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## The Brass Tacks: Practical Tools of Writing for the Theatre

### The “How To” of a Writer’s Life

This chapter covers a lot of practical “how-to” information on writing for the theatre. Some points are geared specifically to playwrights, some to critical writing, while others are geared toward anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of writing for the theatre. Here are some of the questions that will be answered in this chapter:

- Where can I find plays to watch online?
- Where can I read reviews of Broadway, West End, or regional theatre productions?
- How do I write a synopsis or a logline?
- How do I submit my plays to contests and theatre festivals?
- What is unique about a writer’s resume?
- How do I present a staged reading of my play?
- What is a map of relationships and why do I need one?
- Why is it important to acknowledge an opening night?

You can jump around and pick and choose which topics best serve you. These are the practical nuts and bolts of writing for the theatre.

## **Read, See, and Hear**

As stated by so many of the playwrights in the interview section, the best way of learning about writing for the theatre is to simply sit down and write. Also, read as many plays as possible and watch them whenever you can. Any library or large bookshop will have a collection of plays. Many scripts are also available online. Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>) has a number of famous, classical plays (including many by Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Ibsen) filed under Drama (in Book Search, under Subjects). FindaPlay through Playscripts (<http://www.playscripts.com/findaplay/>) has a large selection of plays geared toward students. You have to pay for complete scripts, but free samples are available. There are many online outlets, including services like Scribd (<http://www.scribd.com>) where you pay a nominal monthly fee to access libraries of hundreds of plays. If you are a student, you can often connect to an online school library catalogue with a vast number of plays for free. If you spend a lot of time commuting, you can subscribe to services like Audible (<http://www.audible.com>) where you can listen to plays performed by award-winning actors. To view plays online, in addition to YouTube, there are sites like London's National Theatre at Home (<http://www.ntathome.com>) and Broadway HD (<http://www.broadwayhd.com>) to name a few. A quick internet search will bring up others. Better still, theatres are always looking for free labor. Many venues use volunteer ushers to hand out programs or seat patrons. In exchange, you get to see the play for free. This is

especially true with smaller theatres at the local or community level. Call the box office and ask if they have such a policy.

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