



SCREENWRITING RATES (2019 – 2021)

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TELEVISION

Rates vary along a sliding scale, with lowest rates for candidate members and beginners, average rates for working practitioners and highest rates for highly experienced professionals. These are the recommended WGSA rates for 2019, which are expected to escalate in accordance with inflation (4.9% in 2018) on a yearly basis.

Creation, Proposal, and Pitches

Creating a Story Idea or Concept

The creator is someone who has long been ignored in our industry, and who now must be recognised, not only in credits, but also in payment. The creator, the person who comes up with the original idea, the main characters and the beginning and end of the story, holds the creator IP of the work which is developed from this idea.

The IP can never be transferred to another person or company, but the rights to develop the idea can be bought from the creator, which is done through a contractual transfer of chain of title. The fees the creator can charge are not set in stone but are highly negotiable – especially if there is a bidding war.

It must be noted that promises of using the creator as head writer or even one of the writers on the project is not acceptable. Either the idea is bought from the creator, or the creator is the one who holds chain of title and the intellectual property, making the creator the only person who can legally sell the idea to a broadcaster.

Creating & Writing Pitch Proposal

This is the second development phase once the concept has been bought and chain of title is transferred. During this phase, the characters, world, and story arcs are developed, which are then used to pitch the work to a producer or broadcaster. This is a document not longer than 10 pages.

	LESS THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 100 EPISODES
Series or Serial (50% upfront)	R 8,000.00 – R 15,000.00	R 12,000.00 – R 20,000.00	R 15,000.00 – R 25,000.00

Writing the Series Bible for Development

This is the full writers' bible, which is a detailed document with research and full character sketches and backstories, which encompasses the whole series.

Length of this work varies between 30 to 60 pages. This can be contracted separately or may be included in the deliverables of the Head Writer.

	LESS THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 100 EPISODES
Series or Serial (50% upfront)	R 15,000.00 – R 25,000.00	R 20,000.00 – R 35,000.00	R 30,000.00 – R 55,000.00

Pitch Attendance

Pitch attendance is often included in the Proposal price, but there are instances where writers charge separately.

Including transport costs (50% upfront) per meeting	R 850.00 – R 1,500.00
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Writing the Sales Bible

The Sales Bible is done once development is concluded. It is a shortened version of the writers' bible and is adapted to entice buyers to buy the completed product. Again, this can be contracted separately or may be included in the deliverables of the Head Writer. If the Sales Bible is commissioned before the Series Bible, Series Bible rates apply.

	LESS THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 26 EPISODES	MORE THAN 100 EPISODES
Series or Serial (50% upfront)	R 8,000.00 – R 15,000.00	R 10,000.00 – R 18,000.00	R 15,000.00 – R 22,000.00

Minimum Script Commissioning Fees

There is a difference in payment rates for drama series/serials (aka short form series) and long running serials like soaps and telenovelas (aka long form series).

Long form series are usually paid at a lower rate as they encompass many episodes per writer, and step treatments are supplied by the story liners. In fact, the writer on a long form series is usually called a dialogue writer, because the story is already worked out for him.

Rates on short form series (26 episodes or less) are higher as writers are expected to work directly from a synopsis and must create their own treatment/step treatment. It also must be noted here that short form series presently qualify for repeat fees from SABC, which must form part of the writer's contract.

Payment for TV Features as well as long and short form series is done in phases, which need to be agreed upon by producer and writer and form part of the delivery and payment schedule of the contract.

A minimum of 20% of contract price should be paid as an advance before screenwriting begins on a telenovela.

Promo Voice Over

Writing per minute	R 800.00
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Television Script Rates

Head Writer (per Month)

Including ongoing bible, treatments, and script editing	R 90,000.00 – R 120,000.00
Excluding bible and script editing, but inclusive of episode treatments	R 60,000.00 – R 80,000.00

Script Editor Rates

Including a maximum of one (1) rewrite per episode per month	R 40,000.00 – R 50,000.00
Excluding rewrites per 30-minute episode	R 2,000.00
Including rewrites per 30-minute episode	R 5,000.00
Excluding rewrites per 60-minute episode	R 4,000.00
Including rewrites per 60-minute episode	R 10,000.00

Rates (per Episode)

	PER 30-MIN EPISODE	PER 60-MIN EPISODE	PER 90-MIN EPISODE
TV Features			R 60,000.00 – R 100,000.00
Educational Drama	R 8,000.00 – R 12,000.00	R 12,000.00 – R 22,000.00	R 60,000.00 – R 100,000.00
Dramatizations	R 6,000.00 – R 10,000.00	R 10,000.00 – R 20,000.00	R 50,000.00 – R 80,000.00
Adaptations	R 6,000.00 – R 10,000.00	R 10,000.00 – R 20,000.00	R 50,000.00 – R 80,000.00
Reversioning	R 4,000.00 – R 8,000.00	R 7,000.00 – R 15,000.00	R 25,000.00 – R 40,000.00

WGSA Screenwriting Rates 2019 - 2021

	PER 30-MIN EPISODE	PER 60-MIN EPISODE
Short Form Series or Serials (incl. drama and youth drama)	R 8,000.00 – R 12,000.00	R 12,000.00 – R 22,000.00
International Market TV Series (three drafts)	R 12,000.00 – R 15,000.00	R 18,000.00 – R 25,000.00

Workshop Attendance

Conducting per day	R 5,000.00
Attending per day	R 2,000.00 – R 3,500.00

Long Running Series / Soaps / Telenovelas

Rates (per Role)

Head Writer per month	R 60,000.00 – R 90,000.00
Storyliner (per full half-hour episode rotating A, B, C storylines among storyliners)	R 5,000.00 – R 7,000.00
Breakdowner / Treatment Compiler per episode	R 3,000.00 – R 5,000.00
Story Editor per episode	R 1,900.00 – R 2,500.00
(incl. rewrites) per episode	R 3,500.00
(incl. one rewrite per episode) per month	R 40,000.00 – R 55,000.00
Script Continuity per month	R 20,000.00 – R 27,500.00
Script/Dialogue Writer (half-hour episode)	R 8,000.00 – R 10,000.00
Researcher daily	R 2,000.00 – R 4,000.00
weekly	R 10,000.00 – R 20,000.00
Script Co-ordinator per month	R 10,000.00 – R 14,000.00

Workshop/Brainstorms Attendance

Conducting per day	R 5,000.00
Attending per day	R 1,500.00 – R 3,500.00

Situational Comedy/Dramedy

Rates (per Episode)

	PER 30-MIN EPISODE	PER 60-MIN EPISODE
Head Writer (incl. of treatments)	R 60,000.00	R 90,000.00
Story Editor	R 1,900.00 – R 2,500.00	R 2,500.00 – R 5,000.00
Script Editor	R 1,900.00 – R 2,500.00	R 2,500.00 – R 5,000.00
Writer	R 8,000.00 – R 10,000.00	R 12,000.00 – R 22,000.00

Gag & Sketch Writing

Gag Writing per original material gag	R 50.00
Sketch Writing per 5-8 minutes sketch	R 1,600.00

Documentaries

Researcher

Per day	R 1,000.00 – R 2,500.00
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Rates (per 60-minutes Episode)

Synopsis	R 5,000.00 – R 20,000.00
Treatment	R 5,000.00 – R 20,000.00
Voice Over Narration (scripted to picture)	R 10,000.00 – R 15,000.00
Research (top end international)	R 80,000.00 – R 100,000.00
Treatment (top end international)	R 100,000.00 – R 150,000.00

WGSA Screenwriting Rates 2019 - 2021

Animation

Dramatic screenplays for animation are calculated at the same rate as short form television series. As animation screenplays are often shorter, a per minute rate may apply.

Per 30-minute episode per minute	R 300.00 – R 500.00
Per 60-minute episode per minute	R 250.00 – R 460.00

Children's Programmes

Youth/Children Scripts

Drama and Comedy Series Average (per minute)	R 300.00 – R 500.00
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Pre School Scripts

Dialogue (with storyline & format provided by producer or 3 rd party) per minute	R 100.00 – R 120.00
Writer (originator of the storyline, format, and characters) per minute	R 130.00 – R 150.00

Song Lyrics

Per song	R 80.00 – R 100.00
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Original Cartoons

Per minute	R 280.00 – R 300.00
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Workshop Attendance Fee

Per day	R 800.00
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Entertainment Scripts

Entertainment scripts vary in scripting needs and production fees available. A good guideline is that the script fee equals 10% of the cost per minute of the production.

Rates (per Minute)

Talk Shows (including Research)	R 175.00 – R 300.00
Variety, Magazine, Game Shows & Music Programmes	R 150.00 – R 200.00
Religious Programmes	R 180.00 – R 250.00
Specialty Shows (for hearing or visually impaired audiences)	R 220.00 – R 280.00

Educational Programmes

Costs for scripting Educational Programming varies by genre, with dramatic works costed at the same rate as short form drama productions. Variety, magazine, talk, and specialty shows are costed as per Entertainment scripts.

Translations

	PER 30-MIN EPISODE	PER 60-MIN EPISODE
Dialogue English/Afrikaans	R 1,200.00 – R 1,500.00	R 2,400.00 – R 3,000.00
Dialogue English/Ethnic Languages	R 1,400.00 – R 1,800.00	R 2,800.00 – R 3,600.00
Voice-over Narration English/Afrikaans	R 1,500.00 – R 1,800.00	R 3,000.00 – R 3,600.00
Voice-over Narration English/Ethnic Languages	R 1,700.00 – R 2,000.00	R 3,400.00 – R 4,000.00

Writing Subtitles

	PER 30-MIN EPISODE	PER 60-MIN EPISODE	PER 90-MIN EPISODE
English / Afrikaans / Indigenous Languages	R 500.00 – R 650.00	R 1,000.00 – R 1,300.00	R 1,500.00 – R 2,000.00

NEW MEDIA

New Media series can be short films specifically produced for the web and mobile devices like cell phones. Most are quite short – between 3 to 10 minutes – and here development costs are calculated on a per minute rate.

Streaming services also commission projects ranging from drama to documentary to actuality, which range from 30 to 90 minutes. Scripting fees for streaming services are on par with television rates.

Dramatic Web Series (of overall production budget) per minute	10%
Web Blog per word	R 0.40 – R 0.55
Web Page Administrator per hour	R 300.00 – R 400.00

CORPORATE / AV SCRIPTS

Cost per minute (15 minutes or less)

Corporate/Company AV (with research supplied)	R 400.00 – R 500.00
Corporate AV (with writer doing research)	R 500.00 – R 650.00
Specialty AV (requires project expertise)	R 1,500.00 - R 2,000.00
Educational AV	R 1,000.00 - R 1,500.00

FILMS

Payment Schedule/Instalments

30%	Advance Payment on Signature of Contract
20%	Delivery of Original Treatment
30%	Delivery of First Draft Screenplay
20%	Delivery of Final Draft Screenplay

Roles

Script Editor	R 60,000.00 – R 70,000.00
Script Polishes (maximum 4 rewrites)	R 50,000.00 – R 150,000.00
Story Supervisor (concept to treatment)	R 40,000.00 – R 50,000.00
Story Supervisor (during script polish)	R 20,000.00 – R 30,000.00

Screenplays

Original Screenplay (including Treatment) between R 1,2 million – R 8 million	R 200,000.00 – R 300,000.00 (or 3% of overall budget)
Top End Screenplay (including Treatment) over R 8 million	R 350,000.00 – R 500,000.00 (or 2.5% of overall budget)
Low Budget Screenplay (including Treatment) under R 1,2 million	R 60,000.00 – R 80,000.00 (or 6% of overall budget)
Mini Budget Screenplay (including Treatment) R 200,000.00 – R 500,000.00	R 16,000.00 – R 40,000.00 (or 8% of overall budget)
Micro Budget Screenplay (including Treatment) under R 200,000.00	R 15,000.00 – R 20,000.00 (or 10% of overall budget)
Non-Original Screenplay/Adaptations (including Treatment)	R 180,000.00 - R 220,000.00

Rewrites

Script Rewrite (major)	Charge as per original screenplay less the percentage of the original which is kept
Script Rewrite (minor)	Charge pro-rata based on the percentage of new work that will be done on the original.

WGSA Screenwriting Rates 2019 - 2021

Other

Additional Compensation (story or concept of screenplay i.e. creator IP)	Negotiable. Usually 8-12% of Development Budget
Principal Photography Payment	3-5% of Production Budget
Exploitation	Contractually agreed upon. Usually 1.2% of gross or 0.3% of net profit.

PLEASE NOTE

According to the South African Competition Act, the Writers Guild of South Africa is not allowed to prescribe rates. The above rates are, therefore, recommended guidelines.