

**Bromley's 100 Totally Subjective And Transitory Principles Of Playwriting,  
In No Particular Order And Of No Ostensible Importance  
Save As A List Of Those Ideals To Which  
The Author Himself Has Failed To Adhere.**

1. Know whether you want to be a personal or a popular playwright. If personal, find a voice. If popular, find a formula.
2. Write with a pen. Computers standardize.
3. Find a dramaturge and nurture that relationship until it doesn't work anymore. When doesn't it work? When you are more afraid of than inspired by that person.
4. Gather actors around you to read your plays. Actors will always work for free, so there's no excuse not to have them constantly reading your work.
5. If you are going to start your own theater company, make it very clear from the beginning – this company is about creating and producing my plays the way I see them being created and produced.
6. Realize that writing is a chemical process in your body. You must rouse the proper chemicals to your brain in order to achieve transcendent speech.
7. Write about extremely emotional issues that have seriously screwed with your head.
8. Strive to write for both sexes.
9. Take a serious stand on the issue of “what happens among humans.” The dynamics in your play – the things people talk about, the way they talk about them, the level of being at which they operate – are your primary statement on existence and they define you as a visionary.
10. Know where you stand vis-à-vis all the past playwriting traditions.
11. Feel free to make outlines, but feel freer to stray from the outline as the play progresses.
12. Constantly thank and congratulate and praise everyone who works with you or supports you.
13. Be megalomaniacal.
14. The work is not the chipping away of the stone, it's the statue that's left. Know your own personal issues and divulge them in your work.
15. The goal is not to avoid clichés. The goal is to tweak clichés, use clichés in new ways, or make new clichés.
16. Set up a structure where you hear your play, rewrite your play, hear your play, rewrite your play, etc...
17. Don't take too long or too short a time to write one play.
18. See theater.

19. Write according to a question I once heard ascribed to Richard Foreman – “What do I want to see in the theater tonight?”
20. Once you have completely written the play and don't feel like looking at it anymore, go through one more time to differentiate each character's speech patterns from every other character's.
21. Plays are about a symphony of voices. You must achieve different voices. If you don't feel capable of that, write a poem or an essay.
22. There must be play in plays. Politics, psychology, physics, any other topic must be subordinate to play. Play means the individual seeking private goals in public ways.
23. Know the world, characters, and issues of your play before you start writing it.
24. They say you shouldn't direct your own plays. I say direct your own plays if you're awesome at it or if it teaches you something.
25. Act as much as possible. The actor's perspective is the one you want to have on your plays and drama in general. The producer's, the playwright's, the director's perspectives – these can be deadly to the creative theatrical imagination. Act!
26. Block out a chunk of time each day for writing, and do nothing but that during that time.
27. Realize that theater, more than film, is dependent on sublime language.
28. Read poetry. Poets are the writer's writer, so if you don't read them, you're not a real writer.
29. Don't browse the Internet or Email while writing.
30. When you sit down at the desk, do not plunge immediately into writing. Meditate, muse, meander in your mind. You are looking for the perfect entrance into your better notions.
31. Don't confuse the dynamics of theater and film. They are as different as war and war photos.
32. Read your plays out loud to yourself, stand up and perform them in a mirror, only accept what you yourself would LOVE to do and say on stage.
33. Don't be afraid to be archaic, but always be fresh.
34. Don't write about things you don't know or care squat about.
35. Read the dictionary.
36. Use a thesaurus, but disguise the fact that you do.
37. Rhythm is key. Every word you write must fall into some greater rhythm.
38. The extreme states are what are interesting – agony, ecstasy, confusion, awareness, etc...- but none of them are worth anything unless you express them directly and intensely thru your characters.

39. Never ask yourself “What do audiences today want?” They have no idea what they want and whatever they want will be totally different tomorrow. They want only what you want them to want, but only if you want them well to want what you want well.
40. Realize no one has any idea how to make a hit. I have heard people say “Yeah, the guys who wrote Urinetown set out to make a hit” and I have heard people say “Yeah, they guys who wrote Urinetown set out to make a flop.” Enough said. All you can do is write what you think is great, again and again, and hopefully a few of your friends will still show up on opening night.
41. It’s fine, schmoozing and all in the hopes of meeting someone who will take your work to the next level, but if this gets in the way of writing, no one will be interested in taking your work anywhere except to the trashcan. That said, getting produced is largely about not who you know, but who is glad to know you.
42. Write so that people will be excited to do your plays again and again, meaning fill them with lots of interpretational possibilities, meaning don’t over-define how they should or can be done.
43. Current events do not a timeless play make.
44. If you can’t say it thru a metaphor, then you must question what you say it for.
45. How and why you write is a question for therapy, and not one you should hold off answering.
46. My central creative components are (for the time-being) dream, psychology, metaphor, and wit. Know yours.
47. Plays are about opening and closing. Always open and close.
48. Events in your play must unfold organically, meaning they must occur in a way that is organic to the world of your play, meaning they must clearly have evolved within the world of your play, be functioning naturally in the world of your play, and contributing essentially to the way in which the world of your play is manifesting itself into the future. Plays are eco-systems.
49. Our world is filled with everything from clowns to killers. So should your plays be.
50. The anger of non-recognition will destroy the creative wonder you need to generate plays that make the spirit breathe. Get rid of that anger.
51. Don’t write another word until you honestly feel good about the idea that if you knew no other person would ever see it, you’d still write it.
52. How to gauge your success? Don’t gauge your success. Living itself is success.
53. Theater is voyeurism. It is a prurient interest in seeing and hearing those things that we cannot or would not do. Satisfy that urge.
54. If you’re funny, be funny. If you’re tragic, be tragic. If you’re both, be both. If you don’t know whether you’re either or both, then you aren’t.
55. The world is the result of neuroses. Know the neuroses of your characters.
56. Never mediate the truth. I don’t exactly know what that means, but Christopher Sanderson said it to me once, and it rang true.

57. If you see someone whose work you like, walk up directly to them and tell them you want to work with them.
58. Don't know how to get started? Try this. Think up a really crazy, intense, earth-shattering event, and then write about the reactions of those who were involved, and bring their reactions to a particularly wild outcome. Fill it with dream, psychology, metaphor, and wit, and you will have gotten somewhere.
59. Know your characters' desires.
60. Get excited about the technologies of your time and put them in your plays.
61. Trust that the essence of plot is innovation. The idea that there's only 7 or 31 or 116 plots is a load of reductionist bunk.
62. Put yourself in your play. The idea that the playwright should not be in the play is an idea generated by the jealousy of academics who can't write plays and so aren't in any plays.
63. Make freedom your over-riding artistic objective.
64. Always appear to be qualified to be talking about what you're talking about.
65. The primary talent of the playwright is the ability to instinctually infer other peoples' thoughts and actions. Observe and empathize with other people 24 hours a day.
66. A great play is not merely a series of amazing one-liners. It is amazing one-liners put into one amazing over-arching, though unspoken, line.
67. Don't be precious about your work. Theater is all fists and fire, and precious things will quickly break or burn.
68. For lack of a less hokey phrase, I'll say this – your plays must adhere to the feel world, not the real world.
69. Don't be intimidated. Be inspired.
70. The problem is never that you can't write. It's that you haven't fully realized an interesting perspective to write about. Realize that, then the writing will come.
71. Weapons, drugs, and nudity – these are the three largest industries on the planet, after energy. Why? Because people want to know how to defend and destroy, they want to get high, and they want to see their lust-object revealed. Satisfy them with your plays.
72. Don't think listings, mailings, reviews, or posterings will get people into your theater. The one and only thing that will get people there is positive word-of-mouth from actors and audience.
73. Get an MFA to exploit connections or avoid labor, not to learn anything. You want to learn something? Go live on the streets of Mexico City.
74. The majority will always think you suck.

75. Let affection lead you to a collaborator, but do not let it be the only thing that keeps you collaborating.
76. Most of the people who go to theater developed an interest in it as a fetish item from some point in their lives. They will project that fetish on you. There is no pure audience member.
77. Theater as an industry has a distribution challenge. It is inherently local. And in the age of film, it is inherently refined. Local and refined would be two good places to start in terms of deciding on theme and style.
78. If getting reviews is of concern to you, then meet reviewers. They are generally very open to talking to playwrights and being seduced to come to a show by a personal connection. The way to grab their attention is to know and comment on some of their reviews.
79. I have been reviewed in every major paper and website in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and London, but I still have nights where not a single person shows up to my play and the only non-self-produced play I've ever had has been by people who know me – actors turned directors or producers.
80. Self-producing your plays on a regular basis is a good idea if you want to see your plays produced, but it's a bad idea if you want to be produced elsewhere. Most producers are offended at the idea that a playwright would choose to self-produce, so they steer clear. Or they only do premiers, and you blew that for them. Or they're decent people and they simply figure you got your own thing going on, so why do you need them?
81. Mac Wellman once told me it takes 20 years to make great theater. Like the Wooster Group, he said, you need to hang out together for 20 years, lose all your friends, and then one day people say "Wow, they are crazy!" That's when you've made it.
82. T.S. Eliot, after trying to write seven verse plays late in life, said that he never actually got it. Writing verse plays, he said, is something you have to dedicate your entire life to in order to be good, and you must be wary of dabbling in other forms, which dissipates your focus. The same could be said of prose plays, I think.
83. So many writers get caught up in the ironical quest for fame that their themes become infused with it. I hate that. Writing a play about being the kind of schmuck who is incomplete unless famous seems inherently anti-art to me.
84. The only award I have ever won – the Berrilla Kerr Playwright Award 2000 – was one I didn't apply for.
85. Some people go to Yale, then do a year at Cambridge, and then they teach at Julliard, and all their friends from college who are now lawyers and doctors provide them with patrons and a board and a rich audience. If you're one of those people, great. If you're not, you must realize that most of your appeal is guerilla, gutter, proletariat. Use that, cuz it's what you are.
86. Writers are shy and isolated beings. Theater is an extroverted, social experience. Bridging that gap can be the difference between meeting someone important and not.
87. Belief is the best beautician.

88. Theater does not require a set and costumes and props. That is a sham perpetrated by the institutions of spectacular hoaxes. Look at the black box! Have you ever seen anything uglier? It is neutered and charred so that designers can stuff it with their expensive frippery. Everything that is not the language and the actor and the gestures their relationship implies should be deeply suspect to the great playwright.
89. If you have ever heard a great playwright speak, you will have had one overwhelming sensation – this person is in touch with the drama that is the world. How did they get that way? By ruthlessly connecting to the in-between forces of thought, action, and emotion that make everything happen. It is a cognitive practice.
90. I once heard of a Jeune Lune production where Romeo and Juliet were two fat middle-aged people who did the balcony scene crawling through a huge mound of dirt. Can you be that cool?
91. Every play is a party. Inverse has been trying to realize that production mission for years. I still believe in it.
92. American artists function in the midst of a confusion. We are told that value is synonymous with distribution. Why else does *The New Yorker* review XXX? Yet art has always been about isolated, self-generated, inspired value. True art is part of no industry.
93. Most people go to a music concert to receive what they give - adoration. Most people go to a play to receive what they give - criticism. So give them criticism.
94. All other kinds of writers – poets, novelists, essayists – nestle in the confidence that, whether they are being recognized or not, they are contributing to the important lineage of literature. Playwrights have no such confidence. They are supposed to be there to please the audience, and, if they don't, they suck. I think that's crap. Playwriting has as much a place in the lineage of literature as anything else, and for that reason it should feel self-confidence.
95. They say that people start singing in musicals because they reach a point where they simply can't express what they're feeling in speech. Write your plays so that people start speaking because they reach the point where they simply can't express what they're feeling in song.
96. If I can see great sets and costumes in the Star Wars series, hear great dialects on rap CD's, read great thoughts in academic journals, and see great emotion on talk shows, why should I see your play? Like any product, a play must find a niche.
97. I must confess to having got a lot out of Robert McKee's book *Story*. But looking back on it, it is a screenwriting book, not a playwriting book. Read it if you want, but there is more to learn.
98. Vagabonds, drunks, whores, and thieves – this is the rabble that invented and has maintained the theater throughout time. And it's this "other side" that people want to experience when they go to the theater.
99. Write every day.
100. Don't waste your time writing out principles for other playwrights. Just write plays.