

ABOUT THE

WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA

# Low Budget Film Contracts



## WHAT ARE YOUR LOW BUDGET CONTRACTS?

The Writers Guild offers a Low Budget Agreement for narrative theatrical films and the Documentary Screenplay Contract for theatrical documentaries. These contracts are designed to meet the demands of the low budget film business as well as ensure rights and benefits for writers of films budgeted at \$1.2 million or below. Both Guild members and non-members may request these contracts.

## HOW DO THEY WORK?

Many low budget filmmakers need to stretch every dollar to get their films produced. These contracts allow writers to write and sell narrative and documentary screenplays under the protection of the Writers Guild while working within various low budget payment levels.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

By working under these contracts, writers receive minimum rates, credit and creative protections, and residuals, which are paid when their works are distributed on television, DVD and other media. When employment takes place, writers may be eligible to receive premium pension and health coverage. Also, first-time writers may use these contracts to join the Writers Guild - the world's largest organization of its kind.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the WGA West  
at (323) 782-4731  
or [indie@wga.org](mailto:indie@wga.org)  
or contact WGA East  
at (212) 767-7836 or  
[indie@wgaeast.org](mailto:indie@wgaeast.org)

Downloadable documents are available online at [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org) or [www.wgaeast.org](http://www.wgaeast.org).



## WGA LOW BUDGET AGREEMENT FOR THEATRICAL SCREENPLAYS

NARRATIVE			
	BUDGET BELOW \$200,000	BUDGET \$200,000 - BELOW \$500,000	BUDGET \$500,000 - \$1.2 MILLION
<b>EMPLOYMENT: WORK-FOR-HIRE (1ST &amp; 2ND DRAFTS; ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY)</b>	<b>CHOOSE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$11,674 (25% of minimum)</li> <li>No \$5,000 Script Publication Fee</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May defer up to \$46,695</li> <li>May defer \$5,000 Script Publication Fee</li> </ul>	<b>CHOOSE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$23,348 (50% of minimum)</li> <li>No \$5,000 Script Publication Fee</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May defer up to \$46,695</li> <li>May defer \$5,000 Script Publication Fee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard Minimum Basic Agreement terms: \$46,695</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee is payable after writing credit is determined.</li> </ul>
<b>SCREENPLAY "SPEC" SALE (ORIGINAL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choices above (same budget category)</li> <li>May also defer up to \$22,804 for the first rewrite (if a rewrite is performed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choices above (same budget category)</li> <li>May also defer up to \$22,804 for the first rewrite (if a rewrite is performed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 due upon commencement of principal photography. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee is payable after writing credit is determined.</li> <li>May also defer up to \$22,804 for the first rewrite (if a rewrite is performed).</li> </ul>

Deferred payments are paid "most favored nations" with the person who performs directing services, however, sums due are no less than those stated above.

Low budget minimums are \$46,695 for Original Screenplays and \$38,000 for Non-Original Screenplays. Calibrate accordingly if the project is Non-Original.

Work-for-Hire treatment and 1st and 2nd drafts are paid at 25% and 50% of \$69,499 for Original Screenplays (\$60,814 for Non-Original Screenplays) in the below \$500,000 categories and paid per standard MBA terms in the \$500,000 - \$1.2 million category.

## WGA DOCUMENTARY SCREENPLAY CONTRACT FOR THEATRICAL SCREENPLAYS

DOCUMENTARY			
	BUDGET BELOW \$500,000	BUDGET \$500,000 - BELOW \$750,000	BUDGET \$750,000 - \$1.2 MILLION
<b>EMPLOYMENT: WRITERS WHO ARE ALSO EMPLOYED AS PRODUCERS OR DIRECTORS (ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May defer up to \$46,695</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT: WRITERS WHO ARE <u>NOT</u> ALSO EMPLOYED AS PRODUCERS OR DIRECTORS (ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$5,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$41,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$15,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$31,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>
<b>SCREENPLAY "SPEC" SALE (ORIGINAL)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May defer up to \$46,695</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$10,000 paid to Writer within 10 days of signing the Contract. May defer up to \$36,695.</li> <li>\$5,000 Script Publication Fee may be waived by Writer</li> </ul>

Deferred payments are paid "most favored nations" with the person who performs directing services, however, sums due are no less than those stated above.

Low budget minimums are \$46,695 for Original Screenplays and \$38,000 for Non-Original Screenplays. Calibrate accordingly if the project is Non-Original.

**If the budget is over \$1.2 million, please call the WGAW's Contract Department at (323) 782-4501 or the WGAE's Signatories Department at (212) 767-7837 to learn how you can work under the WGA Minimum Basic Agreement. The guilds encourage writers and their representatives to negotiate overscale deals and to defer as little of the Writer's compensation as possible – these charts set forth the MINIMUM terms required to make your project under the WGA Low Budget Agreement or WGA Documentary Screenplay Contract.**