I don’t know if you know this, but making a movie is a collaborative activity. One of the most important parts of it is communication. The end result, communicating a story to the audience, is pretty obvious. What’s not as obvious is the initial step of the writer communicating the story to the producer and/or director.

I have heard many writers say that the producer has taken their story in a different direction than they intended. There are two main reasons that this could happen:

- Your story was crap to begin with. This is highly unlikely. If it was crap a producer would never have bought the script.
- The most likely reason is that you didn’t adequately communicate the story.

Communicating a story is a very tricky thing. As a writer you have a story in your head. You know the emotions. You know the mood. The problem is that you can’t put it all into words. If you wrote down all of the details you’d end up with a novel and not a screenplay.

So how do you know what to put in and what to leave out? The truth is – I don’t know. However, I do know how to find out. The secret is to find out what directors and producers look for in a script.

- Watch the behind-the-scenes interviews on DVDs.
- Read interviews and articles about these people.
- Learn what it is that attracts them to certain scripts. Listen to the words they use. They might be very strong on subtext, or colour, or location.

All producers and directors have a different. Spielberg works differently from Scorsese. If you learn a little about what producers and directors require from a script then you will be able to present a story to them that meets all of their requirements. It’s like giving clear blueprints to a builder.

So, keep the producer and director in mind while you write. If they can clearly understand your script then there is more chance they will buy it, and it’s more likely to end up looking like what you imagined. Of course you still need to tell a great story.