

Pilot Structure Guide

Plotlines:

There should be an A, B and C plot in the pilot.

A plot: Story of the week. This is a closed-ended story usually dealing with the "business or franchise of the series."

B plot: Ongoing serialized plot line for our main character that goes over the course of the season. This should be something that builds throughout the season with twists and turns. Two Essential Questions to answer within B Plot:

1. Why start the story now?

Most importantly there should be an inciting incident that happens at the top of the pilot to our main character that is out of their control - i.e. Tony Soprano having an anxiety attack in Sopranos, or Walter White gets lung cancer. What happens to our lead character early on?

This incident makes the lead character decide to do something i.e. Tony goes to see a Shrink; Walter decides to sell Crystal Meth. This decision is what springs the plot of the series into action. It moves the character's life in a new direction. It's also why the pilot story starts now versus another time in the story.

2. What does our lead decide to do?

This is what the series will be about.

C plot: Closed-ended story in the pilot that revolves around a secondary character whose plot has nothing to do with the A or B plot.

Theme:

The pilot episode needs a theme that connects all three plotlines.

Ending:

Make sure to end the pilot with a surprise or twist that the audience does not see coming so that they are compelled to watch episode two.