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DOCTOR WHO?

The term 'script doctor' was coined in the 1930s, according to the [Hollywood Lexicon](#), when silent movies started being replaced with the talkies - which indicates that a lot of what a script doctor did was to work on dialogues. It has since evolved, and the task now embraces a series of actions that range from evaluating the screenplays, supervising their development, recommending improvements, and, sometimes, polishing or rewriting. It depends on the demand. Celebrated screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, for example, script doctored Kung Fu Panda 2 by only writing the jokes, according to [Vanity Fair](#).

Definition

What a script doctor does depends on what and how much work is needed: change the structure of the script, touch up the dialogues, give pointers, take care of a specific plot or character, or polish the whole thing.

Script doctors need extensive experience in the film and television industries, as well as a reputable status for their screenwriting skills. In Hollywood, there are almost no films or TV series that don't go through the eyes of specialists. Here is a fun list of doctors from [IndieWire](#).

Credits

Screenwriters collaborate with each other all the time. Well, either with each other, or after the other. The Wizard of Oz, for example, had at least 17 screenwriters working on it - although only three were credited. Unfortunately, credits are almost exclusive to the main writers, even if a script doctor comes on board and completely saves the day. See WGA rules [here](#).



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Rumor has it that actor Carrie Fisher, who was once the most sought-after script doctor in town, did uncredited rewrites for Hook, The Wedding Singer, Lethal Weapon 3 and Sister Act. Another interesting story states that four-time best screenplay Oscar winner Aaron Sorkin was invited by Steven Spielberg to do a dialogue doctoring on Schindler's List. He was never credited, and Steven Zaillian took home the Best Adapted Screenplay statue.

Outside Perspective

Most big companies – studios, streamers, producers – tend to have in-house script doctors. Which in a way facilitates the business and guarantees that the tone of the scripts is within the editorial lines of the house.

On the other hand, always using in-house lacks innovation, freshness and outside perspective. And screenplays need lots of different points of views, and a multiplicity of tests to prove that the story is not only being told or being delivered but being understood.

[Find out if you need a script doctoring in just 5 questions](#)

Good news, we are here to help you! Doctoring has been our specialty for over 20 years, and we are ready to give you premium feedback and help your project reach the stars.

Contact us for a free 20-minute call.

Cheers,
Laura

COACHING AND MENTORING