A short is a tiny story

1. Follow one character your viewer can root for.
2. Give that character one problem to face.
3. End with one change the viewer can see.

EXAMPLE

Bean, a cheerful coffee cup, keeps jumping the line at Omar's cart. By the end, Bean waits his turn — and holds the door for the next cup.

YOUR TURN

Write your story in one sentence: ___ wants ___, but ___, so ___.

Start with the ending

1. Decide your last picture before you build anything.
2. The ending is where the change shows.
3. Every earlier scene exists to earn that ending.

EXAMPLE

Omar's last picture: Bean beaming, holding up a little sign that says "Your turn!" as a new cup arrives.

YOUR TURN

Describe your final scene in one sentence, as if you were looking at it.

Break it into beats

1. A 30-second short needs about six scenes.
2. Each scene is one moment, in one place.
3. If a scene changes nothing, cut it.

EXAMPLE

Omar's six beats:
1) The morning line forms.
2) Bean hops to the front.
3) A drink splashes.
4) Omar explains turns.
5) Bean waits, counting cups.
6) Bean cheers for the next cup.

YOUR TURN

List your beats, one line each. Stop at six or seven.

Write lines people would say

1. Keep every line to one breath.
2. Read each line out loud before you keep it.
3. Let each character sound like themselves.

EXAMPLE

Omar: "Bean, around here, everybody gets a turn." Bean: "Even the last cup?" Omar: "Especially the last cup."

YOUR TURN

Write the three most important lines in your short.

Design your character once

1. Build your character from simple shapes.
2. Give them one signature color and one signature item.
3. Make one hero picture you love before you make any scenes.

EXAMPLE

Bean is a round white cup with a teal sleeve, a tiny orange scarf, and one curl of steam for hair. Omar can describe him in a single sentence.

YOUR TURN

Write your character's one-sentence description.

Make a character sheet

1. Save your character from the front and from the side.
2. Save three faces: happy, worried, and surprised.
3. Write a "never changes" list and keep it beside you.

EXAMPLE

Bean's never-changes list: white cup, teal sleeve, orange scarf, steam curl, two-dot eyes, no arms below the elbow line — five things, always.

YOUR TURN

Write your character's never-changes list. Five things.

Keep them the same in every scene

1. Start every new scene from your hero picture.
2. Use the same description words every single time.
3. When a picture drifts, remake it — do not settle.

EXAMPLE

One early scene gave Bean a blue sleeve. Omar checked it against the sheet, caught it, and remade only that scene.

YOUR TURN

Put your hero picture and never-changes list where you will see them while you work.

Plan every scene on paper

1. For each scene write: where, who, and what happens.
2. Add the line spoken in that scene.
3. Note the feeling the scene should carry.

EXAMPLE

Scene 3 — Morning, at the cart. Bean hops the line and a drink splashes. Line: "Hey — my turn!" Feeling: funny, then awkward.

YOUR TURN

Write your scene plan — one row for each beat from Slide 3.

Plan the voice and sound now

1. Decide who speaks: you, a helper, or a generated voice.

2. Choose your music's mood before you start building.

3. Check that your voice source allows the kind of video you are making.

EXAMPLE

Omar will speak his own lines, Bean gets one cheerful generated voice, and the music is gentle piano. Omar checked the voice tool's rules before he recorded a word.

YOUR TURN

Write your voice plan: who speaks each part, and where each voice comes from.

Your one-page plan

1. Gather it: story sentence, ending, and beats.
2. Add your character sheet and never-changes list.
3. Add your scene plan and voice plan — then stop and review.

EXAMPLE

Omar's whole plan fits on one page. Lesson 2 takes that page and turns it into moving scenes.

YOUR TURN

Lay your plan on one page and read it like a stranger. Fix the first thing that confuses you.