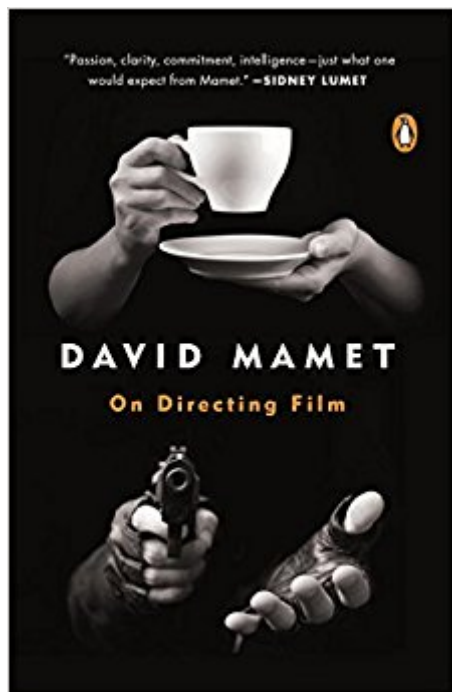


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# On Directing Film



## Synopsis

A masterclass on the art of directing from the Pulitzer Prize-winning (and Oscar and Tony-nominated) writer of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Speed the Plow*, *The Verdict*, and *Wag the Dog* calling on his unique perspective as playwright, screenwriter, and director of his own critically acclaimed movies like *House of Games*, *State and Main*, and *Things Change*, David Mamet illuminates how a film comes to be. He looks at every aspect of directing "from script to cutting room" to show the many tasks directors undertake in reaching their prime objective: presenting a story that will be understood by the audience and has the power to be both surprising and inevitable at the same time. Based on a series of classes Mamet taught at Columbia University's film school, *On Directing Film* will be indispensable not only to students but to anyone interested in an overview of the craft of filmmaking. "Passion, clarity, commitment, intelligence" just what one would expect from Mamet. "Sidney Lumet, Academy Award-nominated director of *12 Angry Men*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Network*, and *The Verdict*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

According to David Mamet, a film director must, above all things, think visually. Most of this instructive and funny book is written in dialogue form and based on film classes Mamet taught at Columbia University. He encourages his students to tell their stories not with words, but through the juxtaposition of uninflected images. The best films, Mamet argues, are composed of simple shots. The great filmmaker understands that the burden of cinematic storytelling lies less in the individual shot than in the collective meaning that shots convey when they are edited together. Mamet

borrowed many of his ideas about directing, writing, and acting from Russian masters such as Konstantin Stanislavsky, Sergei M. Eisenstein, and Vsevolod Pudovkin, but he presents his material in so delightful and lively a fashion that he revitalizes it for the contemporary reader.

Noted playwright, screenwriter, and director Mamet offers his views on film directing taken, some in transcript form, from lectures and classes at Columbia. With only two films under his belt, Mamet is an odd choice to publish his opinions here, and his ideas are unsurprising. Although presumably being paid by Columbia, Mamet "suspects" film schools are "useless." Citing his heroes Eisenstein (story via cuts) and Hitchcock (pre-planning), he advises shooting scenes simply in the "least interesting way" possible and cutting everything extraneous to the story. He suggests reading in myth and psychology and watching a lot of animated cartoons. Refreshingly untheoretical, particularly regarding acting technique, this is fitfully interesting stuff, but a bit of an ego trip, too.- David Bartholomew, NYPL Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I'm really disappointed with this book. A very boring read because of the presentation of the material. It all boils down to 2 examples (1. Student gaining respect of the professor 2. Farmer who has to sell his pig) which are discussed in a very bland way. There is some good writing advice in there often referring to Aristotle's basics. The directing advice looked bad to me because of over simplification. He seems to have a very different opinion of actors, than most directors. I also found a lot of ranting about American films in general, Hollywood and acting. I wish I read the negative reviews before buying it.

Mamet has a clear idea of how to make a film. You may not agree with his idea. But I think he's proved he knows what he's talking about. There are real gems of clarity about how to think about making a film in here. Excellent

ON DIRECTING FILM, by David Mamet, is one of the best books ever written on the topic. Mamet, a writer/director himself, doesn't fill up the book's 107 pages with talk of the technical know-how required by a film director but instead writes about what makes a story compelling; how to communicate to a cast and crew with short and simple directions; how to not pander to an audience but still effectively communicate your film's intent; in short, how to make a better film. Part of the book consists of transcripts between film students and Mamet when he lectured on directing at

Columbia Film School. Mamet and the student's talk through an imaginary scene, beat by beat, with Mamet never letting them choose the easy route at any time in the process, but instructing them to think like screenwriters, imagining the scene shot by shot. Mamet's extremely wide vocabulary and commitment to making this book as accessible as possible make it well worth your time to read and, like me, re-read.

Perfection. "The nail in a ship does not need to resemble a ship"... not sure if there's a polite way to say that to an actor but it's a god reminder for directors

What can I say...look him up at [IMDB](#) PRO.

a masterpiece!

good

Of the hundreds of 'How To' books on movie making - or mostly screenwriting - this slim volume is succinct, provocative, dogmatic (as only Mamet is dogmatic), witty and more use than twenty texts on 'the rules'. It contains no doubt edited lectures to Colombia students - and sometime the students' too hasty responses. Although it's called 'On Directing Film', it is possibly of more use to writers in terms of what is necessary in a piece of screen storytelling and what is redundant dead wood. Mamet's ideas on 'backstory' and exposition - unnecessary - for instance, are radical, but his funny examples of how 'explaining' kills narrative drive are worth considering. Some may object that if one were to follow Mamet's principles, one would end up with a Mamet movie - that is, something less than a box office smash. But that is not the point. The point is to cause one to question one's own work and that can't be a bad thing.

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