KEY QUESTIONS

- **How many panels** are needed to express what is happening? Are major moments emphasized using a larger panel or more space? Are minor moments given too much space?
- Is the **pacing** working? Does the story go too fast (e.g. the page is crowded with actions and plot developments)? Or too slow (e.g. multiple shots being used to make the same point)? Ensure that each speech balloon conveys only one emotion.
- Is there an **engaging variety of shots** in each spread, or are the angles and images coming across as static? In text-heavy comics, editors should watch for repetitive shots of "talking heads"; look for alternative shots (e.g. find an object that helps to tell the story and provide a close-up; pull back to an establishing shot; show the events being described by the speaker in a flashback panel or an imagined future scenario; etc.).
- Are there **too many words**? Some comics are intentionally text-heavy. However, most strive to convey as much as possible in as few words as possible. A general rule of thumb is 25 words or fewer per balloon or caption; 50 words or fewer per panel; and 3 balloons or fewer per panel. These maximums should not be applied to every panel on every page.
- Do the descriptions add new emphasis or perspective, or do the **descriptions simply repeat** the information conveyed by the pictures?
- Are characters are **speaking in a consistent order** throughout a given sequence of panels? You want to avoid the visual confusion of speech balloon tails crossing or characters switching positions (from left to right and vice versa) in each panel down the page.
- Do the visual elements (lines, angles, shading, colours, frames, speech balloons, etc.) work to guide the reader's eye from left to right, top to bottom? Is the **panel sequence clear**?
- Is the **last panel of each recto page** a compelling image, a "cliffhanger" moment, a question, or a teaser of some kind? (Not necessary, but a good practice where possible.)
- Is all important information (words, hands, faces, etc.) inside the **safe area / live area**? Does the art in the bleed fall short of the trim size?

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

COMICS THEORY AND "HOW TO" BOOKS

Scott McCloud (**Scottmccloud.com**)
- *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*
- *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology Are Revolutionizing an Art Form*
- *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels*

Jessica Abel and Matt Madden (**Dw-wp.com**)
- *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures: A Definitive Course from Concept to Comic in 15 Lessons*
- *Mastering Comics: Drawing Words and Writing Pictures Continued*

Will Eisner
- *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practice of the World's Most Popular Art Form*
- *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*

SELECTED ONLINE RESOURCES

Defining Comics and Graphic Novels

- Jessica Abel, *What Is a "Graphic Novel"?* (2002): **Dw-wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel**
- Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993)

The Creative Development and Publishing Process

- Various comics creators' scripts, thumbnails, pencils, inks, colouring, and lettering: **Darkhorse.com/Features/Making-of-a-Comic**
- Dark Horse's guidelines for preparing a proposal, script, or portfolio: **Darkhorse.com/Company/Submissions**
- Devin Larson, *Overview of the Comic Creation Process* (2014): **Makingcomics.com/2014/01/16/overview-comic-creation-process**
- Canadian companies that publish comics: **Joeshusterawards.com/links/links-to-canadian-publishing-companies**

Concept

- Ty Templeton's sample 22-page story map: **Comicbookbootcamp.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/writing-story-map-avengers.jpg**

Script

- Nate Piekos, "Comic Script Basics": **Blambot.com/comicscript.shtml**
- Ty Templeton's sample comics page showing number of words per balloon, per panel: **Comicbookbootcamp.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/writing-word-count.jpg**
- Dark Horse's script format style guide: **Images.darkhorse.com/darkhorse08/company/submissions/DHScriptFormatGuides.pdf**
- Sample scripts from well known writers: **Comicbookscriptarchive.com/archive/the-scripts**

Layouts

- Jessica Abel and Matt Madden, "Layout Quickguides" (details on creating layouts and using the bleed): **Dw-wp.com/resources/cartooning-quickguides/layout-quickguides**
- Nate Piekos, "Original Art Dimensions" (A sample page with standard comics dimensions): **Blambot.com/ruleyourown.shtml**

Lettering and Word Balloons

- Nate Piekos, "Comic Book Grammar and Tradition": **Blambot.com/grammar.shtml**