STUDIOBinder presents

30 WAYS TO BRAINSTORM FILM IDEAS
Spark new film ideas with these techniques

LOCATION

1. FIND CHEAP LOCATIONS
   Does your father own a gas station? Does your buddy own a taco shop? Having access to these type of locations can open up possibilities when ideating new stories.

2. UTILIZE COLLEGE CAMPUSES
   Most college campuses feature a mid-twentieth century design that could work potentially for most genre's, especially dystopian sci-fi projects.

3. RESEARCH DESERTED PLACES
   Writing a thriller or horror film? Just search for abandoned locations which can immediately boost your project's production value. Anything from abandoned warehouses, hospitals, zoos, etc.

4. CONTAIN CHARACTERS IN ONE SPACE
   See how much high-pressure drama you can squeeze out of two or three characters trying to escape a contained space (bathroom, cellar, etc.). As an example, look at Room which is about a woman and her son trying regain freedom by escaping a room they've been held captive in for years.
5. BROWSE WIKI ARTICLES

By clicking on Random Article on Wikipedia, you’ll learn about key events and historical figures that you may have never heard of before.

6. LOOK INTO YOUR FAMILY

Sometimes, the best short film ideas can be found by looking at your family’s history. Do you have an estranged half-sister that recently got in touch with you? That’s a story waiting to be written.

7. BE A NEWS HOUND

Current events might not be pleasant, but they do tend to be rife with drama and tension. There are many ways to portray war, injustice, and political strife without hitting the nail too squarely on the head.

8. LOOK INTO OLD STORIES

If today’s news is too overwhelming, do a quick Google search (or go to Archive.org) for the headlines of yesteryear. Try limiting the scope to either a specific location or time.

9. WATCH CLASSIC CINEMA

This should be the easiest homework for ideating new film ideas: Watch some classic movies and reduce them to their essence.

10. GET INSPIRED BY OTHER MEDIUMS

Listen to a beautiful song, go to a museum, or take a look at any Gregory Crewdson photograph. You might discover that it’ll provoke the clearest sense of what you want to write.

11. ANALYZE FILM CHARACTERS

Take a look at your favorite character in any film and dissect what makes them special. For example, Pennywise from It is a murderous, bloodthirsty clown. Right off the bat, this would make an interesting story.
12. STORYBOARDS
Don’t limit yourself just to your thoughts and a notebook. Spend a few minutes to visualize interesting sequences in a storyboard format. This can be created and easily shared with StudioBinder.

13. MOOD BOARDS
Mood boards can be used to communicate the “look and feel” of your project and can be used when you’re in the brainstorming phase. Just put together a collage of imagery that inspires you.

14. PROP LISTS
Think about some unique props that your lead character would be in contact with, then create a plot around it. For example, Thor’s hammer (Mjölnir), Luke Skywalker’s lightsaber, the pill from The Matrix.

15. SHOT LISTS
Thinking of camera set-ups before you’ve written anything may feel counter-intuitive, but it’s not. Did you see a really unique camera angle in a film? Take screenshots, identify the specs and create the shot list in StudioBinder.

CHARACTER

16. ADD CHARACTER FLAWS
Adding major character flaws to your lead character will immediately make audiences connect with them. For example, a power-hungry anti-hero. That’s Walter White from Breaking Bad.

17. FISH OUT OF WATER
Take a person out of their normal environment and put them in a radically different one. For example, Tarzan’s New York Adventure follows the lead character as he travels to Brooklyn to rescue a boy from kidnappers.

18. GO OVERBOARD
Make your lead take extreme action to reach their goal. Take a look at Daniel from Mrs. Doubtfire who begins wearing a nanny’s outfit so that he can spend time with his children, which he otherwise would not have done.
19. BLEND TWO GENRES
Subvert expectations by combining two film genres. Take a look at *No Country for Old Men*, which combines neo-western with film noir.

20. START AT THE ARC
Create a beat sheet with a clear emotional arc and try focusing on a single trajectory with limited twists. For example, start when your lead character loses everything and then tries to regain it.

21. START WITH THE ENDING
When the ending is clear up front, it'll allow you to only focus on the scenes and sequences needed to achieve your desired ending.

22. WRITE LONGHAND
If you're stumped, it helps just to write. Writing longhand, “stream of consciousness” style pages will give you unpredictable results. It's an effective way of capturing ideas that you didn't know you had.

23. TRANSCRIBE AUDIO
Find a film you haven't watched before, scrub to a scene with limited dialogue, and start writing the sounds you hear. Transcribing the sounds can unlock great ideas and get you thinking about scene actions.

24. USE A SHORT FILM GENERATOR
Try a mad libs-style randomizer like *Plot Generator* to see what comes up. It's a bit like spinning a roulette wheel, but you might find a useful element or two in the suggestions.

25. COLLABORATE WITH CREATIVES
Have a friend who knows motion graphics and wants to beef up their reel? You'll be able to incorporate unique sequences that will help your screenplay take shape in ways you haven't considered before.

26. WRITE A LOGLINE
As an exercise, write multiple loglines and run it by your inner circle to see which one gets people excited. You'll know immediately which ideas stick.
27. EAVESDROP ON CONVERSATIONS

When was the last time you were in a cafe and overheard a line too good to be true? Stay glued to your notebook and write down those perfect snatches of dialogue. Then generate some character descriptions and see if they lead you to an interesting film idea.

28. PLAY THE “WHAT IF” GAME

Try adding a character who seems out-of-place or create an unpredictable event that throw a wrench in the gears of your story world. Remember, irony is key here.

29. WRITE AROUND LIFE EVENTS

Funerals, anniversaries, birthdays — these are all dramatic events by their natures and have the added benefit of being limited in scope. As an example, look at Rachel Getting Married which focuses on family tensions surrounding a supporting character’s wedding.

30. WRITE ABOUT YOUR DAY

The best screenwriters write what they know, especially when it’s about seemingly mundane situations. Office Space is about a character that hates his soul-killing job which is based on Mike Judge’s personal experience.