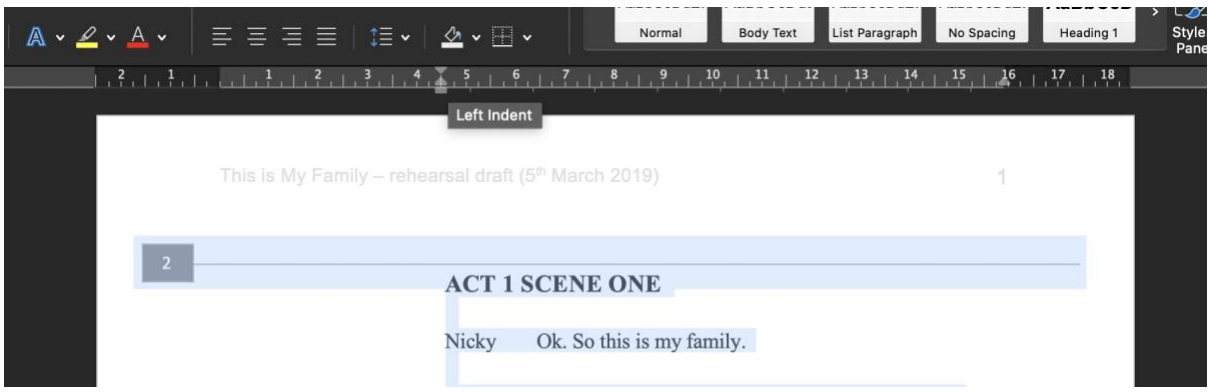
Now select all the text in the document (easy way is keyboard **CMD** and **A**)

You should now notice that the up and down arrow on the horizontal ruler at the top of the page are now slightly greyed out. This is because it's likely that the text has different margins throughout the text



Margin points on the horizontal ruler

Looking at the left margin first, there are two arrows one facing down, and one facing up. Moving the arrow facing down moves the margin of FIRST LINE of any paragraph only. The arrow facing up moves the rest of the lines on a paragraph (this would be used if you wanted the first line to be indented on every paragraph, which we don't need). It's useful to just clear all the different margins that appear in your script by clicking once on the up and once on the down arrow. You might notice the text moves a little here. Now, click and hold on the bottom arrow and move to the right (I usually go for about 4.5 on the ruler).

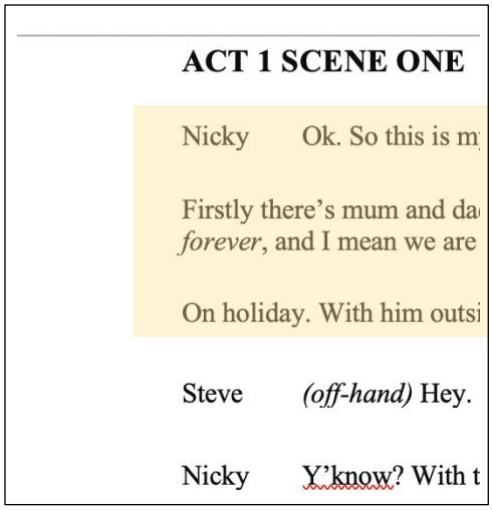


After moving the left margin

You can also move the right margin (it's usually possible to go to about 17 on the ruler). This adds a bit more text on the page.

2.4 Tab any supplemental paragraphs of dialogue

This is personal choice for me but I like all my character names to be separate from any dialogue.



ACT 1 SCENE ONE

Nicky Ok. So this is m

Firstly there's mum and da
forever, and I mean we are

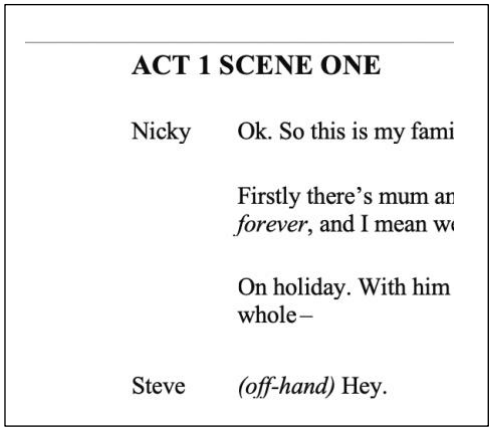
On holiday. With him outsi

Steve *(off-hand)* Hey.

Nicky Y'know? With t

Supplemental paragraphs with original margin

As you'll see from the example above, *Nicky's* first line has three paragraphs (second starting '*Firstly there's mum and dad…'. I go through my entire script lining these up using tabs (on the keyboard).*



ACT 1 SCENE ONE

Nicky Ok. So this is my fami

Firstly there's mum ar
forever, and I mean w

On holiday. With him
whole–

Steve *(off-hand)* Hey.

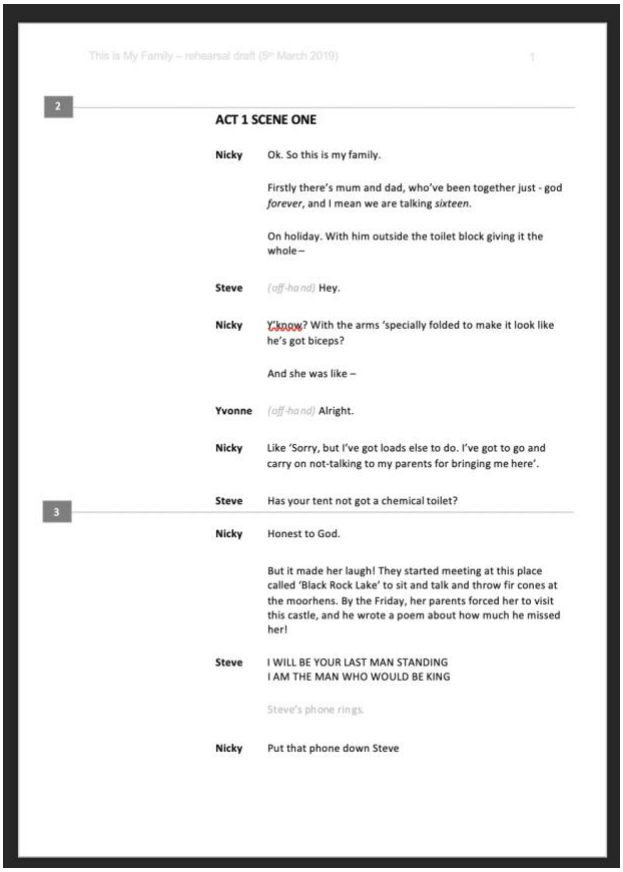
Supplemental paragraphs all lined up

2.5 Format the text

Again personal choice, but I like to do the following

- Bolden character names (not in the dialogue or stage directions though)
- Turn all stage directions to grey and italicise
- Highlight any pre-recorded lines
- Capitalise any sung words
- Bolden and Capitalise Scene numbers/names

I also have a preferred font – if you find one font easier to read than others, use it (unless it's comic sans in which case don't!). Doing a digital book allows you the opportunity to lay the page out for YOU.



This is My Family – rehearsal draft (5th March 2019) 1

2

ACT 1 SCENE ONE

Nicky Ok. So this is my family.

Firstly there's mum and dad, who've been together just - god *forever*, and I mean we are talking *sixteen*.

On holiday. With him outside the toilet block giving it the whole –

Steve *(off-hand)* Hey.

Nicky Y'know? With the arms 'specially folded to make it look like he's got biceps?

And she was like –

Yvonne *(off-hand)* Alright.

Nicky Like 'Sorry, but I've got loads else to do. I've got to go and carry on not-talking to my parents for bringing me here'.

3

Steve Has your tent not got a chemical toilet?

Nicky Honest to God.

But it made her laugh! They started meeting at this place called 'Black Rock Lake' to sit and talk and throw fir cones at the moorhens. By the Friday, her parents forced her to visit this castle, and he wrote a poem about how much he missed her!

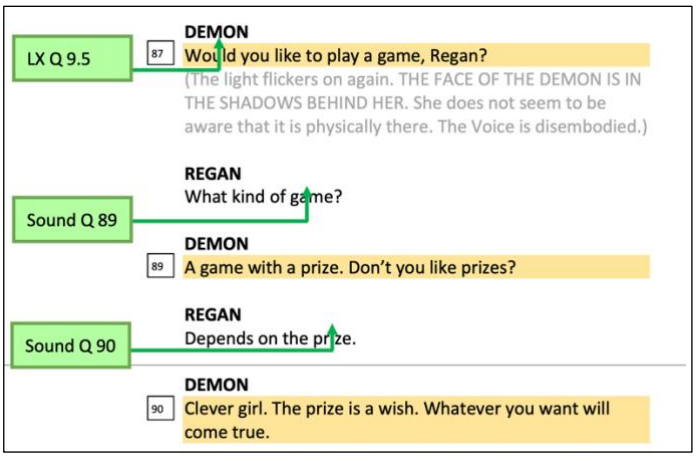
Steve I WILL BE YOUR LAST MAN STANDING
I AM THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

Steve's phone rings.

Nicky Put that phone down Steve

Page with text all formatted

There are some clever ways of doing this task automatically using 'Advanced Search and Replace'. This is beyond the scope of this document but the gist is you'd search for example all the stage directions in the original document and then replace them as italic and grey. You'd search for anything using wildcards between brackets, ie. Any text between brackets – this is not 100% perfect but can save a lot of the labour.



Page with recorded lines highlighted

I highlight any lines that will end up being pre-recorded in yellow for two reasons. It's useful to keep track of these, but also invariably in rehearsals I end up saying these lines. This is a helpful (and not very subtle) reminder of this. Some of these lines might be obvious at this stage, some not.

2.6 Page Breaks

At this stage I go through the entire script making sure that every scene starts on a new page. This is useful for two reasons – it's not uncommon for there to be a scene change (and hence more Q's) at the end of a scene. This will give you some extra white space on the page to add this but also adding white space throughout the script means that if things change and lines are added/cut only the rest of that scene is affected…. Adding as few as two lines can change all the subsequent pages so the lines move around – this is a pain once you have printed your script and you are only printing odd pages here and there. Adding new the extra white space between scenes helps cover this.

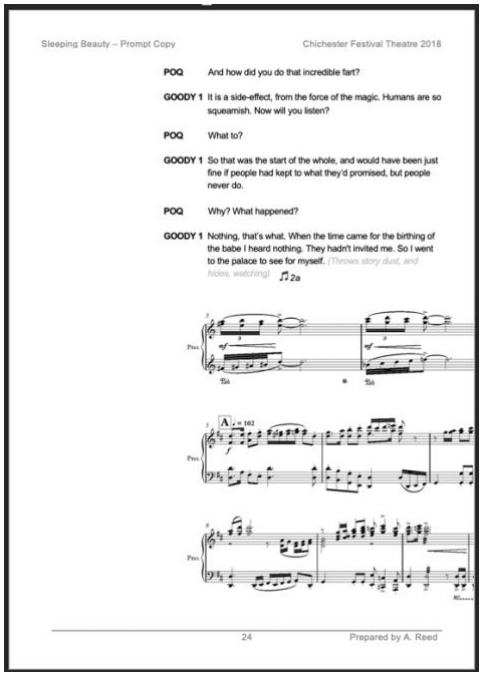
If you can, rather than just a page break at the end of a scene, use a section break (INSERT, BREAK, SECTION BREAK). More on this later.

2.7 Add Music

It's likely that you're going to want to add score to the prompt copy. Usually this is sent to you as a PDF. I have an app on my mac that converts this to JPG (but you can easily do this online). Once all the PDF's are converted, I go through the book and add each sheet individually. You'll also want to remove any sung lines from the script which are now in the score.

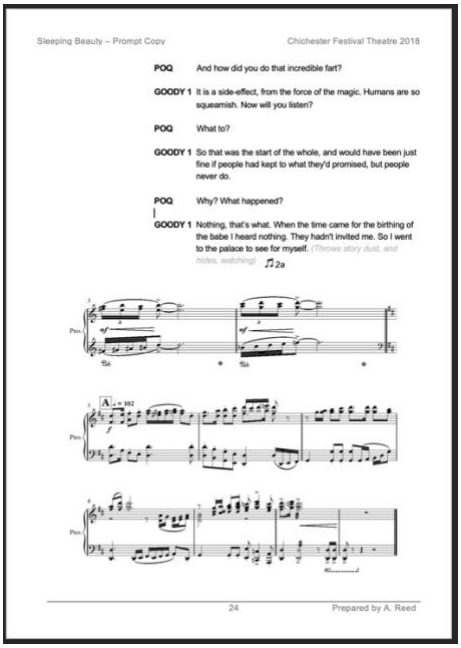
Go to the point in the script you want to insert the page of music INSERT, PICTURES, PICTURE FROM FILE and navigate to the image of music. This will insert the music on the page

This will also be the same way to add script that's photocopied etc.



Score inserted onto script page

It's likely the margins for this music will be the same as the dialogue. I choose to move this to the left of the page
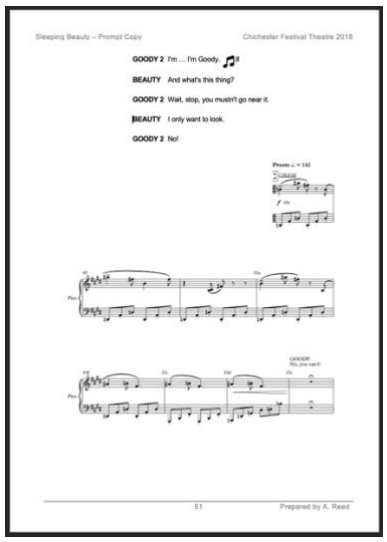


Score margins moved on page

My rule of thumb is add ALL vocal score to a book for a musical – it may well be you don't need it but it's easier to take it out later and replace with the libretto (just the words) later than try and add the score in the middle of tech.

It can be tricky with large sections of underscore (low level music under the dialogue) to know what to add, but this will be discovered during rehearsals.

Something else to consider with using score in a book. Your book should flow like the show does. Any music with repeat bars should be inserted once for each repeat, you shouldn't go back and forth through score. Also you can cut and paste music bars around dialogue as required. Avoiding unnecessary page turns can help if it's a busy book.



In the example above, the music starts on the top line (see the musical notes) I have however cut the first two bars of music out to stop me counting it.

2.8 Header and Footers

You might find the original script has a header or footer. I usually amend these to add the name of the show and any scene in the top margin and the page number of the prompt copy (NOT THE SCRIPT) at the bottom of the page.

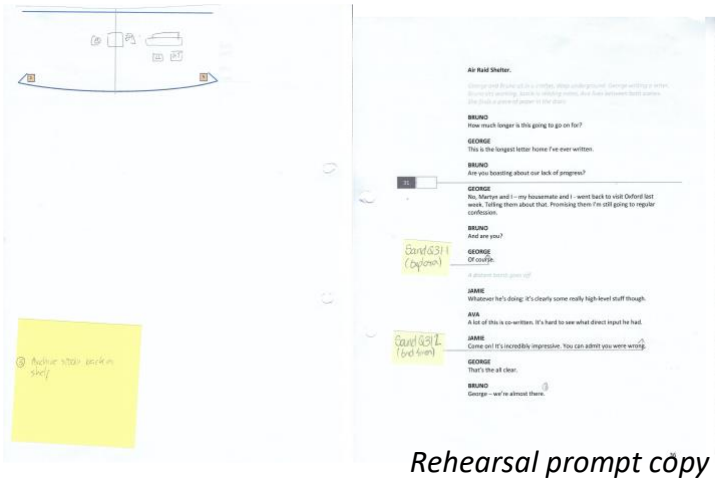


Script with header and footer

If you have used section breaks to insert breaks between scenes, each section (or scene) can have different headers so one could have Act 1 Scene 1, and the next Act 1 Scene 2 etc.

2.9 Rehearsal Book

This is what I now start rehearsals with, I use post-it notes to add Q's that come up in the rehearsal room but otherwise it's back to pencil and rubbers for rehearsals



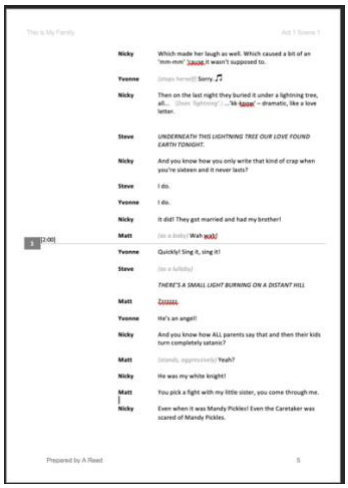
Rehearsal prompt copy

As any script changes in rehearsal, I will reprint pages, but tend to work from the same book. This gets me used to the page layout (it's amazing how much the layout of the page becomes familiar). If there are lots of Q's in the rehearsal room (usually sound or revolves etc) I will start to add these digitally to the prompt copy but not likely to print them.

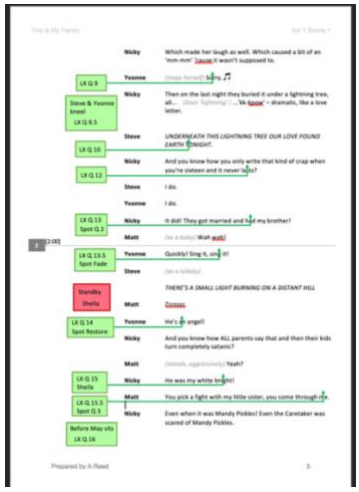
3 – Start to make Prompt Copy

Once you get to the end of rehearsals, it's likely that you'll start getting Q's, or have a good idea where they go. Personal choice again, but I like to try and start tech with a complete digital book printed and ready to go, so I will use the time before tech to insert all the Q's that I can. I will certainly add the point of any MD Upbeats (with musical symbol seen in the example below) and the timings of the start of each page, scene and song.

To do this, I will go back to my symbols document and copy whichever symbol required and paste it into the script. I then have a printer with me in tech so can print pages very quickly.



Rehearsal prompt copy



With Q's added ready for tech

You should have a play before you need to with the copying and pasting symbols.



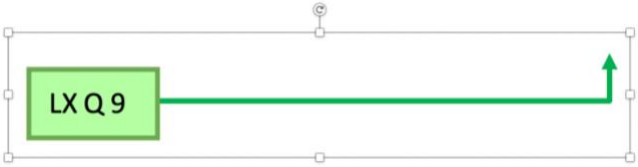
You might find that one element is on top of one. In the image above the Go box needs to be in front of the green line. To achieve this, right click the Go Box, select BRING TO FRONT, BRING TO FRONT



You may also find that it's useful to 'Group' symbols together so that they become one object. To do this on the keyboard hold down **COMMAND**, the click on each item you want to copy



While keeping command pressed down, right click on one of the elements and select GROUP, GROUP.



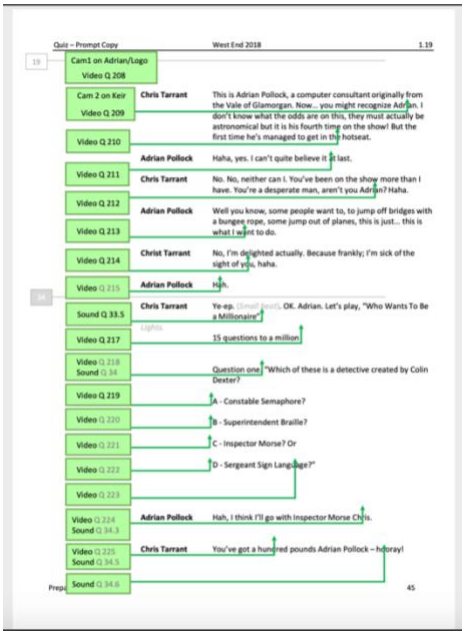
I will also use things like small images to create symbols (musical notes etc).

I start tech with two books – the rehearsal prompt copy which is complete with blocking and the calling book. I file the rehearsal version to one side and often refer to it but never amend it.

If I need to refer to blocking in tech, I usually now refer to the timing on the page that I've noted during rehearsals near the relevant point, open up the latest run through video I have also taken and line the video up – this can be much more detailed than written blocking.

It's rare for me to make any blocking notes during tech. I will spend the time instead noting what every Q does and note any MIDI Qs etc.

Having a digital book also allows you the chance to change the script to fit Q's. You might want to add extra lines between busy sections to accommodate Q's which if you were using the traditional method, you couldn't do.



Script layout changed to accommodate Q's

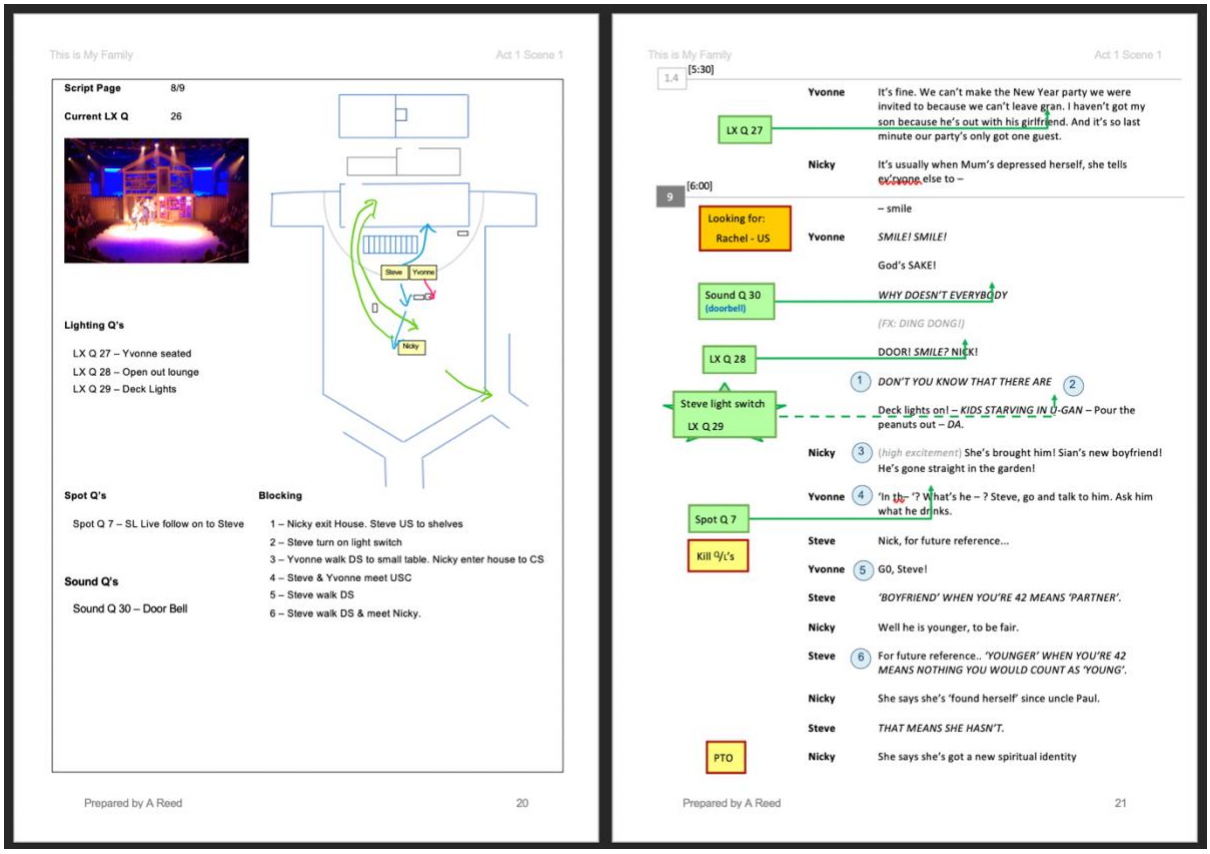
In the page shown above, extra lines have been adding in the dialogue to accommodate the large number of Q's in this section.

This is one area digital books come into their own – you can make it work for YOU. If you have a book cover you can also let them have their own copy with slightly different layout to suit their needs.

4 – Finalise Book with Blocking and Notes

Once the show is open, I now go back to the start of the book and work through each page. This is a good opportunity to remove score that's not required (putting the libretto back), perhaps moving any horrid page turns etc and also add blocking and notes

Using a show recording video, I can work through pages adding the blocking notes. From this, I also draw a plan and add a screenshot of each set up.



Complete Prompt Copy Left and Right hand pages

You can either have two word documents, one for the Right Hand Pages and one for the Left Hand Pages, or you can have one document with the Left Hand Page between each Right Hand Page.

Prompt Copy documents can be quite large in size, so you may wish to split it into Act 1 and Act 2 BUT make sure you save it frequently as the documents can become quite complex and word has a habit of crashing.