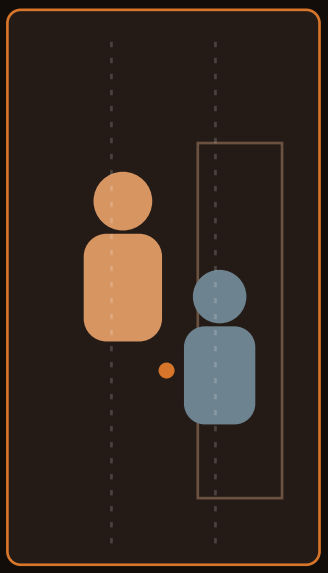
SuperReel

A FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Vertical Storytelling Starter Kit

A small frame. A clear dramatic choice.
A reason to watch the next chapter.



01 Frame the relationship

02 Plan one fictional scene

03 Use the printable worksheet

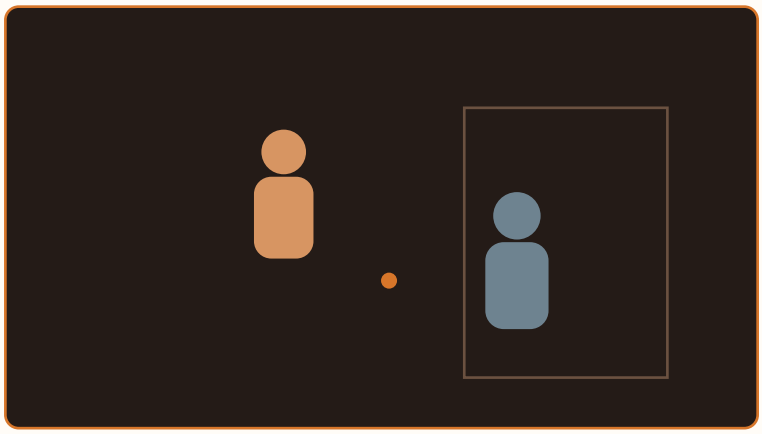
For filmmakers, writers and curious viewers. Includes original schematic diagrams, an invented scene, a shot-and-sound plan and a reusable checklist.

superreel.fun/blog

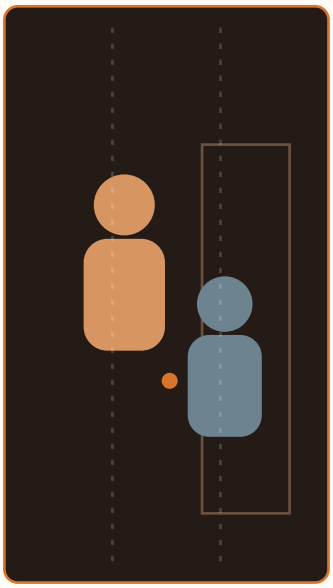
No unreleased series, characters or footage.

Compose for the information.

A vertical drama is built for an upright frame. The useful question is what the viewer needs to notice, and when.



16:9 composition. Two people and the room share the width.



9:16 composition. Depth can carry the relationship and the clue.

Re-stage the moment; do not just crop it.

A narrow crop can remove a hand, a second person or the doorway that explains the scene. Start by choosing the emotional subject, then place the next important clue where the viewer can read it.

Choose one point of attention. An expression, a hand or a threshold can lead the moment. Let the rest support it.

Use depth with intention. A person in front and a door behind can create a relationship without forcing both faces into a tight two-shot.

Check the actual phone view. Keep meaningful action clear of captions and interface overlays. Their positions vary by platform and device; test the intended destination.

Diagrams are original teaching schematics. Neither layout is a universal rule. The example uses a common 9:16 portrait ratio; vertical work can use other ratios.

One scene. A changing relationship.

“The spare key” is an invented teaching exercise. It is not a SuperReel series, pilot or production announcement.

SETUP

Evening. Asha is closing a small tailoring shop. Her brother Leo arrives at the glass door with an old brass key in his right palm.

LEO

Before you ask, I didn’t take it. Mum left it in my coat, with a note saying you’d know which door it opens.

ASHA

She hasn’t called me in twelve years. Why would she send me a key now, through you?

LEO

Because I said you’d still let me in.

ACTION

Asha lets him enter. He passes the key from his right hand to her left. A latch clicks behind the closed fitting-room door. Leo looks toward it before Asha does.

A VOICE, FROM INSIDE

Ask him what he opened.

CUT

Asha looks back at Leo. This time she closes her hand around the key.

The change: Asha begins by deciding whether to admit her brother. She ends questioning his account of the key. The next chapter owes the viewer a meaningful answer about what Leo opened.

Four shots that each do a job.

This is one possible coverage plan. Shot count and runtime are creative choices, not rules for the format.

1 At the threshold

Picture: Hold Asha near the foreground; show Leo through the glass. Let his open hand enter the lower-middle frame.

Dramatic job: Establish who controls entry.

Sound: Interior room tone, distant traffic, a knock.

2 A natural exchange

Picture: Move inside with them. Keep the fitting-room door readable behind Leo while the dialogue develops.

Dramatic job: Connect the brother to the door before the audience knows why.

Sound: Continue the same room tone. Let pauses remain audible.

3 The handoff

Picture: Show the key leave Leo’s right palm and arrive in Asha’s left hand. Keep the screen direction consistent.

Dramatic job: Make the object transfer unambiguous.

Sound: One restrained key sound; cloth movement.

4 The changed look

Picture: Return to Asha and Leo with the closed door in context. The latch clicks; Leo looks first; the voice speaks.

Dramatic job: Turn the object into a question about trust.

Sound: Latch, then the off-screen line. Leave room for the reaction.

Continuity note: Leo starts with the key in his right hand. Asha receives it in her left and keeps it there. The fitting-room door stays closed throughout this exercise.

Let the scene breathe.

A short episode can contain a complete exchange. Compression should preserve what people mean and how their relationship changes.

Dialogue: give each person a reason.

Leo wants admission and belief. Asha wants an explanation. Their sentences respond to each other; neither is simply delivering background for the viewer.

Pause: make the hesitation readable.

A held look before Asha unlocks the shop can reveal reluctance. Use a pause when the picture or sound carries something, rather than stretching empty time.

Sound: keep a believable place.

Maintain a continuous sense of the shop as the camera position changes. A knock, fabric movement and a latch provide specific information. Music is optional; it should leave the dialogue intelligible.

Captions: preserve the clue.

Caption dialogue and meaningful sounds. Keep text readable against the image and away from the key or important expressions. Decide deliberately how to identify an off-screen speaker without revealing more than the story intends.

The ending: earn the next chapter.

The off-screen line changes how Asha sees Leo. The continuation should develop that consequence and answer something substantive, rather than repeatedly postponing the same reveal.

A useful review question
After this scene, what does the character believe or choose that was different before it? If nothing changes, identify the missing dramatic turn before adding more shots.

Build your own short scene.

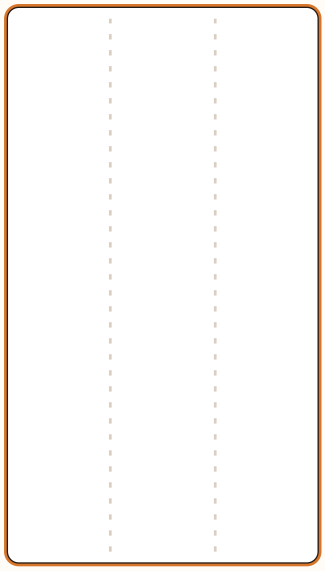
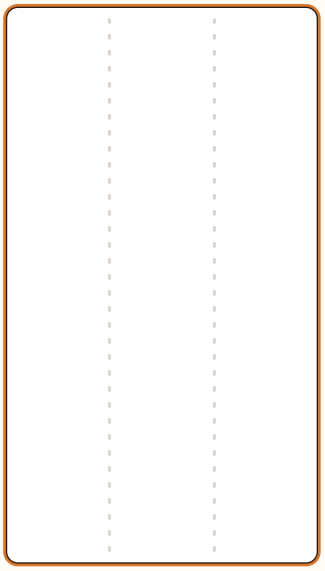
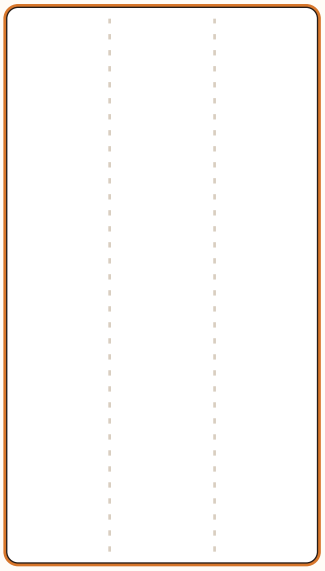
Print this page or annotate a copy. Use the boxes to plan attention and depth, not to draw a perfect storyboard.

Scene / working title: _____

Who wants what? _____

What changes by the end? _____

What must the viewer notice? _____

SETUP	CHANGE	CONSEQUENCE
		
Focus: _____	**Focus:** _____	**Focus:** _____
Action: _____	**Action:** _____	**Action:** _____
Sound: _____	**Sound:** _____	**Sound:** _____

Continuity to preserve: _____

The next chapter owes: _____

Phone-view issue to test: _____

Before you call it ready.

A compact review checklist for a scene, a storyboard or an early cut.

- ☐ I can describe the character’s immediate goal in one sentence.
- ☐ The situation changes during the scene.
- ☐ The key action is understandable without extra explanation.
- ☐ Framing shows the relationships and clues the scene needs.
- ☐ Hand positions, props and screen direction remain coherent.
- ☐ Dialogue sounds like people responding to each other.
- ☐ Speech is intelligible and sound supports the same place.
- ☐ Captions preserve essential information and leave clues visible.
- ☐ The ending follows from the scene and creates a meaningful question.
- ☐ The planned continuation delivers a consequence or an answer.

Keep learning

SuperReel: Vertical Drama Explained

SuperReel: What Makes a Short Drama Feel Cinematic?

Adobe: Aspect ratio and storytelling

W3C: Understanding captions for prerecorded media

The scene, diagrams, shot plan and worksheet are original educational material by SuperReel. Text developed with AI assistance. External links provide further reading, not endorsement. Methods are creative suggestions, not platform requirements or performance guarantees.

Share the guide with a colleague. When referencing it online, credit SuperReel and link to its official journal. SuperReel creates original short drama and microdrama for vertical viewing.