

ATYPICAL ARTISTS

Hello!

If you're reading this, you're probably one of two kinds of people: either you are at the beginning of working on an Atypical project (yay! welcome!) or you are embarking on making your own show (yay! welcome!). It's possible you've come here from my [Production Handbook](#) and therefore have read that first sentence already.

As with that handbook, this is not the be-all-end-all of audio script development and writing. There are far smarter and more talented writers out there who have written entire books on the subject but, as I get asked about my personal approach a lot, I thought it would be interesting to share. I also wanted an excuse to gather a bunch of examples into one place so that folks could see how I format my scripts, pitches, etc.

Because writing is such a personal, specific process, this is not going to be as long or as detailed as the Production Handbooks. But I hope there are some pearls of wisdom to gather, or at the very least, some formatting tricks to use.

Happy writing!

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GERMINATING THE IDEA

You have an idea for an audio drama! How wonderfully exciting. Every writer grows and develops their idea in their own way, but it's always good to start with a logline. A logline is a one or two sentence summary of your show, ideally presented in an intriguing way. Your elevator pitch. Even if I have no other materials for a project, I often make sure I have a logline on hand so that as I'm talking to potential partners/funders, I can send them a handful of loglines to read their temperature on what kind of show they'd be interested in. A quick google search will give you a lot of resources on how to write a great logline.

Some loglines from Atypical's shows (and a version of these often shows up in our press kits!):

In a sleepy New England town, Maxine Miles' humdrum life is shaken up when a fellow teen goes missing. When Maxine starts to sniff around town, she uncovers a dark secret which puts her - and everyone she cares about - in danger.

Hanging out with a teacher every single lunch period might be social suicide for the typical high schooler, but for the Weirdest Girl in Hawkins, it's salvation.

After years of intense rivalry and near-fatal duels, two gunslinging cowboys are forced to help each other escape the law and slowly come to the realization that their passionate feelings for each other might not have been of the negative sort after all.

Now that I know where I'm starting, I pull together inspiration in the form of making playlists and pinterest boards for my shows. Even though this material won't appear anywhere in the show itself, these are two things that help me ruminate on the idea and then—when I'm writing—quickly tap into the vibe of the world. For instance, DESPERATE HOLLOW (the last logline of that bunch) is a concept I've been working on for a *long* time, so I have a [pinterest board](#) as well as [several playlists for it](#). As you can see, the playlists are not buckets of songs all jumbled together, they're mostly small playlists that are meant to be listened to in order. Honestly, my process for writing playlists and their accompanying annotations (a thing I do) could be an entirely separate handbook, so I'll just direct you to my [monthly newsletter](#) about it.

No matter what you do, the important part of this stage is to find a note-taking method that works for you—write everything down and keep it as organized as

possible, because you never know what you might need down the road. Organizing early and often will really help you in the long run, especially if your show goes for several seasons. For a long time, I used Evernote to organize my thoughts, and programs like that can be a huge asset.

PUTTING TOGETHER A PITCH

If you've got a perfect vision of your show and you're making it on your own, you can skip to writing scripts! Though I would recommend doing a show bible, a pitch isn't necessary unless you're, you know, pitching.

But let's say I throw some loglines someone's way and they're like, "Lauren! I would love to hear more about Maxine Miles!" I want to be able to say "Great! Here's some more information about it" and hand them a one to two page pitch. I'm going to make myself a liar in a second, because the pitch for Maxine Miles was a *lot* longer, but an early pitch can just include:

- Logline
- Story summary
- Format
- A tease at future seasons
- Your bio

If you want to send a more comprehensive pitch, you'd add:

- A more detailed season outline
- Character bios
- And perhaps even a detailed rundown of your pilot episode (a very common practice in TV that I've seen carried over into podcasting)

You can see an example of an [extended pitch here](#) which, incidentally, actually serves as a pretty good example of a broad season outline (also, if you've listened to Maxine Miles, you'll see that the story has some significant differences—things often shift between outlining and scripting for me!).

If you really want to dazzle someone, you can go the extra mile and create a pitch deck using Keynote or Google Slides. This is a more visual representation of your story—the same information, just presented in a way that's more exciting. Briggon Snow made this [pitch deck](#) through some wizardry of his—every pitch deck I've personally made is for a project that's not out yet and, more importantly, doesn't look nearly as good.

Alright, you've got more information about your story now, time to move to...

MAKING THE SHOW BIBLE

“Show Bible” or “Series Bible” is a term from TV that I've borrowed for both story bibles and directing bibles (the latter of which I have no shareable examples unfortunately, as I usually make those for shows that are not mine, but which I'm hired to direct). But the concept is simple and widely applicable—your bible is exactly what it sounds like, the one true source of information about your show.

To this day, I still think of *Battlestar Galactica* when I think of series bibles. This is because it was the very first one I ever read, back when I first moved to LA and was trying to devour as much knowledge in my agency job as I could. That bible and more can be found [here](#), and are a great place to start when it comes to building your own bible. There are also a lot of worldbuilding templates on the internet that serve the same function.

But regardless of how you format it, it's best to start with the material of your pitch and grow it from there. You want this document to be a reference point for not only you, but any writers you bring on and for your actors as well if they choose to read it.

Unlike for the other materials, I don't have my own personal example to share—all my current bibles have a bonkers amount of spoilers in them and my most significant show bible, for *The Bright Sessions* of course, is currently offered as a bonus behind-the-scenes document for the [Atypical Plus](#) members. So, that said, if you want to pay ten bucks for one month of membership and download everything in there (which includes the bible, the in-universe timeline (another VITAL asset if you're doing a long running show), downloadable music, bloopers, etc. etc.) I can't stop you! Though, of course, I would love to have you be a long term pal.

That said, to give you an idea of what *is* in *The Bright Sessions* bible, I'm outlining the different sections below. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the show, *The Bright Sessions* is a seven season series about people with supernatural abilities in therapy, called atypicals, and their therapist, Dr. Bright. The original show ran for four seasons, and then we had one season of bonus one-off episodes, and two spin-off seasons that took place in different parts of the “Bright Universe” as I call it.

This is what the bible contains (my internal version, which actually includes a few minor things the pals version does not):

- An opening letter that was directed toward writers/actors joining the series as an introduction to the world, with links to some fun stuff, like press and fanart.
- THE BASICS
 - In Universe Calendar/Content Order

- Glossary of Terms
- Additional Resources (playlists, bonus content, a link to our fan wiki (!))*
- WORLD BUILDING
 - A breakdown of how atypicals work
 - A list and description of each of the organizations/groups/secret societies that appear throughout the show
- CHARACTERS
 - Main characters with their bios
 - Supporting character with their bios
 - Minor characters with their bios, including those that only appear in the books but may be referred to in the podcast
- THE FANDOM
 - Just some quick facts and figures about the fandom as well as some fanart :)
- APPENDICES
 - As referred to throughout the bible—a list of known atypical powers, tiers in The Atypical Monitors, an organizational map of how The AM is structured, and a list of how the character of Caleb interprets emotions through his empathy power.

As you can see, it's a bit of a grab-bag based on what that show in particular needs. A big thing The Bright Sessions bible does *not* have that many of my other bibles do is a breakdown of each season or a description of each episode. This is because it was largely put together into a formal document well into the show's run, at which point those existing episodes became reference points. For many of my bibles now, an episode outline is often included in the bible, as well as a format explanation, depending on the show.

*a quick sidebar about this: it's nuts to me that TBS has a wiki, but I *have* used it on occasion—at the start, I was not good at writing things down, so some details were harder to find in my own notes. But thinking of your bible like a wiki is not a bad approach.

Furthermore, shows like *Passenger List* or *Maxine Miles* lean heavily on those episode outlines. Those are both mysteries, so I would create an “information gained” section for each episode, in order to track what the audience knows versus what the character knows—not to mention, what the secret truth is. Other shows have large sections on theme and tone, if those are particularly important. Have fun with it—this is the essential beating heart of your story and can take whatever shape it wants. I once made two distinct bibles for a show (one I have yet to make) because I had a series bible for the show itself and then a fictional, in-universe bible for a video game *within* the show. For the Marvel show I made, I included a whole section of 1960s newsreel and other reference points for the decade, as well as all the different Marvel comics I was taking inspiration from. Make it yours and *keep it updated!*

A hot tip: a lot of the stories I write take place over short periods of time (*The Bright Sessions* ran for 7 years and, with the exception of the major time jump before the last season, the majority of the show takes place over only eighteen months; *Maxine Miles* takes place over the course of one week) and, weirdly, I think that makes keeping track of when episodes happen even more vital. Sometimes I’ll use actual dates (TBS goes from early ‘16 to late ‘17) but sometimes I’ll just rely on days of the week (*Maxine Miles*, *Bridgewater*). But again: update early and often. Having to go back through a season and figure out when the heck things are happening is frustrating. Or, I don’t know, maybe that’s just me! Maybe everyone else has a perfect internal calendar for all their stories.

SCRIPTING

FORMAT

Ah, script format. A hotly debated topic in audio drama. In America, there is no standardized audio drama format in the way there is in TV and film (a different story entirely in the UK, which has had a rich audio drama tradition). I have spent *years* refining my format and while it changes a *bit* for each show, I’m mostly pretty happy with where it’s settled. Here are the basics and, unfortunately, it is a bit specific to the formatting capabilities of FinalDraft, but hopefully the example will give you enough of an idea [[PDF](#) / [FDX](#)]

- FOR THE SCENES
 - I use traditional scene headers, including INT. and EXT.
 - The TITLES “scene” is written as an action line, not a scene header. This is to eliminate misnumbering in script breakdown.
 - If characters are moving locations (Character A storming out of their house into the yard, for example) but there’s no break in the dialogue (Character B following Character A outside because this fight is not

finished), I will mark CONTINUOUS in the scene heading and then change the new scene heading to an action line, for the same reason as above. With audio, continuous scenes in separate locations will be recorded all at once.

- Scene transitions are going to function a little differently in audio, even if some of the terminology is the same. I almost never write if there's going to be a musical transition, because that's something that's easier to feel out in post-production, but I will often (though not always) write in other transitions, whether that be a crossfade, fade out/fade in, smash cut, etc. When I say they function differently in audio, I mean that this is something you're going to eventually train your ear for—a scene that you *think* might work as a hard/smash cut might not actually function all that well in context, so when you're starting out, I think it's fine to leave out scene transitions entirely, and leave that to your post team to feel out.
- FOR THE SOUND DESIGN
 - After the scene header, include an ATMO action slug to describe the atmosphere of the scene.
 - Each sound effect should be a separate SFX action slug. You'll find your own style of writing sound effects, but I find it more helpful to describe what's happening, rather than the specific sounds we're hearing, and separate them out by action. So "SFX: Max walks to the fridge and takes out the orange juice. SFX: Max pours herself a glass" as two slugs and not "SFX: Footsteps as Max walks to fridge. SFX: Max opens fridge. SFX: Max takes out the orange juice. SFX: Max closes the fridge", etc. etc. I *have* written SFX that way before, on request for certain projects, but it isn't my preference.
 - At times, it might be appropriate to include non-SFX actions (beats, emotional information for the actors, unheard blocking that may not have a sound but will give the actor information) but avoid too much visual direction that is not directly linked to a sound effect.
- FOR THE DIALOGUE
 - For the most part, dialogue will look like any other script, but there are a few things to keep in mind.
 - Any unvoiced actor sounds - gasping, sighing, breathing, laughing - should be written as dialogue lines, not action lines, to ensure we capture it in recording. Use parentheticals under the character name for these actions.
 - For *performance* parentheticals (bitterly, warmly, etc.), I will sometimes use visual/physical indicators, such as "rolls eyes", "with a shrug", "with a smile". If you're working with a corporate partner, they may push back on this because 'how will we see it', but this is purely for the actor. If an

actor rolls their eyes or shrugs while recording, that's going to inform the way they read that line, and I find it more natural than saying "sarcastically" or "unsure". Also, you absolutely can hear when someone is smiling.

- Utilize O.S. in the character name to refer to any character that will have their voice affected in post - whether they are on the phone, in a diegetic recording in the show, calling out from a different room, trapped in a magical book, etc.
- Utilize V.O. in the character name for any lines that are "outside" the world of the show - narration, internal monologue, prelap, etc.

LENGTH

Another hot topic in audio drama. My contracts will often stipulate that my scripts should yield episodes 25-30 minutes in length and this could mean...literally anything when it comes to script length. A general rule of thumb I've discovered: two person scenes read slower than scenes with lots of people. This may have to do with my particular writing and directing styles, but a 5-page scene with four people is probably going to be quickly paced with some overlapping and interrupting. It will probably end up being somewhere between 2 and 3 minutes. A two person scene, especially if it's a more emotional scene, might be 8 pages in the script and 12 minutes in the final audio. Three pages of detailed audio descriptions for a montage or fight sequence might end up being a 25-second moment. You just won't have any idea until you start recording and discover the rhythm of your writing and/or directing.

If you don't have an episode length mandate, let your scripts be as long as they're going to be. Let the story guide you. Audio doesn't adhere to the same boundaries that TV does, though TV doesn't really do that either anymore. As an example— *The Last of Us* on HBO has episodes from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. The season is 9 episodes, a bit of an unusual order for TV (8 and 10 are more regular). It seems they let the story tell them the shape of their episodes and their season. And just look at the feed for *The Bright Sessions*—our episodes vary WILDLY in length. You have maximum freedom in audio. Use it.

STRUCTURE

As with format and length, audio also does not adhere to an established structure in the way that TV or film does. An episode doesn't have to be five acts or have a cold open, or any of those other things we've come to recognize in serialized storytelling. That's not to say it *shouldn't* have those things—I like cold opens, but I don't use them consistently. I rarely sit down to outline an episode in acts, but an act structure often reveals itself anyway. Find the skeleton that works for you and for your particular

show (it will change from show to show!). All that said, I do think there are a few fundamentals that are helpful to keep in mind for audio specifically:

- Keep your character count low to start. Without visual cues, the audience is going to take a second to learn whose voice belongs to who—you can certainly pepper in lots of voices in your first episode if those voices aren't important (side characters, extras, etc.) but I personally like to keep my Episode 1 scenes focused on 2-3 main characters, with small introductions of the other main characters. I try not to veer too far into ensemble scenes (which I consider 5 characters or more) until at least Episode 4.
- Don't be afraid to repeat information. Find interesting ways to do it—don't just lean into exposition for exposition's sake—but keep in mind that a good portion of your audience may be listening to your show while they drive, do the dishes, fold laundry, etc. If there's something important for the audience to know, find a way to state it clearly and/or a few times.
- This is a personal preference, but try not to lean on very small scenes. I think it can be quite difficult to settle your audience into a new location/new set of characters only to leave two pages later. There are exceptions to this obviously—a cold open, a suspenseful tag at the very end, cutting back and forth between two different scenes that are paralleling each other, etc. – but I prefer to keep my scripts simple and chunky as I ease the audience into a new show. Small character combos, scenes of 5 pages or more, only a handful of locations. The deeper into a show I get, the more I throw out these rules, but audio storytelling is still new for a lot of folks, so I don't like to throw too much at them at the start.
- As for season/overarching plot structure, I tend to think of my plotting as an exponential curve—things start slower and simpler than they end, with the snowball of plot and revelations gaining more and more momentum the further you get into the season. With that in mind, I usually like to throw a bottle episode somewhere around two-thirds of the way through a season to slow things down and give the audience time to catch their breath. I love a bottle episode—I'll put characters into a room and lock the door until they figure out their feelings any day of the week—but you can take this beat in a lot of ways. Maybe you do an episode from an entirely different character's POV, maybe you step away from the main plot—as with attention grabbing in your scenes (below), sometimes it's nice to create a little road bump in the momentum of your bullet train plot.
- Framing devices are great when they boost the story, not just function as a crutch. I relied on a framing device in *The Bright Sessions* because I knew I would be sound designing it myself and wanted to have an in-universe excuse for the audio quality being less than stellar. But the device also informed the story—why is this therapist recording her sessions without telling her patients? What are these notes she's leaving for herself about? Eventually, the framing

device started to stretch credulity, and I cast it off entirely eventually, but now I think very seriously about if a show would benefit from narration or voiceover or some other framing. Do *not* have narration for narration's sake. There are lots of great "podcast/radio show within a podcast" shows (Limetown, Welcome to Night Vale, The Black Tapes) who use their framing in interesting ways and other shows that have more traditional narration—Steal the Stars is a sci-fi noir that, I think, uses voiceover extremely effectively to both lean into and subvert the classic noir genre. As with writing in any medium, the best homework you can give yourself is to consume a lot of different stories from that medium.

CHARACTER VOICE

Finding your writing voice and therefore the individual voices of your cast of characters is going to be your own personal journey, but there are a few things I've done through the years that have helped me start out.

- Get granular: for *The Bright Sessions*, I wrote out some fundamental rules for character speech patterns. Here is my shorthand from those early days (some of which I did not adhere to). You'll notice that some of these things are physical—as with "rolls eyes", physicality can be a helpful cheat code for me.
 - **Dr. Bright:** Does not ramble, does not mince words. Is always as clear and straight-forward as possible, though not always fully honest.
 - **Sam:** ALL THE FILLER WORDS. Common sentence structure: words words words words....word. Fidgets a lot while speaking, makes sporadic eye contact.
 - **Caleb:** Swears and sighs *a lot*. Looks at the floor when he talks unless he's making fun of Dr. Bright. Uses a lot of metaphors, often convoluted or found in the moment.
 - **Chloe:** A great intelligence buried under a lot of hippie nonsense. A visual talker. Uses her hands a lot.
 - **Damien:** Smarmy, like he got all his vocab from Ray Chandler novels. Uses pet names - no one likes it. Sarcastic little shit. The fewer words used, the better.
 - **Agent Green:** Doesn't actually uptalk but somehow still says everything like an up talker. "Wonderful" is his filler word. Always trying to appease someone, even when strong arming them. Probably the least intelligent of the lot but he has an optimism and hope that Dr. Bright found charming in her youth.
- Get goofy: find the fun exercises that help you connect with your characters! There's a character meme that goes around Tumblr periodically that I did for my Maxine Miles characters—this is both a silly, fun thing and also a practical guide for what vocab characters use.

- **Regularly says fuck:** Ross, Jenna, Ransom
 - **Has sworn off saying fuck, but has said it at some point:** Riley, Mr. Beatty, Joe
 - **Has not said fuck before, but can if so desired:** Theo, Honeywell
 - **Has not said fuck before, and refuses to say it:** Mayor Hal
 - **Legally cannot say fuck:** Maxine
- Write toward your actor. Once you've got someone in a role, you can start to adapt their character to the way they naturally speak—you're not turning the character *into* them, but you're helping them merge. When our lead came aboard Passenger List, she and I sat down and went through all the scenes to make sure the character would sound natural coming out of her mouth—turns out, I personally say “what on earth” a lot in my real life, and that didn't feel natural to Kelly at all, so away it went. With Misha Collins in Bridgewater, he added so many curse words in our first season recording that when I was writing the second season, I had the delightful freedom of making Jeremy swear a lot more. Those are two straightforward examples, but with actors I've worked with longer (like those in The Bright Sessions) it can be a much more subtle and ever-changing process. Lean into it.
 - This is a bit more macro but, on the subject of attention, I personally love long runs of uninterrupted dialogue (if you've ever listened to The Bright Sessions, you know this already). I truly believe that you don't need some bonkers SFX or big twist to happen on every other page to keep the audience engaged. That said, your listener's mind may wander, so you want to find ways to draw them back in. When I have the luxury, scoring is *perfect* for this, but I try to build little road bumps into my scenes when I'm scripting. That might be a piece of sound design, or it might be a beat of silence (also don't be afraid of silence!). Maybe it's a character laughing in a moment you don't expect, or two characters shouting at each other and then abruptly going quiet (once again, silence is your friend!). Maybe a new character enters the scene, or maybe a character starts speaking in a different language. Thinking of these things as road bumps is helpful for me—they're little moments in the course of your scene that are going to feel different than the smooth road, therefore calling your listener's full attention back. It is, of course, entirely scene dependent, but find ways to interrupt the flow of the scene just a little every few pages.

WRITING FOR SOUND DESIGN

As I have mentioned, I am not a professional sound designer nor do I have a lot of sound expertise. But I do have a lot of experience of working with sound designers and am constantly refining the best way to communicate ideas. I also direct nearly all of my work, so a lot of the 'writing toward sound design' thoughts I have are deeply

entwined with that. The [Production Handbook](#) has some information along those lines, so there might be some repeats here.

- When you're starting out, consider your resources—are you sound designing? Do you have an incredibly accomplished sound designer working with you? Are you able to record your own foley if need be? All of these things should inform what kind of sfx you write. A few things to keep in mind around that.
 - Environments can be reused. If your show only has two locations, that's only two atmospheres that have to be designed!
 - Most everyday sounds - phone rings, door knocks, keys jangling, etc. - can be found for free online (quality not necessarily guaranteed). If you've got something in mind that is unique or at all specific (for instance, the sound of someone time traveling, or a character building a pillow fort) have a plan for that before you commit to writing it in. Do you have a sound designer who is confident in making those sounds? Can you find or make the sound yourself?
 - If the sound design isn't being done by a pro, do yourself a favor and keep your characters stationary as much as possible. Footsteps are deceptively difficult and I've found they'll snap people right out of the story if they're not done well, because they can sound especially forced compared to other bits of sound design. If you *do* want characters moving around, consider whether you're going to be able to record them that way. Blocking is *much* easier to capture live than to recreate in post—even if you aren't fully blocking your recording, having an actor lie down when a character is lying down, pumping their arms when the character is running, etc. Keep all of that in mind as you write blocking in your scenes and you *should* write some basic blocking, at the very least so the actors can imagine what they would be doing if they were acting out the whole thing. What the blocking ends up being in the final draft before going to a sound designer is a conversation to have with both your designer and your director (more on that in the [Production Handbook](#)).
 - Also avoid too much kissing and too much eating. A lot of listeners find these things very irritating to listen to—I personally don't (I love romance! Let them kiss!) so I'm not saying don't do it at all. Just don't go overboard.
- The sounds we hear in real life and the sounds that are going to be helpful to an audience might be different. This is something to work out with your sound designer, but it's still important to have it in your mind as you write—the way your listener understands something might not happen in the way you first expect. We all know what it feels like to watch a character put their back against a wall and slide down it to sit on the ground, but that doesn't really have a strong *sound* (and yet I keep writing it! Bad!). Instead, you're going to

want to rely on your actor's performance as well as a small collection of sounds—what kind of shoes are they wearing and what material is the floor? Will their shoes squeak as they kick them out in front of them? Is the character sighing in defeat or crumpling to the ground with a sob? Every action we take has a multitude of sounds that come with it—including the sounds we make with our voices and bodies—and thinking through each of those sounds and how it's going to translate to the audience will make a difference. It isn't necessarily your job to decide what kind of shoes the character is wearing, but you should think about if you want them sitting on the ground or flopping down on a leather couch (now *that* would have a sound!).

- If you're really new to the medium, don't overcomplicate things—I realize that of course *I'm* the person who would say this, but it really is okay to have two people in a room talking to each other! Focus on the craft of dialogue first and foremost. This might be a controversial take, but you could have the most interesting and intricate story ever created with the most incredible sound design and it won't matter at all if you fumble the dialogue. Writing about the craft of writing is not my expertise or strength (as I said, there are so many great books out there!), so I can't tell you how to best find your dialogue voice, but I will encourage you to dedicate your time and energy to finding it yourself. If film is a director's medium and TV is a writer's medium, audio is an actor's medium—sound design and scoring and great plot are all vitally important, but they're only as strong as the acting performances let them be. Naturally flowing, engaging dialogue is the first step to getting great performances from your actors and an episode of engaging dialogue will cover all manner of sins when it comes to sound design. You don't need flashy action sequences or wild sound effects, you just need a good story told well (though the flashy and wild sfx *are* a great deal of fun).

EDITING

You did it! You wrote a script. The hardest part (in my opinion) is over. In general, I think it's always a great idea to just sit down and bang out a draft, no matter how sloppy it is—you can't edit a blank page, etc. As you edit, there are a few things I find helpful:

- Read your script out loud! It's always awesome if you can get some friends together for a table read, but there's nothing wrong with sitting at your computer talking to yourself, trying on different voices. It helps to hear the dialogue flow out loud, to make sure that your character voices aren't too similar to one another, and to get a sense of length. Recording or timing yourself earnestly acting the whole show out can be a good way to get a *very* rough idea of your script page to episode length conversion.

- Keep an eye on consistency in your formatting—make sure you’re using the same character names throughout, not a character’s full name and then just their first name in the next scene. Ensuring dialogue tags are consistent will help you when you’re breaking down the script for recording.
- Take notes on important pieces of information and your in-universe timeline. As I discussed above, for certain shows, having an “information gained” list for each episode is a useful tracking tool. If you read through your episode and those pieces don’t immediately jump out for you to take easy notes on, you might need to rethink how you’re presenting that info.
- Once you’ve read through your script once with all the characters, do a voice pass for each individual character. I do this by reading one character’s lines out loud and the rest in my head. This helps me check voice consistency as well as the amount a character is talking.
- Kill your darlings but know where you buried their bodies. Sometimes you’ll read through a script out loud and realize that there’s a whole scene that just doesn’t fit. But you like it! Great—delete it and put it in a separate final draft document, labeling it with the episode it came from. Who knows, you may end up using pieces of it down the line or, if you want, sharing it with your listeners as bonus content. I have dozens of documents labeled “random scenes”, “extras”, “snippets”, etc. (gosh, I should really come up with a labeling system, huh?) and when I do end up taking chunks of those scenes and throwing them back in, I bold those sections in the snippet doc so I know which of those castaways made it back into the final product. This is an especially helpful practice when you’re playing in someone else’s universe, as sometimes you write something that works on a fundamental story level, but doesn’t click in with a larger vision (I’ve got 25 pages of Stranger Things snippets (a lot of which were eventually used) and 80 pages of Marvel snippets, many of which ended up being walla that we recorded for sound design. Never completely delete anything).

And that is my personal writing philosophy in a nutshell! Start slow and small and build up your own process as you go. Welcome to the wonderful world of audio!