

# Phone Calls in Screenplays: Template & Checklist

# CELTX

. Use the templates as starting points and the checklist as a final pass before sharing your script with readers or collaborators.

## Phone Call Templates

### ONE-SIDED PHONE CALL (DIALOGUE ONLY)

Use when the audience only needs to hear one side of the conversation. The unheard voice is inferred through reaction and subtext.

INT. LOCATION - TIME

Character holds a phone.

CHARACTER

Dialogue line responding to unheard speaker.

(beat, listening)

Reaction or escalation.

### INTERCUT PHONE CALL

Use when we actively move between locations and both characters are equally important to the scene.

INT. LOCATION A - TIME

INT. LOCATION B - TIME

INTERCUT CHARACTER A / CHARACTER B

CHARACTER A

Line of dialogue.

CHARACTER B

Line of dialogue.

### PHONE CALL USING VOICEOVER (V.O.)

Use when hearing the person on the other end without cutting away from the main location.

INT. LOCATION - TIME

Action.

CHARACTER

Speaks into phone.

OTHER CHARACTER (V.O.)

Voice heard through device.

# Phone Call Writing Checklist

- Is it clear who initiates and controls the call?
- Do we need to hear both sides of the conversation?
- Does the formatting stay consistent throughout the call?
- Are locations only shown when they add story value?
- Is the emotional point of view anchored to the correct character?
- Does the call advance plot, character, or tension?
- Could the scene be clearer with fewer formatting elements?
- Does the scene rely on reaction more than information when appropriate?

*Reminder: The cleanest phone calls are often the least noticeable. If a reader never questions how the call works, you've formatted it correctly.*