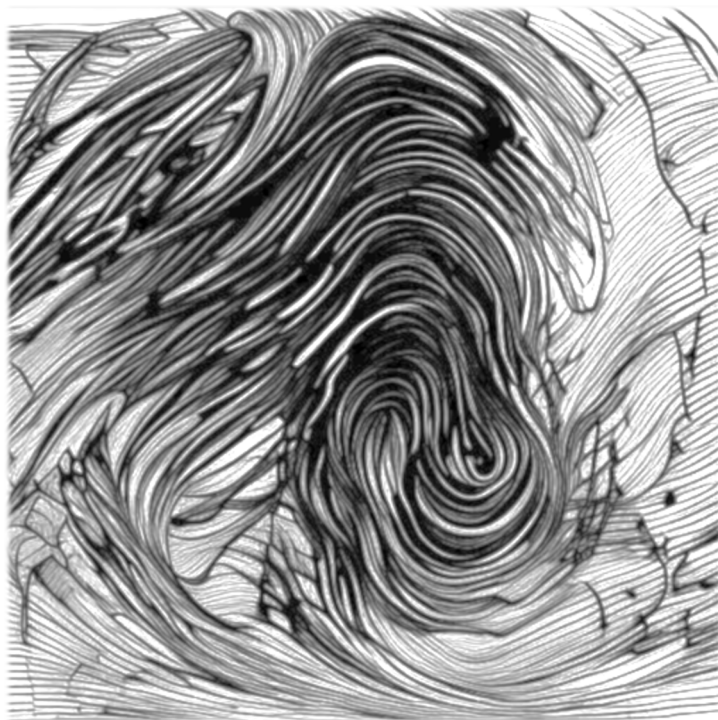


# Between the Lines



***A Resource for Neurodivergent  
Playwrights and Dramaturgs***

By Emily Duncan, PhD

Between the Lines: A Resource for Neurodivergent Playwrights and Dramaturgs  
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The playwright participant and researcher avatars for this resource were created by Chatsiri Klinpibul.

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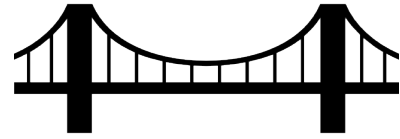
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## INTRODUCTION: BRIDGING THE GAP

The focus of *Between the Lines* is to help address gaps in accessibility for both **neurodivergent** (ND) playwrights, and in turn **dramaturgs** (script advisors).



Opportunities and strategies for accommodating ND performers and audience are readily available, but not so much for playwrights and the script-development process. Much assumption and reliance are placed on ND playwrights' literacy, writing ability, and independent motivation, and focus. This is not to say they don't have these skills, but current standard models are inadequate. Even with the option to apply for opportunities and festivals by audio or video file, in most cases a script still needs to be written adhering to industry standards and requiring many hours of solo, undivided focus.

Neurodiverse approaches and strategies for playwrights are not widely modelled or made explicit; usually, the "silent" onus is on the individual. A key objective with *Between the Lines* is to document a range of targeted strategies and examples to remove barriers faced by neurodivergent playwrights.

For creating this resource, and in addition to my independent research, I acted as dramaturg–researcher alongside three playwrights who identify as neurodivergent, who worked on a new or existing playscript. Together we engaged in form of practice-as-research, reflective engagement, by testing drafting and writing strategies and documenting progress and experiences.

The research and writing of *Between the Lines* was funded by the Whakahoa Kaitoi Te Puna Toi Arts for All Fellowship 2023 and with support from Prospect Park Productions NZ.

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## USING THE *BETWEEN THE LINES* RESOURCE

*Between the Lines* is primarily for **neurodivergent** (ND) playwrights, secondly for ND and/or **neurotypical** (NT) dramaturgs working with ND playwrights, and thirdly for anyone (ND or NT) looking for new playwriting strategies. You don't have to identify as ND to use the strategies in this guide. Accessible practices have a cunning knack for accommodating a wider and more diverse range of people than for whom they were initially designed to serve.

The information in this resource can be divided into three main categories:

1. **Playwriting Strategies.** These are approaches and tools that can be used for the writing of playscripts.
2. **Neurodiversity Information.** This includes explainers of neurodiversity as well as links to other resources.
3. **Playwright Research Findings.** See the next section to meet the three playwrights who participated in this research.



While the resource suggests an order for using the playwriting strategies starting at Draft One and ending with Draft Three, this is not intended to be prescribed. If a playwright or dramaturg finds that a Draft One strategy is more helpful for Draft Two, then do so by all means. It should be noted that while the strategies here will help with playwriting, this is not a how-to-write-a-play manual. However, you could also use it that way if you wish.

Terms in **bold** can be found in the Glossary of Terms section. A Further Reading and Resources section is also included at the back of this resource.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR-RESEARCHER

Why playwrighting?

For me it's about the space. The architectonic possibilities of playwriting resonate constantly. First in this enfilade of sense-making is the multi-dimensional world of the story, followed by the imagined space of the reader, then the possible performance spaces. It's a logic and pattern-recognition process that leads me both in and out of the text as an ND playwright and dramaturg.



I'm not the only playwright who experiences an unease between a fascination with the puzzle and parsing of human behaviour and the pressurised communal dynamics of the theatre or rehearsal room. The writing is the inviolable space playwrights carve out for ourselves within the wider theatrical enterprise. It's fitting that **takiwātanga** is the Te Reo word for autism coined by Keri Opai, which means in one's own time and space. Furthermore, **aroreretini** (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/ADHD), meaning the mind goes to many things, captures the multifaceted factor analysis required when writing for theatre.

When I was young one of the things that I wanted to be when I grew up was an architect. However, my **dyscalculia** would not make me at all a strong candidate for this profession. The first time I saw the (mostly hilarious if dated) movie *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) my heart ached for band member Nigel Tufnel when he mixed up the feet and inches measurements for his Stonehenge model design. He had the vision, just not the technical exactitude (except why can't it "go to 11" and who doesn't hate it when the mini-bread dimensions don't match the filling??! If you know, you know).

My hope is that *Between the Lines* will welcome other ND playwrights and dramaturgs into spaces of curious imagination, consideration, and creation for their own practice. Enjoy and please use the strategies as they work best for you.

## PARTICIPANT PLAYWRIGHT PROFILES

### JAMIE

As a young child, Jamie enjoyed the anonymity of sitting in a theatre and watching a fantasy world play out in front of her eyes. Jamie's mother enrolled her in acting classes when she was in primary school, hoping it would help to bring her extremely shy daughter "out of her shell." Whilst Jamie initially hated these classes, she grew to love the process of understanding a character and their given circumstances and learning to inhabit a new world.



Jamie's love of acting led her to study the craft formally after she left high school. Jamie has performed in a myriad of both professional and amateur plays and musicals throughout New Zealand. Although she enjoyed performing in larger productions, Jamie frequently experienced burnout following long seasons of shows and all of the intense socialisation they entailed. Perhaps this is what led her to try her hand writing for theatre in her 30s. She was drawn to autobiographical theatre, having been captivated by solo artists growing up.

Jamie found the more solitary process of playwriting brought her a different kind of creative fulfilment. She has immensely enjoyed the close relationships she has developed with dramaturgs, actors, and directors when developing a play script. Very recently, Jamie has diverged from solo work and begun writing fictional work for multiple characters.



Jamie was surprised but relieved to be diagnosed with both **ADHD** and **Autism** in her late 30s. She likens the diagnostic process to putting on a pair of glasses that very slowly brings life into focus. Before her diagnosis, she viewed her process of both acting and writing as either incorrect or painting by numbers that weren't her own. She is having an exciting time discovering both her own numbers and colours.



## BRONWYN



Bronwyn grew up in the North of England, and was involved in performance from a young age. She was encouraged to try lots of different activities – ballet, Indian dance, drama, choir – but found herself drawn to theatre time and time again. She enjoyed visiting the local theatre to see touring shows, and fell in love with the magic of a production. She spent time “play acting” with friends, mimicking daily activities such as taking the roll at school, and talked through every hour of the day.

After relocating to New Zealand at the age of 11, Bronwyn felt quite a culture shock, and had to “re-learn” how to be around new people. She continued to take part in drama at high school and went on to complete an Honours degree in Theatre Studies at the University of Otago. Over time, Bronwyn became less interested in performing and focused more on directing, producing, and playwriting.

Hindsight now helps her see that performing was a key part of surviving in the world, so continuing it on a stage was of little interest to her, and she was instead being drawn to elements of creative control. She has gone on to creatively lead two theatre companies and has worked closely with local practitioners on projects spanning the last fifteen years.

Bronwyn was diagnosed with Autism in 2023 and is currently in the process of seeking an ADHD diagnosis. She sees the diagnosis as comforting and disruptive – it’s nice to know you were right, but it’s challenging to see your life through a new lens.

Theatre, it seems, can be categorised as a **hyperfixation**, with nothing feeling as satisfying as the flow state of writing or the currents of a rehearsal room. This project has provided an affirming space for Bronwyn, allowing her neurodiversity to be a tool in creating a script instead of framing it as a hindrance.



## PATTY

Patty grew up loving storytelling through doodling and performing. Fortunately, the first several schools Patty attended had strong arts programmes. One even had all students from each year put on annual plays. Requiring everyone to participate seemed to help students and the wider school community learn to look up to the arts and appreciate the effort involved in theatrical productions. There, Patty's Year 3 teacher introduced her to playwriting. Then, even after another family move and change in schools, Patty continued to write short scripts for class plays and films until around age 12.



However, a subsequent relocation left Patty enrolled in a school where there was no opportunity to perform or write plays. She started struggling mentally and academically. At 14, Patty was diagnosed with **obsessive compulsive disorder** (OCD). She also likely became depressed. Getting through each day was hard enough, and Patty stopped pursuing her hobbies.

A turbulent decade later, after instances of dropping out, more relocations, and eventually graduating with a bachelor's degree, Patty found herself working as an administrator in public education in Dunedin. Unlike while studying, she could better manage her OCD and anxiety in this routine day job. Thanks to that and the art community in Dunedin, Patty felt comfortable and supported enough to rekindle some of her passions.

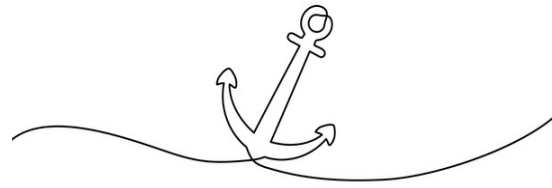
Patty especially gravitated towards playwriting, appreciating how she can do so in her own space, time, and pace. This suited her more than having to quickly memorise choreography or lines. Nonetheless, writing could still be torturous at times with her recurring intrusive thoughts and doubts. Patty would wonder if she is qualified to write plays due to her lack of formal training. She would also be self-conscious about her writing habits and style.

Now, Patty has come to understand that there is no one right way. In this research project, various strategies were presented as options rather than there being a prescribed inflexible process. This served as a reminder that differences, whether with regards to a writer's voice, neurodivergences or pathways into playwriting, are not aspects to be ashamed of, for diversity is what enriches the arts.



## SAFE ANCHOR

Anchors are devices used to hold a vessel to the seabed. They keep the vessel safe while simultaneously allowing it a degree of movement. A similar notion applies to desired ways of working as a playwright.



In theatre, there's a lot of "this is the way it's always been" and sometimes pressure to relinquish boundaries, psychological, emotional, and physical. The collaborative nature of theatre-making can be generous and joyful on one hand, while overwhelming and intrusive on the other. A common theme with all three participant playwrights was a healthy sense of control. Healthy, because they have a strong sense of the world and characters they are wanting to create in their work. In turn, they know the intention of their work. That is, how they want the work to function and how they see its purpose.

Intention is a form of anchoring in playwriting. Waves of opinion and input can roll over the work and the writer, but a Safe Anchor prevents it from being swept away. A key objective with playwriting is to develop the script to a state where the intention is clear and everyone else who comes to read the script (dramaturgs, directors, actors, producers etc.) understands its direction and the purpose of its journey.

### Identifying Intention:

What is the topic of your work?

What aspect of this topic do you want to share or show?

What do you want an audience or reader of your work to understand about this topic?

Intention can also be thought of as function or purpose.

The concept of a Safe Anchor in playwriting allows for the writer to establish what is safe territory and how far and where they wish to venture within and beyond the safe territory. It can be used to create a map of where we do and do not want to go and under what conditions. It also helps keep us stay in reach of our writing **glimmers** during the process.

Safe Anchors can be used in the following ways:

- To explore expectations and concerns with the writing process.
- To establish trust between the playwright and the dramaturg.
- To outline access options.

## SAFE ANCHOR & SETTING CONDITIONS FOR *BETWEEN THE LINES*

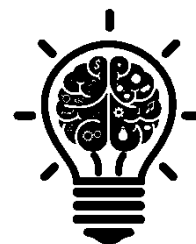
At the start of the *Between the Lines* research, I invited each playwright to respond to a questionnaire, with four sections covering:

1. being diagnosed as neurodivergent their experiences and understandings of this;
2. their [general] involvement in and/or connections with theatre;
3. their experiences writing for theatre;
4. general questions around their access needs for this project.



Patterns that emerged from their questionnaire responses included:

- Watching & involvement in performance from a young age.
- [Some] preferences when in audience. Displeasure at “too much” (**sensory overload/sensory regulation needs**). BUT also important NOT to generalise.
- Love of creating and performing.
- [Healthy] desire for control.
- Prep time and planning. Needing to know what’s ahead.
- Appreciation for (some) methodical approaches.
- **Associative thinking.**
- **Emotional empathy** (AKA affective empathy or embodied EQ, and is more prevalent for ND than **cognitive empathy**)
- Curiosity and heightened focus.



# SAFE ANCHOR TEMPLATE FOR PLAYWRIGHTS & DRAMATURGS

Establishing Trust and Setting Conditions for the Playwriting Process.

Playwright's Name	
Script Advisor/Dramaturg's Name	



Please note:

- You are not limited to one option in any section. Select and add as many options as needed. You can circle, highlight, or underline your options in the boxes you wish to focus on.
- This is a living document in that it can be revisited or changed throughout the process as needed.
- While every effort will be made to honour the requested accommodations in this document, that might not always be possible in practice.
- The document should not be shared with anyone not named above without the playwright's permission.
- There is the option to talk through this document instead of or as well as complete it in writing.

## Intended Outcome of Process

Script assessment/feedback	Workshop	Rehearsed reading
Competition entry	Formatted script	Writing group
Research or study project	Completed script	Other



Needs, requests, & queries related to outcome:

*For example, this is my first time aiming to write a play suitable for entering a competition. Specific advice around this would be appreciated so that I can make the best possible impression on judges.*

## Who/People

Dramaturg	Director	Actor(s)
Anonymous reader	Agent	Producer
Peer readers or writers	Competition judge	Other



Needs, requests, & queries related to who/people:

*For example, I am not comfortable with people reading my script without my permission, especially people I don't know. It would be helpful for me to understand why and when other people might need to read the script.  
Can I please talk to you directly about a person I have concerns that I might have to work with?*

## Page Space

Formatting	Digital	Printed
Font	Spacing	Icons



Needs, requests, & queries related to the page space:

*For example, I like to have feedback written in Comment Boxes in Word documents.  
I'm also comfortable with Tracking Changes for suggested edits.  
1.5 or single spacing is fine for me to read.  
I'd like to be sent documents in both Word and PDF.  
Can I please have a print-out of my script for workshops and read-throughs?*

## Presentation Space

(Includes Workshop/Rehearsal Room and/or Venue)

Access	Sensory	Scheduling
Personnel	Configuration for audience	Configuration of presentation
Masking & unmasking	Furniture	Other



Needs, requests, & queries related to the presentation space:

*For example, echoing and loud rooms with lots of activity contribute to my burnout. I prefer to work at a table and have a spare chair next to me to place personal belongings I need to access. I would like the opportunity to visit the venue beforehand to familiarise myself and ask questions.*

## Writing

Script template	Script examples	Scriptwriting software
Specific writing supports	Specific reading supports	Dramaturgical explainers & resources



Needs, requests, & queries related to writing:

*For example, I have Microsoft word and prefer to use this rather than script writing software. I would appreciate any dramaturgical explainers and resources you can provide that would be helpful for the process. It helps me to be able to talk-through (**verbal processing**) my drafts.*

## Boundaries

Feedback delivery	Number of people involved	Timeframes
Language	Pacing	Communication
Proximity	Hygiene	Other



Needs, requests, & queries related to boundaries:

*For example, full-day in-person sessions are draining for me, as are multiple consecutive in-person days. I work best in-person for half a day or a few hours. I prefer emails for communication and text messages or FB messenger for urgent matters.*

*Chaos and last-minute changes are stressful for me. I especially like to know where I am going and who I will be with in advance.*

*I prefer not to be crowded (proximity) when working with others (see comment under Presentation Space requesting table and extra chair).*

*I appreciate if there are paper towels, tissues, and hand sanitizer available.*



'I love Safe Anchor ... you can keep coming back and checking your intentions. Not just your artistic inventions – but your personal intentions of how to treat yourself and your work/process. It is not onerous. It feels like minimal workload because I basically just circled what felt intuitively.' – Jamie

## OTHER SAFE ANCHOR OPTIONS

A Safe Anchor doesn't have to be a formal document.

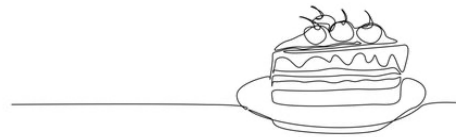
It might be:

- A note the playwright pens for themselves.
- A card taped on the wall over the writing desk or table.
- An image or piece of music that has a Safe Anchor meaning for the playwright and the script.
- A quotation that captures the playwright's Safe Anchor preferences.





# THE CAKE MODEL



Having an analogy or metaphor for writing a play is helpful for breaking it down into stages and thinking about the type of play you're writing. Happily, for mostly everyone, cake is an excellent metaphor.

How a play is like a cake and cake is like a play:

- Cakes and plays have been around for thousands of years.
- Different cultures have their own versions of cake/theatre.
- There are different types of cakes/plays for different occasions and people and budgets.
- You can make a cake/play out of just a few simple ingredients or it can be an elaborate undertaking with many layers and decorations.
- Cake/plays can be shared; both represent generosity and communal experience.
- Cake/plays are multi-sensory experiences.
- Cakes/plays require certain ingredients but are also very adaptable.

The three-draft process for writing a play proposed in this resource can be thought of in similar ways to baking a cake. You don't have to know how to bake a cake to use this model. You just need to know what cake is.

<b>Drafting:</b>	Draft 1	Draft 2	Draft 3
<b>Baking:</b>	Harvesting	Baking	Serving
<b>Focus:</b>	Decide occasion (intention) & collect ingredients/ideas	Assemble and test the ingredients/ideas	Present the script to others

While there is an order to how you make a cake or a play, the intention with this three-draft model is to provide a focus and strategies for each stage of the writing and drafting process. You can go back to a previous stage or skip ahead as best serves you and your script.



## À LA CARTE MENU OPTIONS

We took an à la carte (meaning they could choose from a menu of options) approach with the *Between the Lines* playwriting strategies so that everyone felt they had a degree of control and were not locked into an inflexible writing trajectory of draft after draft after draft.

Choice is often an important factor for ND people to successfully complete tasks, which is sometimes intercepted by **Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)**. PDA is not about being stubborn or obstructive, but a need to safeguard autonomy and sense of control.

Breaking tasks down into manageable options also helps avoid **ADHD paralysis, Monotropic Split, Autistic Inertia, and Burnout**.

In starting out the practice as research model for this research, I set out the following conditions for the playwrights:

- For each draft of the project, trial no fewer than 3 different strategies.
- Choose 1 or 2 strategies that seem “good” options for you and your project, and at least 1 that you’re not so sure about or keen on. It’s totally fine to discard a strategy that isn’t working for you.



‘It’s crucial to have some sort of Basic Structure. However, what helps is when that structure is Not Too Prescriptive, is Flexible and allows for Choice ... It takes the pressure off knowing that the instructions/structure doesn’t have to be followed to a tee and that allows people to be more forgiving of themselves when they aren’t able to follow processes perfectly like machines.’ – Patty

# DRAFT ONE

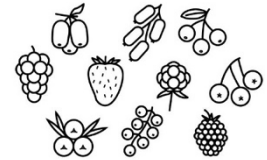
**Focus for Draft One:** Identifying intent and harvesting ideas for script.

NB: The Draft One strategies are intended to seek out and explore the idea of your play.

- They do NOT require perfection.
- The expectation is NOT for you to spend precious time on high-quality presentation or figuring out new software or craft or drawing skills.
- Instead, you are aiming to capture something that represents for you your early conception of your play.

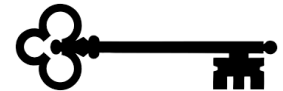
## HARVESTING

Using the Cake Model, we can think of Draft One as harvesting possible ideas (or ingredients) for our play. Ideas could include images, music, memes, articles. Whatever represents for you the vibe or flavour of your play for you.



We put everything we harvest into an imagined Script Store.

Only you have the key and we can collect as many ingredients as we wish. The Script Store has unlimited space, whereas the final script (Draft Three) will not. I imagine that my Script Store is a walk-in pantry in a castle with many shelves holding a jar for each idea or ingredient.



## DRAFT ONE STRATEGIES

### Brainstorming & Representing

The purpose of these strategies is to capture how the idea presents itself in your mind. How do you “see” parts and the whole of the idea, and how do you imagine a staged production might look or sound like?

Also, most of these strategies encourage us to shift our focus from language, words, and text at the beginning of the playwriting process. Instead, we’re wanting to keep in mind the dynamic and dimensional dramatic world.

**Power Point** can be used to organise your idea into a visual presentation (for yourself or also others).

**Storyboard** your idea to visually present the narrative. (NB: Canva has free Storyboard templates).

**Project Idea or Mood Board.** Digital options include Apple’s FreeForm app, Canva, and Pinterest. Pens and paper work equally well.



‘I chose the FreeForm app as it was new to me ...[and] found this strategy the most helpful. I absolutely loved being able to colour code my ideas and move them around in little shapes. It made me realise how overwhelmed I get when information – including ideas – is in the form of screeds and screeds of text ... I like that I can easily move things around. I can colour code things by theme and have a bigger understanding of my overall without pages and pages of text.’ – Jamie

FreeForm also got a BIG TICK from Bronwyn who loved how you can expand your idea as much as you like and all the options for how to arrange it so it was both comprehensive but not overwhelming.

**Word Cloud** to create a visual representation of the key words and repeated words and word patterns in your idea. This could inform how you write your dialogue in Draft Two.

**Playlist.** This isn’t a playlist for a production of your play (although it could be), but a selection of music that represents the theme, mood, tension, pace, energy, and the overall narrative arc. You could have a separate playlist for each character so that you can track their contrasting story arcs.

Another suggestion from Bronwyn was creating a playlist of pre- and post-show music. This is the music that you’d like to have played as the audience enters and leaves the theatre or other performance space.



‘I find that having “creating a playlist” be recognised/named as a strategy very reassuring and comforting. Because when my doubt tries to take over me, it’s easier for me to quiet those anxious thoughts and replace it with thoughts like, “No, this isn’t a waste of time. This is a strategy. This can benefit/influence my writing” ... from there I can go onto think about how does a particular song make me feel, what is the (emotional) journey it takes me on and how is that similar or different to the journey I want to take others on through my own play/work.’ – Patty

Anywhere between 3 and 7 songs would be adequate for a play list.

**Model, sketch, or floorplan of the envisioned performance space** to help conceptualise and reinforce the intended outcome of a playscript (i.e., live performance in a real space). We're exercising our sense of spatial awareness and architectonics (the study or character of various types of structures such as a stage set). Options for this could include:

- ◆ Sketch of the stage design by hand.
- ◆ Digital plan using Google SketchUp or similar.
- ◆ Making a maquette, diorama, or tunnel book.
- ◆ Create miniatures of models of key costume, set, or prop items.
- ◆ NB: This activity works well with reading Elinor Fuchs' essay "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play" (see under Reading Food for Thought on p.23).

## **Embracing Flow States, Focus, & Curiosity**

**Special interest topic.** Identify a topic to be included in some way in your script for which you would like to do more research. This strategy allows you to embrace **monotropism** and hyperfixation in a way that is generative and productive, and feeds into and expands the writing process. It's NOT wasted time!



Examples of special interest topics for playwriting include:

- ◆ A character's profession.
- ◆ Something related to the environment the play is set in.
- ◆ Historical event or figure relevant to the play.
- ◆ Staging techniques used in similar plays.



Another way to think of your special interest is as a project research legitimate side quest.

Curiosity and special interests are neurodivergent strengths. My personal belief is that curiosity fuels empathy, which is a core value in theatre. The more I find out about other topics and people the more I will understand and form some connection. To quote playwright Lynn Nottage ([NYT](#), 22 April 2017):

*'I like to replace judgement with curiosity. You tell me your story. I'm going to listen without interruption, and then decide what I think.'*

What do you want to spark an audience's curiosity when watching, listening to, or reading your play?

## Initial Drafting

These strategies are intended to capture thoughts (fragments are fine) before we filter or edit them for others or to overcome any sense of doubt or shame about the idea. They can also be used to capture phrasing, dialect, accents, and jargon that could later inform how we write our character'(s) dialogue. Tools include:

- ◆ Using a Notes apps or similar to record snippets of thoughts or lines of speech.
- ◆ Audio recording of yourself or others speaking (might need to ask permission!).

Audio recording can also be a good tool if you find **verbal processing** helpful for discussing your ideas but don't have someone readily available to talk with.

'I find I can form my ideas best in the early stages of writing if I can verbally process them.'  
– Bronwyn



## Agree to Disagree

Bronwyn and I are both fans of handwriting at the start of a project. We want the freedom before we have to confine ourselves to a more conventional format (tips on templates are in the Draft Two section of this resource). Patty, however, finds handwriting too uncomfortable.



(NB: Also, be aware that **dysgraphia** might be an issue impacting someone's handwriting abilities).

## Quick Questions

The Quick Questions are a set of questions I give to playwrights when I start working with them. They're to be answered as quickly as you can about your script idea. If you get stuck on a question, move onto the next one. Think of your ideal production of your play. Don't concern yourself with what you think could or could not be achieved on stage. THINK BIG.

<p><b>First and Last Impressions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the central image you want your audience to remember from your play?</li> <li>• If your play had a theme song or piece of music, what would it be?</li> <li>• How would you describe the shape of your play?</li> <li>• What is the speed and rhythm of your play?</li> <li>• What colour is your play?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Story</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the time frame of your story?</li> <li>• What event kicks your story off?</li> <li>• In what order will you be presenting the story?</li> <li>• What are two key obstacles/turning points in your story?</li> <li>• What is the resolution of your story? Or what is not resolved?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The World of Your Play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where and when is your play located? (Be as accurate as possible).</li> <li>• What are the boundaries (place and time) of the world of the play?</li> <li>• What sounds exist in your play?</li> <li>• What textures exist in your play?</li> <li>• What smells exist in your play?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Style and Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the genre/style of your play?</li> <li>• How do you envision your set? Naturalistic? Expressionistic? Minimalist?</li> <li>• What are some of the conventions and techniques you envision your actors using? Straight dialogue? Direct to audience? Soliloquy? Asides? Singing? Dance? Physical actions/gestures?</li> <li>• How do you envision the lighting?</li> <li>• How do you envision the sound design?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Characters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your characters' full names?</li> <li>• In one simple sentence for each: Why do they NEED to be in the play?</li> <li>• In one simple sentence for each: What stops them from leaving?</li> <li>• What do each of your characters fear?</li> <li>• What brings each of your characters joy?</li> </ul>	<p><b>In a Nutshell</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your play in one sentence?</li> <li>• Who is the hero or anti-hero in the play?</li> <li>• What will your audience be left wondering after they leave the theatre?</li> <li>• Why write this play now?</li> <li>• Could there be a sequel or a longer version of your play? Why? Why not?</li> </ul>

## READING FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play” is an essay that can make for good contemplative reading while you’re conjuring up the world of your story. Don’t get caught up on anything that makes you think too hard or makes you feel stuck. Set it aside and move on to what you do find constructive and generative.

You can find a link to the essay in Further Reading and Resources.

## CREATIVE CAPACITY

Alongside enjoying the freedom of harvesting for your idea, it’s important to acknowledge and understand what I call your creative capacity. This is how much we can do (effectively and joyfully) in a creative session (including writing and research) before burnout. Some days we have increased capacity and some tasks will drain capacity faster than others. This is not a fault, it’s just what it is. Punishing ourselves doesn’t create more creative capacity.

See the links to articles by Psychologist Megan Ann Neff in the Further Reading and Resources section about Pacing Systems, Burnout, and **Spoon Theory**. You will find pacing strategies in the Draft Two section of this resource. Dan Siegel’s **Window of Tolerance** concept is also relevant to creative capacity.



## DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR DRAFT ONE:

- Select and store (harvest) ideas to contribute to the writing of the play.
- Organise the main elements of the play in a way that you can present and talk about it with chosen and trusted others.
- Decide what is the intention of the play. What is the main theme, message, or question of the play? How do you want the audience to feel watching, reading, or listening to your play? If it was a cake, what type of cake would it be and for what occasion?
- Develop an understanding of how you will pace yourself going forwards in line with your creative capacity to avoid burnout.



## DRAFT TWO

**Focus for Draft Two:** Form and arrange your idea it as a dramatic text (i.e., play script).

This stage of writing is more methodical than at Draft One. However, there are still options around how you might approach this.

### DRAFT TWO STRATEGIES

#### Formatting

The formatting strategies are intended to:

1. Assist you to organise your ideas into a play script format.
2. Prompt you to consider how you might want to present your script so that it communicates as clearly as possible your idea to the reader or readers.

You might be thinking, 'do I really need to format my script to standard?!' Imagine your script is going to be performed but you can't have any contact with the production team. They've only got your pages to work with. The clearer and more comprehensive your script formatting, the more likely the produced play will represent what you had imaged when you were writing it.



#### Script Template

A script template can be a helpful tool for organising the ideas you harvested. One way of thinking about this is that you've collected your ingredients and now you're organising them on the countertop to test them together.

At least for your first pass at writing the play script, I'd encourage you to focus more on finding a place in the script for the idea (or ingredients) you wish to keep, as opposed to making the script read or look professionally presentable. Then during a second pass, you can start measuring and shaping the ingredients so that it reads more as intended.

'When I read scripts, I prefer to have as much information as possible. I do appreciate a script with minimal information – Ella Hickson's *The Writer* comes to mind ... as a playwright, I want my director and actors to have alllll the information. I'm literally always worried that my intentions (in life and writing) aren't clear. So, I like to provide lots. [Having a] template allows me to do this in a very "readable" and minimalist way.' – Jamie





Bronwyn pointed out that the template can “lock you in” to writing in a more exclusively technical way. That is, some of that freeing creativity is replaced by too much worrying about formatting. Therefore, it’s important to know that once you start working with a template, you’re not confined to *only* working with a template. Don’t allow it to be your cage. Return to other modes of writing and brainstorming as needed then come back to the template.

Also, it might not be apparent where the ideas you harvested should be placed in your template (formatted script) at first. Allow yourself time and space to decide what should become a line of dialogue or a stage direction. It’s entirely ok to have place to store what is undecided. This might be a separate file or it could be in a “phantom scene” that you put at the end of the script and decide what to do with later. Very few of us solve everything in one day.

## Template Options

Some writers use specialist scriptwriting software and if that’s what works for you, great. Otherwise, you can create a very user-friendly template with [Microsoft Word Styles](#), which is what I do and recommend to others.

You can find Playmarket’s preferred script formatting style [here](#). It’s also worth looking at published scripts to see other formatting options.

In addition, I suggest including the following information at the beginning of your script (as relevant):

- ◆ The title and your name (obviously).
- ◆ Character list with any casting requirements.
- ◆ Production requests and requirements. This could include around accessibility.
- ◆ Music publishing information if there is anything that will be require a licence and/or there are particular versions of songs and music you want to be used.

**Script Reading & Reflection.** Playwrights (should ideally) read plays, and reading other scripts while writing, especially works that are similar in some way (staging, theme, setting) to your own play will:

- Give you ideas for how to present your own text.
- Refine your thinking around both what you do and do not want your play to be.
- Further open up your imagination to what is possible to be staged.



## Pacing & Progress

Burnout and/or procrastination are not uncommon for ND people. This section includes some tools that can help you be consistent with your writing practice.



**Body Doubling.** Body doubling is a practice (primarily for people with ADHD) where you work alongside someone else to complete a task. You don't have to be working on the same task and you don't even have to be in the same place.

[Think Divergent](#) is a free virtual co-working app where you're matched with a stranger for 30 minutes. They will likely be working on something entirely different to you. The point of it is accountability. Bronwyn trialled Think Divergent and confirmed it's legitimate and very user-friendly.

You can also do a form of body doubling by working in a public space such as a library or a café. Jamie and Patty's thoughts on this strategy are that it works well for more menial tasks, but not so much for deep-focused creative work.

**The Pomodoro Technique** uses a timer to break work into 25-minute chunks. The name Pomodoro comes from the tomato kitchen timer used by the Italian (pomodoro = Italian for tomato) student who created this technique. However – and in all honesty – none of us are a fan of this technique, and no-one more so than Jamie, who I quote, 'didn't even try this shit.'



'Seeing an actual countdown timer or even a sand timer would stress me out the most. However, even a timer on say a hidden tab on my computer that will just go off once time is up... would still stress me.' – Patty

If you don't mind alarms and you think 25 minutes is an achievable amount of time to get some of your script onto the page, don't be swayed by us. No judgement on what works for you!

**Writing Cycling.** My rule of thumb is that if you're working on a script you should aim for no fewer than 3 writing sessions per week. This helps ensure that your idea remains active and fresh in your mind. Cramming all your writing into one marathon session takes more effort to make a start on and is more likely to cause burnout.

Writing cycling allows you to have a different focus or approach to each writing session. A writing session does not have to be just writing. A three-day writing cycle could look like:

- ◆ Day one: writing script.
- ◆ Day Two: side-quest research and/or reading scripts or watching shows or movies relevant to your project.
- ◆ Day Three: writing script.

A writing session doesn't have to cover the entire script either. Focusing on one aspect (e.g., dialogue between two characters) or scene or section is more manageable and constructive.

## **Structuring & Dramatic Elements**

Strategies focused on structuring and dramatic elements in your script help for thinking about how you want your script to function to communicate your intent. If we pick up the cake analogy, this would be us considering how the different flavours, smells, textures, and appearance of the cake work together.

Also, by taking one of these strategies in turn you achieve a satisfying writing session without having to be tied to your computer for hours. If you know the purpose of the strategy, it can help solve fundamental issues with the script that might otherwise take much more work and time to address.

**Scene Planning.** Having a scene plan is an effective and efficient way to:

- Map out your play as a whole.
- Identify the main elements of each scene.
- Identify patterns across the entire script.

Even if you don't have separate scenes (for example in a monologue) you could still apply this strategy to different sections of the script.

You can make a scene plan on one page, a whiteboard, or on notecards. Notecards are good if you think you might want to change the order of your scenes. They're also a good, restricted size so you can focus on the most essential information.

For each scene, I recommend including the following information:

<b>Scene Number and/or Title</b>	I like to give scenes titles in drafts so that I can track the theme or function or main action of each scene. I remove these titles later.
<b>Transition into Scene</b>	Reminder of what happens directly before or if there are technical and staging considerations to keep in mind.
<b>Focus and Function</b>	The WHY (intention) of the scene. To remind me how this scene supports the overall intention of the play.
<b>Content/Context</b>	The WHAT of the scene: what happens? Helps track what information is shared and when so that audience can follow the story.
<b>Miscellaneous Thoughts &amp; Questions</b>	Notes as needed for the next draft or anything I'm not yet sure of how to solve.



'I use note cards instead of the actual template. But I write basically all of the same elements on them. I can then move them around easily. As I re-read my draft for editing, I make notes on the back of the cards such as "cut this scene" or "needs to happen earlier" or "need to clarify Ruth's desperation" etc., etc. I've found it very helpful. I guess it's another way of not being overwhelmed by too many screeds of words.' – Jamie

**Character Profile Questions.** Character profile questions can be used to form a clear portrait and identify the function of each character.

The questions below are based on Stanislavski's Given Circumstances (see 'What are Given Circumstances in Acting?' in the Further Reading and Resources section).

- ◆ Who are they? (Including some or all of: name, age, gender, family and cultural background, occupation, beliefs, prejudices, values, physical attributes, hobbies).
- ◆ Where have they come from? Both before the story of the play begins and when the scene(s) begins.
- ◆ Why and how have they come to be here?
- ◆ What are they expecting to happen in the play and/or in each scene?
- ◆ How do their expectations change? If not, why not?
- ◆ How does the setting of the play and each scene influence their behaviour?

'I found it useful to think about these "why" questions. It helps to guide the direction of your play/characters ... so when ideas pop up and/or you're inspired by other works, you can stop to reflect and question whether those ideas suit your play/character.' – Patty



**Tactics.** Dramatic action is a key principle in theatre. Playwrights must consider what their characters are *doing* to get what they want or need throughout the play. We can think of these "doings" as tactics.

- ◆ What tactics does the character use to achieve their objective?
- ◆ What tactics does the character use to overcome their obstacles?

Ideally, you want each character in each scene to use *at least one* tactic (expressed as a transitive verb, see next page) for them to be active, and reactive to other characters. The characters might not be conscious of their tactics, but it's advisable that the playwright is.

Try different tactics to identify how your characters will achieve their objectives and fulfill their needs.

Some Possible Tactics (as transitive verbs).

Reasons	Persuades	Convinces	Coaxes	Caresses
Begs	Pleads	Bullies	Confronts	Inspires
Crushes	Teases	Mocks	Threatens	Intimidates
Negates	Teaches	Lectures	Bribes	Flatters
Entices	Insults	Patronizes	Belittles	Charms
Destabilizes	Disorientates	Diminishes	Softens	Provokes
Challenges	Impresses	Surprises	Compliments	Undermines
Overwhelms	Annihilates	Peacocks	Touches	Encourages
Suppresses	Aggravates	Tricks	Lies	Rejects
Soothes	Enchants	Antagonizes	Incites	Appeals
Commands	Reassures	Includes	Excludes	Ensnares

This exercise was informed and inspired by one shared by playwright Simon Stephens (see Further Reading and Resources).

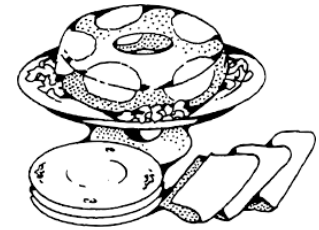
## **KEY DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR DRAFT TWO:**

- Prioritise what from our (Draft One) script store will be included in the script.
- Adopt a pacing or progress system (formal or informal) for our writing that makes time for special interest research.
- Look at some other plays for ideas on how we might want to present our own.
- Complete a first full draft of our script with (mostly) conventional formatting.

## DRAFT THREE

**Focus for Three:** To shape your script so that how it reads as accurately as possible to how you imagine it staged.

Returning to the cake analogy, how do you want your play to be served? Will it be spectacular with candles and elaborate frosting? Accompanied by music? Or is it more of a simple afternoon tea cake? What will be the dominant flavours when your guests take their first bite?



## DRAFT THREE STRATEGIES

### Framing

These strategies are intended to frame how you work on your script, i.e., identifying a conscious writing routine for this particular script. Another way of thinking about this, is how you as the writer “enters” the world of the story at the beginning of a writing session.

In the preface to her play *The Wolves* (about a girls’ soccer team; NY: Overlook Press, 2018), Sarah DeLappe writes:

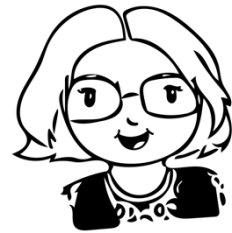
*‘I wrote this play in a sports bra. I am not an athlete in my current life and hadn’t worn one since high school. I would take off my shirt, take off my bra, pull on the sports bra over my chest, and sit down to write. I overshare not to advocate for method writing (although ...) but to suggest just what sort of play this play was from the start. Physical. Concerned with the body, with women’s bodies, not as eye candy or symbolic vessels but as muscular, dexterous, capable, contradictory, and fallible individuals.’*

Some possibilities for your framing routine could include:

- ◆ Putting on particular items of clothing.
- ◆ Playing a specific piece of music at the beginning and end of a writing session (you could include these tracks in a suggested pre- and post-show playlist in your script).
- ◆ Revisiting a scene or section or image from another work that has inspired your approach or project.
- ◆ Reciting a line or phrase to yourself.
- ◆ A physical routine (a warm-up or something that represents how a character moves).
- ◆ Sampling a taste or smell or texture connected to the script.



'Love the idea of a framing routine to get you into writing ... Music is the thing that my brain works with best. My piece is set in a retail store and music plays throughout. I don't think tedious retail music is going to work for me. Instead, I'm imagining what one of the characters would listen to and build their playlist out.' – Bronwyn



'I'm very kinaesthetic so found it easy to "rush around" like my main character but it led me to be too stressed to write. It was helpful to determine what actions my lead character would take, however.' – Jamie

## Patterns

These strategies are to identify and reaffirm patterns and their function in your script to reinforce intention.

**Dramatic metaphor.** Does your play have an overarching dramatic metaphor? And how is this apparent in the script?

An example of a dramatic metaphor is found in Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible* in which the 17<sup>th</sup> century Salem witch trials are a metaphor for McCarthyism in 1950s America. (see Further Reading and Resources for more on dramatic metaphor).



'My piece has some larger political commentary so it was a good lens to re-look at the script and analyse what I was using to carry the message instead of blatantly saying it.' – Bronwyn

'In my play, the character's initial desire to be a "star" in order to "look down on others" is a dramatic metaphor for peoples' and countries' desire for domination. While I had thought about dramatic metaphor when originally writing my piece, actually stopping to pinpoint the metaphor and allowing myself to focus on this aspect whilst rewriting really helped inform my edits and additions.' – Patty



**Symbols and motifs.** What symbols and motifs appear in your script that reinforce your intention? If you are using a motif, I suggest it should appear at least 3 times in a short play. You could re-use the scene planning strategy from Draft Two for this exercise (see Further Reading and Resources for more on motifs and symbols).

**Song.** Think of song as an analogy for structure and arc of play:

- Change and patterns of pace, tone, and energy across verses and chorus.
- Repetition is used not only to reinforce meaning but also has an aesthetic purpose.

What type of song would your play be?

## **Revisiting, Revising, & Reaffirming your Intention**

To recap: Intention is what you're wanting to show and for an audience to understand about the topic of your play.

In his book *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021: pp. 19-21) author George Saunders explains his approach to writing workshops:

*'It's no good to start making suggestions about a story until we've agreed on what it's trying to do. (If a complicated machine showed up in your yard, you wouldn't start altering it and "improving" it until you had some idea of its intended function.)'*

A key focus at this stage of writing is being able to ensure you have identified and can articulate your intention so that you take the lead in determining how the play should function to realise this. This is especially important if your script is to be workshopped or rehearsed by others.

The following strategies are to help reaffirm your intention.

**Imagined discussion.** Imagine a discussion between 2–3 audience members after watching your play. What thoughts and questions might they have about what the characters do next? What lines, images, or themes from the play would stay with them?

'I know what I WANT the audience to be discussing – and so this strategy helped me take out some "clever jokes" and other plot points or lines that just weren't necessary. Sure, they were clever. But they didn't serve my purpose.' – Jamie



**Word Cloud.** This might be a repeat strategy (from Draft One), but now that you have completed a full draft, it could be worthwhile creating a Word Cloud to see which words from the script are most prominent (hopefully reinforcing your intention).

**Feedback questions.** Feedback Questions allow you to direct and have some control over what others share with you about your script. Unfocused or too much feedback makes attempting re-drafting overwhelming. It also risks the play not being a product of your voice but more a noisy conversation between others who don't know all the background of how you came to write the play in the first place and may not have the same objectives and vision around how you want to see it produced.

It's generally not constructive to know of others' "likes" when requesting feedback. Therefore, avoid subjective language as much as possible. Instead, use questions that allow you to examine how the various elements in the play function to serve your intention.

It can be helpful and constructive to limit yourself to 3 feedback questions. These could include:

- ◆ Something others would want to keep/save from the script if they could only pick one thing.
- ◆ Something they want to see or hear more of.
- ◆ Something that they do not understand in the current draft.

NB: Feedback is not a test for you or anyone else involved in a workshop of reading. It's a tool to aid you moving forward with the next draft of your script.

**Review.** Write a short review (under 200 words) for an imagined first and *successful* production of your script.

'This strategy allowed me a clearer understanding of what I wanted observers to take with them. It's also a strategy that is really helpful when I'm feeling stuck.' – Jamie



## Drafting Passes

These strategies are to give you a focus for separate “passes” working on this third draft of your script. Passes can be helpful for managing **Time Agnosia** (or Time Blindness) as you’re setting yourself an achievable and clearly defined task.

Passes could be divided into:

- ◆ Focusing on **dialogue** so that the characters’ words sound as you’d like. Suggest either, speaking the dialogue aloud to yourself or recording the dialogue and playing it back to yourself.
- ◆ Focusing on the **production elements** in the script, including Character, Staging, Props, and Music notes (usually at the beginning of the script), and Stage Directions in the script.
- ◆ Focusing on **formatting** (how the text presents on the page)
- ◆ Focusing on **proofing** for spelling and grammar.

‘I focused on dialogue for one of these passes, in an attempt to see how different I was making the characters’ voices on the page. In my head they were both very distinctive, but when looking through, they didn’t have distinct vocabularies or tones, despite a difference in status, generation and stakes in the scene.’ – Bronwyn



‘I find it really difficult to break tasks down. I think I find it overwhelming to break a giant task into 100 small tasks. But also overwhelming to view it as one big task. Having a specific focus almost splits the difference between the two. I’m still looking at my entire script but with a specific lens.’ – Jamie

‘Going into a session knowing what my focus is and what lens I plan to look at my script, makes the task more manageable and less daunting for me to sit down to begin. It also helps me to stay on task. For example, I’m someone who often reads my writing out loud. But, if I know that my focus is formatting, then I can save the talking to myself for another time.’ – Patty



## Safe Anchor

The aim of completing Draft Three is that you have a script that you're comfortable sharing with others you trust or who you wish to consider the script for competitions, festivals, and suchlike.

Revisit your Safe Anchor to gauge how this draft of the script aligns with your Trust and Setting Conditions for the Process. If in doubt, take a pause and discuss your concerns with your dramaturg, mentor, or a trusted friend before proceeding.



## Finally! – Facing up to Perfection

What is perfect on the day? Don't lose sight of the occasion and people sharing in it.

A playscript is not a finished work on its own, but a manuscript that will guide other creative team members in realising your vision. It is standard and to be expected that you will make changes once you hear the dialogue spoken by actors, ideas are shared by the design team, or a director or producer asks a question you hadn't considered. But so long as your vision and intention have been communicated to the best of your ability in the script, the team can help achieve that goal also.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR DRAFT THREE:

- A completed draft of your script that clearly communicates your intention of the play.
- A completed draft of your script that you would be comfortable with someone else reading.
- A clear idea of your intention for the script and how you would like to proceed from here.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary is not a comprehensive catalogue of terms relating to neurodiversity, but informs and expands on those included in this resource.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	A neurodevelopmental condition that impacts the part of our brain that helps us to plan, control impulses and execute tasks (Source: <a href="#">ADHD New Zealand</a> ).
ADHD Paralysis	Is when a person with ADHD is overwhelmed by their environment or the amount of information given. As a result, they freeze and aren't able to think or function effectively. This makes it challenging for the individual to focus and complete their tasks—including urgent ones (Source: <a href="#">add.org</a> ).
Aroreretini	Te Reo for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Meaning the mind goes to many things (Source: <a href="#">Te Reo Hāpai</a> ).
Associative Thinking	A relatively uncontrolled cognitive activity in which the mind wanders without specific direction among elements, based on their connections (associations) with one another, as occurs during reverie, daydreaming, and free association (Source: <a href="#">APA</a> ).
Autism	Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects how autistic people perceive the world, think and behave, and communicate and interact with others (Source: <a href="#">Altogether Autism</a> ).
Autistic Inertia	Resistance to a change in state: difficulty starting, stopping or changing direction. This is central to many of the difficulties autistic people face in life, but it is also part of what makes autistic thinking distinctive and valuable. (Source: <a href="#">Me and Monotropism</a> by Fergus Murray).
Body Doubling	ADHD body doubling is a practice where a person with ADHD works on and completes potentially frustrating tasks with another person. This other person is the “body double” for the person with ADHD. (Source: <a href="#">Medical News Today</a> ). Here's a <a href="#">short video</a> that explains body doubling.

Burnout	The three primary characteristics of neurodivergent burnout include: chronic exhaustion, reduced tolerance to stimulus, and loss of skills (e.g., reduced executive functioning such as thinking, remembering, creating and executing plans, performing basic self-care skills, and activities in daily living). (Source: <a href="#">Neurodivergent Insights</a> ).
Cognitive Empathy	AKA Perspective taking. Knowing how the other person feels and what they might be thinking (Source: <a href="#">Embrace Autism</a> )
Dramaturg	Someone with knowledge of the history, theory, and practice of theatre who helps a director, designer, playwright, or actor realise their intentions in production (Source: <a href="#">The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance</a> ).
Dyscalculia	A learning disorder that affects a person's ability to understand number-based information and math. (Source: <a href="#">Cleveland Clinic</a> ).
Dysgraphia	The condition of impaired letter writing by hand, that is, disabled handwriting. (Source: <a href="#">International Dyslexia Association</a> ).
Emotional Empathy	Also known as Affective Empathy. When you feel what the other person is experiencing, as though their emotions are contagious. People with Autism tend to be high in emotional empathy (Source: <a href="#">Embrace Autism</a> ).
Glimmers	Small moments when our biology is in a place of connection or regulation, which cues our nervous system to feel safe or calm (Source: <a href="#">Neurodiversity Academy</a> ).
Hyperfixation	Intense focus on one thing to the exclusion of everything else. It can have both negative or positive consequences (Source: <a href="#">Oxford Specialist Tutors</a> ).
Masking	When neurodivergent people hide certain traits and replace them with neurotypical ones to avoid being recognised as neurominorities. (Source: <a href="#">The Conversation</a> ).
Māuiui Whakaauau	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (Source: <a href="#">Te Reo Hapai</a> ).

Monotropism	A theory of autism which was first developed by autistics Dinah Murray and Wenn Lawson. 'In a nutshell, monotropism is the tendency for our interests to pull us in more strongly than most people. It rests on a model of the mind as an "interest system": we are all interested in many things, and our interests help direct our attention. Different interests are salient at different times. In a monotropic mind, fewer interests tend to be aroused at any time, and they attract more of our processing resources, making it harder to deal with things outside of our current attention tunnel.' (Source: <a href="#">Monotropism</a> ).
Monotropic Split	A very specific type of attentional trauma experienced by monotropic people who are regularly exceeding their attentional resources in an effort to meet the demands of living in a world designed for non-monotropic (polytropic) people, inevitably leading to burnout (Source: <a href="#">Stimpunks</a> ).
Neurodivergent	Refers to someone whose brain processes information in a way that is not typical of most individuals. These people may have learning disabilities, autism, attention deficit and anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Tourette's syndrome. Through a neurodiversity lens, such conditions reflect different ways of being that are all normal human experiences (Source: <a href="#">University of Washington</a> ).
Neurodiverse	Describes a group of neurodivergent individuals, it also refers to all of humankind because everyone has a unique way of processing information (Source: <a href="#">University of Washington</a> ).
Neurotypical	Neurologically typical. A word to describe neurologically typical (and sometimes, non-autistic) individuals.
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).	A disorder most commonly characterised by a subject's obsessive, distressing, intrusive thoughts, and related compulsions (tasks or 'rituals') which attempt to neutralise the obsessions.
Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)	A profile of autism that is characterised by an intense, pervasive drive for autonomy and a heightened sensitivity to demands that threaten that autonomy. People with PDA can experience a fight, flight, or freeze response when faced with demands that threaten their autonomy, which can trigger intense emotional reactions (Source: <a href="#">Neurodivergent Insights</a> ).



Sensory Overload & Sensory Regulation	Sensory overload occurs when the nervous system becomes overwhelmed by the amount or intensity of sensory information it receives. For people with sensory processing difficulties, including autism, ADHD, or sensory processing disorder, this filtering and organising process may not work as effectively. As a result, they may experience heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli and have difficulty regulating their responses (Source: <a href="#">Neurodivergent Insights</a> ).
Spoon Theory	Describes the idea of people living with chronic illness or disability as having limited energy, using "spoons" as a unit of energy (Source: <a href="#">Healthline</a> ).
Takiwātanga	Autism. From 'tōku/tōna anō takiwā' - 'my/his/her own time and space'. (Source: <a href="#">Te Reo Hāpai</a> ).
Time Agnosia	AKA Time Blindness. Difficulties with tasks related to time, such as estimating how long an activity will take, sticking to schedules, and recognising when it's appropriate to start or finish tasks (Source: <a href="#">Healthline</a> ).
Verbal Processing	The cognitive and linguistic functions involved in understanding, producing, and manipulating language through speech or inner speech. Simply put, thinking in words (Source: <a href="#">Medium</a> )
Window of Tolerance	A concept coined by Dan Siegel in his 1999 book <i>The Developing Mind</i> . Siegel proposes that everyone has a range of intensities of emotional experience which they can comfortably experience, process, and integrate (Source: <a href="#">Psychology Tools</a> ).

## FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

The following is not a complete bibliography, but a list of the key texts and resources that informed the research.

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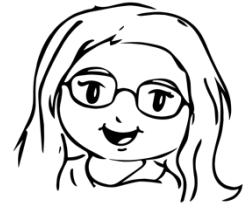
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ngā mihi nui to those who helped, guided, sent me side-quest leads, and provided support during the research and writing of this project.



*Between the Lines* would have been an entirely different undertaking if I didn't have the participation of three Ōtepoti-based playwrights who are both creative colleagues and friends.

Thank you to Stefan Lane, Dr Radha O'Meara, and The Voice Lab New Zealand.

*Between the Lines* was undertaken in partnership with Prospect Park Productions NZ, and while the company is no longer operating, its legacy and the many efforts that co-director H-J Kilkelly and I undertook to improve accessibility in our work lives on through this project.

The Whakahoā Kaitoi Te Puna Toi Arts for All Fellowship is one of the very few of its type, and I am honoured and grateful that Arts Access Aotearoa recognised the value of *Between the Lines* alongside their considerable body of work and on-going advocacy for accessibility in the arts and d/Deaf and disabled arts practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Special thanks to Caleb Gordon, Stace Robertson, Iona McNaughton, Milly Hampton, and Rachel Tate who provided the NZSL interpretation for my Arts for All Network National Zui presentation June 2024.