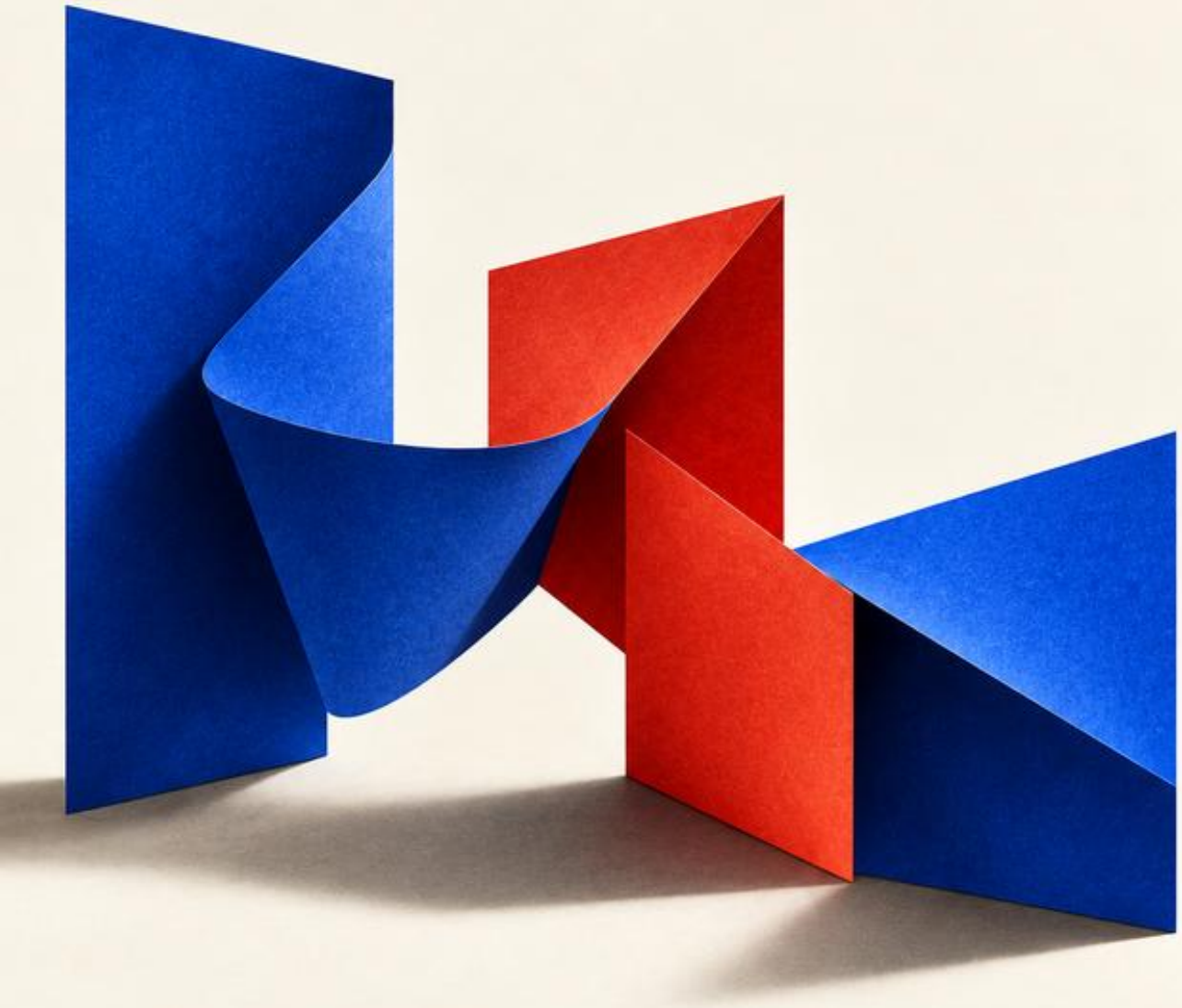
The 60 Second Film clinic.



01 / FIELD GUIDE

Give the minute one job

A minute becomes crowded long before it becomes interesting. A launch message, a founder story, a product demonstration and an emotional ending can each be worthwhile. Putting all four into sixty seconds usually means the audience meets several beginnings and no satisfying change. Start by choosing the change this particular film must make understandable.

Write three sentences before any dialogue. Someone wants something. A visible obstacle interrupts them. An action changes the situation. This is a working prompt, not a rule that every film needs a conventional plot. A demonstration may replace a character with a material under stress. A portrait may turn on a decision rather than a surprise.

Our invented teaching case is Loop Repair, a neighbourhood clothing-repair workshop. Assume the workshop really assesses damaged zips and quotes before work begins. The communication job is to make an old jacket worth bringing in for assessment. The film must not promise that every jacket can be repaired, that repair is instant, or that a repair always costs less than replacement.

> START HERE
>
> A familiar jacket nearly leaves its owner; a repaired zip brings it back into use.

That sentence gives the minute a centre. Keep the history of the business, an environmental manifesto and a price comparison out of this version. They can be useful elsewhere if the brief calls for them.

02 / FIELD GUIDE

Write actions a camera can record

Replace emotional instructions with behaviour. "She remembers everything" gives a director no event to stage. "She reaches into the pocket and finds the cinema ticket she has been looking for" gives the performer something to do. An object can carry history without requiring a flashback, but the detail must belong to this character rather than a collection of sentimental props.

Give each shot a reason for its distance. A wider view explains where the jacket is going. A medium view holds the owner and her hesitation together. A close view makes the stuck zip legible. None of these sizes automatically creates an emotion. Their meaning comes from the action, what surrounds it and the order in which information arrives.

Separate the sound track from the picture on the page. The scrape of a failing zip supplies useful information. A line that says "My zip is broken" merely repeats it. Music may support the rhythm, but it should not be the only reason the scene feels human. Ask what the audience can understand with sound off and what a listener can understand without the picture.

> CRAFT CHECK
>
> A camera move earns its place when it reveals information, follows an important action or changes our relationship to it.

A locked frame is a complete choice. So is a cut. Specify the needed effect before prescribing equipment the production may not need.

03 / FIELD GUIDE

Budget attention before production

Divide sixty seconds into purposeful stretches, then rehearse them. For this example, the first ten seconds establish the failed zip. The next twenty make the owner hesitate and seek help. Ten seconds show assessment, ten establish a later return, and ten deliver the use and the invitation. These divisions are planning estimates, not a scientifically optimal attention curve.

Read dialogue aloud at the intended performance speed. Act out handling the jacket, crossing a counter and finding a ticket. These actions take time even when a script contains few words. Leave room for the owner to notice something before cutting away. An uninterrupted sixty-second voice-over with pictures behind it is a different format; do not pretend it leaves generous space for performance.

01 Mark the exact moment the audience learns the problem.

02 Mark the moment the brand does something relevant.

03 Mark the visible change and the information needed to act.

04 Remove a beat whose absence changes none of those things.

Then build a rough timed sequence with sketches, temporary recorded dialogue and plain cards. If it runs long, first remove a competing thought. Speeding up every shot preserves the clutter while making it harder to read. If an essential condition needs a readable sentence, reserve time for it now rather than squeezing it onto the last frame.

Keep an alternate ending ready if the service cannot support the planned invitation. Operational facts can change the final scene.

04 / FIELD GUIDE

The script: the first thirty seconds

Invented teaching script: "The pocket." Interior hallway and repair counter. One customer and one repairer. The following six consecutive ranges total sixty seconds across this page and the next. Spoken dialogue is in quotation marks. All other words describe picture, sound or on-screen copy; they are not voice-over.

00:00-00:10 / The interruption

Medium shot. The customer puts on a faded green jacket and pulls the zip. It stops halfway. Close shot: a second gentle attempt fails. Sound is the small mechanical scrape, then room tone. She takes the jacket off and folds it over a bag marked CLOTHES TO SORT. No music cue announces a tragedy.

00:10-00:20 / The reason to keep it

Her hand checks a pocket before letting go. She finds a creased cinema ticket, smiles briefly, and returns it to the same pocket. She lifts the jacket off the bag. The picture holds long enough for the change of decision to register. Sound: paper unfolding, then the click of the hallway door.

00:20-00:30 / The request

Cut to a medium two-shot at a modest counter. A small Loop Repair sign is visible. She places the jacket down. CUSTOMER: "Can you look at this?" The repairer checks the stuck section rather than immediately declaring it fixable. REPAIRER: "Let me see." Cloth moves against the counter.

05 / FIELD GUIDE

The script: return it to life

00:30-00:40 / The assessment

Close shot of the repairer inspecting the zip. Cut back to both people, keeping the actual proposed repair understandable. REPAIRER: "I can replace the zip. I will quote it first." The customer nods. A job ticket is attached to the jacket. Do not show a quotation number or a repair claim that the real service has not approved.

00:40-00:50 / Later

A plain LATER caption appears over the counter. The customer receives the jacket. She tries the new zip in one continuous action; it closes. The useful sound is the zip travelling smoothly. Her hand checks that the old ticket is still in its pocket. The repairer has preserved the object rather than transformed it into an unfamiliar new costume.

00:50-01:00 / The invitation

She leaves wearing the jacket. Hold the last six seconds on a clear end card: "Still yours. Ready for more." Below: "Loop Repair. Bring your jacket for an assessment. Quote before repair." A short original musical phrase can enter here, under the natural sound. No unrelated final joke competes with the invitation.

The repair action is deliberately separated from the later collection. A compressed edit must not imply a ten-second repair service. In production, confirm the repair method with the practitioner and adjust the line if the garment cannot support it. A believable small detail is worth more than an impressive false demonstration.

06 / FIELD GUIDE

Exercise: repair the wrong extra scene

An invented client revision arrives: "Add our founder, the workshop exterior, three more repairs and the message that we save the planet. Keep it sixty seconds." Spend ten minutes identifying which request serves the film and which introduces another claim or story. Write a response that protects the idea without treating every request as interference.

Model response

"The assessment is the service we need people to remember. We can show the actual workshop frontage for two seconds as the customer arrives, replacing part of the doorway transition. The founder could play the repairer if they perform the job naturally. Three additional repairs would displace the jacket story, so I would reserve them for a separate service explainer. We cannot substantiate a planet-saving promise from this one repair; the visible outcome is a jacket used again."

This answer accepts a useful location cue and considers a practical casting request. It rejects additions by naming what they displace, rather than by claiming that a creative idea is untouchable. It also keeps a broad environmental claim from arriving through an emotional ending.

Now test your revised opening with someone who has not read the rationale. Ask what the customer nearly did and why she changed her mind. If they miss the pocket detail, adjust framing or duration before adding explanatory dialogue. This is a comprehension check with one person, not evidence of campaign effectiveness.

07 / FIELD GUIDE

One minute, ready to rehearse

Complete this sheet before asking for a shooting estimate. Use actions rather than mood words. Put uncertainty beside the relevant beat so the producer can distinguish a creative choice from an unresolved dependency. Read the finished version against a timer, including pauses and end-card reading time.

Who or what changes, and what observable action makes that change clear?

What must the brand actually provide or demonstrate?

Allocate all sixty seconds: opening / complication / action / change / invitation.

Write the indispensable sounds, dialogue and on-screen words.

Which fact, location, performance or product behaviour still needs checking?

If ten seconds must go, which thought or beat will you remove first?

08 / FIELD GUIDE

Hand over a film, not a mood

A useful handoff contains the timed script, the central change, the claims awaiting confirmation, a rough board and the intended viewing context. Say whether sound is likely to be on, whether the frame must also work vertically, and which details must remain visible after cropping. Do not leave a crucial ticket or product mark at the edge of a format that will later be cut down.

Ask the producer and director which assumptions threaten the idea. The assessment scene depends on handling and performance. It deserves rehearsal and usable sound. A complex move through the workshop does not. Listen when the sound team identifies a problem location; planning to repair unusable dialogue later spends both money and attention that could improve the film.

+ Can the problem, brand action and change be followed without the explanatory deck?
+ Does the end card remain legible at its real size and duration?
+ Is the demonstrated service faithful to what a customer can actually receive?
+ Have captions or an accessible equivalent been planned for essential spoken information?

The method is most useful when a short film must communicate one clear action. It is less suitable for a deliberately open-ended artwork or a complex procedural tutorial. Do not force a sixty-second drama onto a task that needs an instruction sheet. Your next step is a timed rough, then a specific revision, not a declaration that the script is finished because its timecodes add up.

READING / PRACTICE / CONTEXT

Where the thinking starts

The methods, teaching scenarios, exercises and worksheets here are original synthesis. The books below inform particular decisions; their authors do not endorse this guide. Page references locate the supplied PDF editions and may differ from printed page numbers.

Roberta Marie Munroe / How Not to Make a Short Film

PDF pp. 45-50

Distinguishes story from structure and argues for economy appropriate to short form. Festival programming advice is not treated as a sixty-second advertising formula.

Camille Landau and Tiare White / What They Don't Teach You at Film School

PDF pp. 231-233

Production sound and location preparation informed the handoff. Historical equipment advice is not repeated as current practice.

Author not credited in the supplied deck / Camera Work (supplied as Camera Movement PDF)

PDF pp. 12-18

Visually inspected full, medium and close framing examples. Used only for shot vocabulary; no universal emotional effect is inferred.

Make the tools your own

Read the worked example, try the exercise before its model response, then use the worksheet on a real assignment. Print the worksheet at 100% or annotate a copy digitally. Check your actual product facts, audience context and production conditions before applying the advice.

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