

SCENE VERSIONS

In another article I discussed the powerful “alternates” feature of **Fade In**. That feature allows a writer to work on and save multiple versions of a paragraph.

How About Scenes?

I do not know how often the need arises, but at least occasionally it will be convenient to have multiple versions, not only of paragraphs, but of whole scenes.

Reasons for creating multiple scene versions. I can immediately think of three circumstances when having multiple versions of a scene would be helpful.

1. *Alternative approaches.* When the writer is exploring different ways to handle portions of the story, it is convenient to write different versions and have each readily available. I would think that this is the most common reason for having different scene versions.
2. *Language considerations.* The writer may want to create R-rated and PG-rated versions of a script. In some instances, the script has only a few scenes that are offensive in terms of nudity, vulgar language, and excessively graphic violence. The writer may want to create cleaner versions of these scenes and have them ready to use instead of having to rewrite them later. I know that I am speaking in the abstract here, but it is certainly possible to have the same story and to craft one version for something like cable TV and another version for a religious production company. Again, the differences might involve only a few scenes.
3. *Technical and money considerations.* Some screenplays have settings, props, actions, and characters that make them expensive or difficult to produce. I have read scripts that involved airplanes and boats and all kinds of special effects, and included children and animals. All of these are expensive or problematical or both. They might be fine if they really contribute to the film and if the budget is large enough to pay for them. But sometimes a few scene trimmings here and there can reduce production expenses and a lot of grief.

Whatever the reason for writing different scene versions, the Scene Versions feature is a really nice one to have in a screenwriting program.

How to Create the Scene Versions

I am going to walk you through a very simple example that shows you the steps to use to take a scene and then create two other versions of it. Consequently, you will have three versions.

A Reassurance. Before I launch into the creation and deletion of scenes, I want to offer a reassuring fact. It is impossible to lose the currently open scene when you delete scenes from your list of available versions. This requires some explanation. You manage your scene versions through a dialog window. With this dialog you can rename the scene labels,

change to a different version, or delete a version. In fact, you can delete *all the versions* from the list, including the one that is currently open. However, the version that is already open remains present in the screenplay itself. When you delete it through the dialog window, it is only deleted from the list of available versions.

An Example. First, here is a simple scene that shows a young couple moving into a house. Two little boys come along on their bicycles, and they speak to the man of the house. I am calling this version the ORIGINAL version.

(VERSION) ORIGINAL

EXT. GRAYSON HOUSE — DAY

A large moving van is parked in front of the house. Two movers finish up their job by putting away a dolly and closing various doors of the truck.

Two little boys, about 7 and 9, ride along the street on bicycles. They stop close by and watch the two movers.

One of the movers slides the loading door of the van closed. The other mover passes a clipboard to Pierce, who signs something on it.

The movers get into the van and drive off.

OLDER KID

Hey, mister, you got any kids?

PIERCE

No, not yet.

YOUNGER KID

Did you know they call this the Snake House?

Hesper pops out of the house and yells at Pierce.

HESPER

Hey, slowpoke, let's get to work. It's ten o'clock. We can open some boxes before lunchtime.

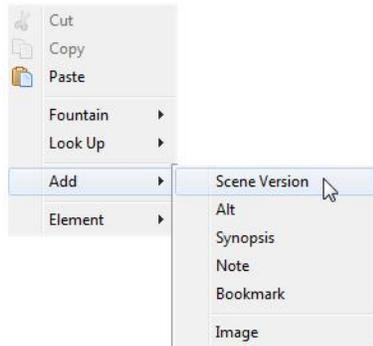
OLDER KID

Bye, mister.

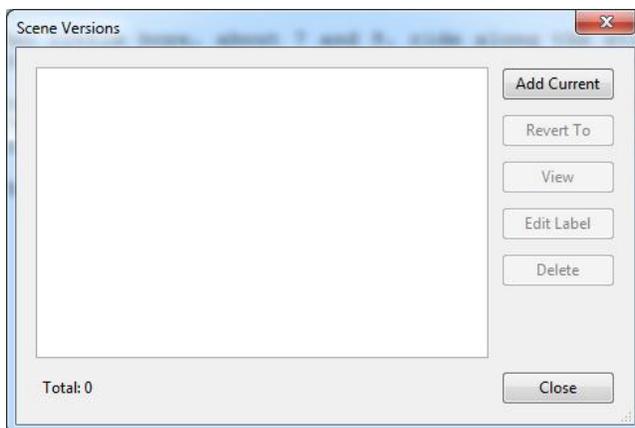
The Kids ride off on their bicycles.

Creating the First Version. So what do I do now to keep this as a version that I can retrieve later if I need to?

It is simple. I right-click *anywhere* in the scene, and when I do, I see this menu:

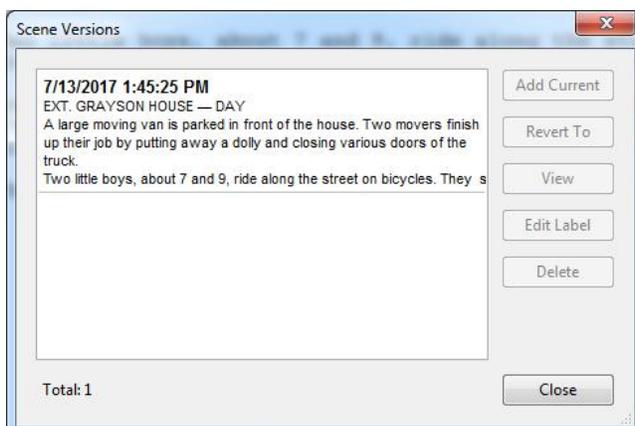


I click **Add** and then **Scene Version**. And now I see:



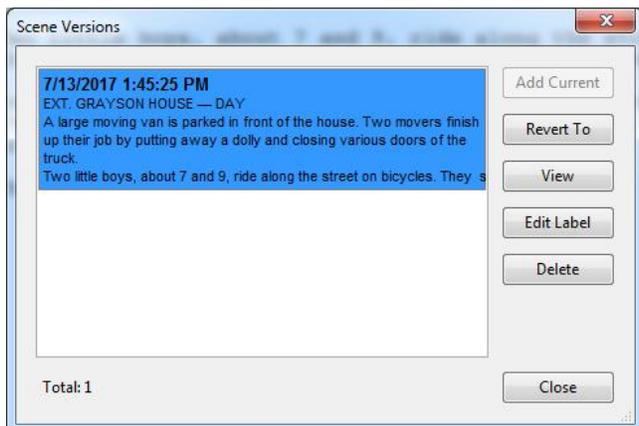
Nothing is there — because I have not created a scene version. I have a scene in the screenplay, but I have not added it as a version. To create a version, I click the **Add Current** button.

And now my scene is available in the Scene Versions list.

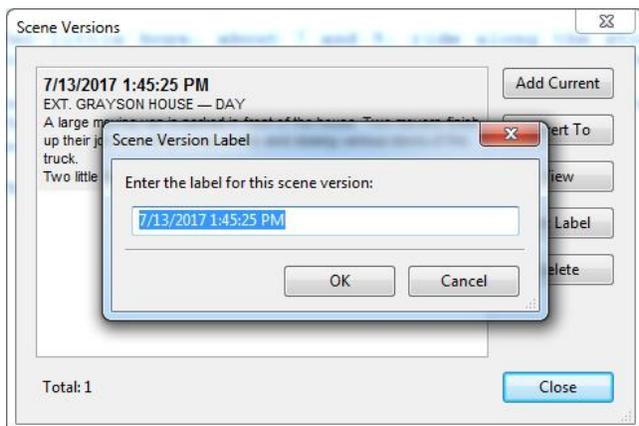


But all the buttons are grayed out except **Close** — so what the heck do I do! Answer: The

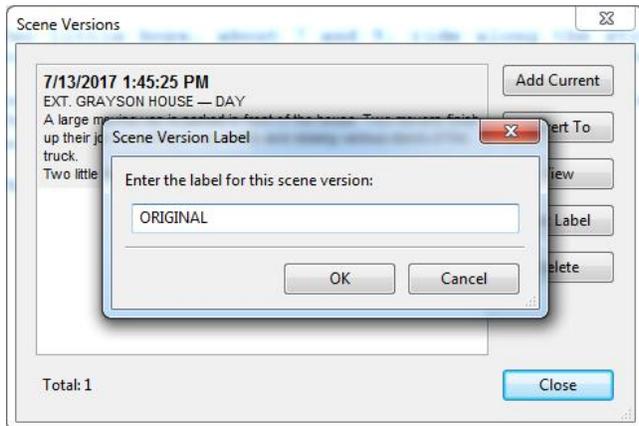
trick is to click on the text that is visible. Voilà — the buttons become active.



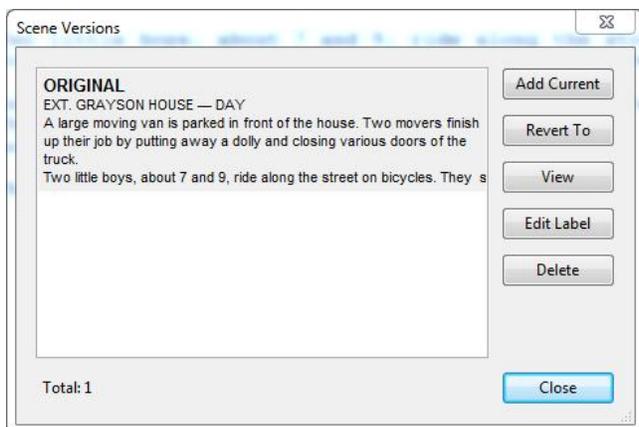
The date-and-time label in bold at the top of the version is not as helpful as a descriptive tag. So I click on **Edit Label** and get a pop-up dialog that shows the current label.



I change the label to ORIGINAL.



Finally, I click **OK** and see my version with a proper label.



I click **Close**, and I am back in the editing window.

Creating the Second Version. I want to revise the scene and still have the kids in it, but without any dialogue. I also want the kids to behave differently. In the first version, they were unafraid and inquisitive. But now, instead of stopping to watch the movers and talk to Pierce, they pedal their bikes faster as they ride by the house.

To create this second version, I simply edit the scene. Then I save it as a version and rename the tag to KIDS - NO TALK. Here are the steps involved:

I rewrite the scene to be like I want it. Strictly for illustration, I have marked new or changed text in **blue**. Deleted text is, of course, just gone.

(VERSION) KIDS - NO TALK

EXT. GRAYSON HOUSE — DAY

A large moving van is parked in front of the house. Two movers finish up their job by putting away a dolly and closing various doors of the truck.

Two little boys, about 7 and 9, ride along the street on bicycles. **When they approach the moving van, they pedal their bikes faster. The younger kid glances at the house apprehensively. They ride by the house as fast as they can.**

One of the movers slides the loading door of the van closed. The other mover passes a clipboard to Pierce, who signs something on it.

The movers get into the van and drive off.

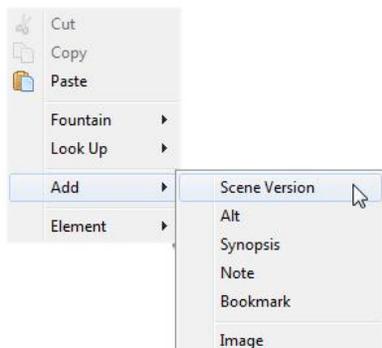
Hesper pops out of the house and yells at Pierce.

HESPER

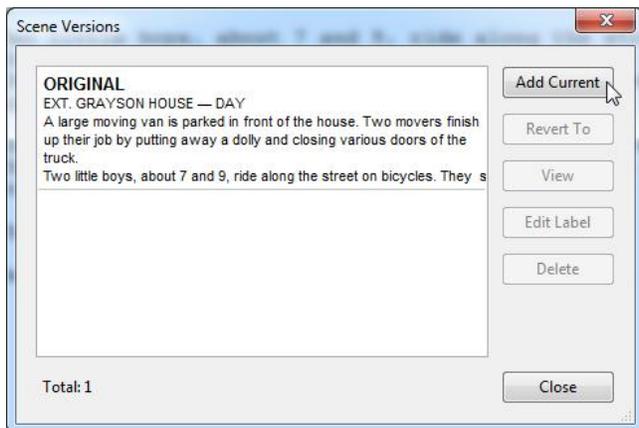
Hey, slowpoke, let's get to work. It's ten o'clock. We can open some boxes before

lunchtime.

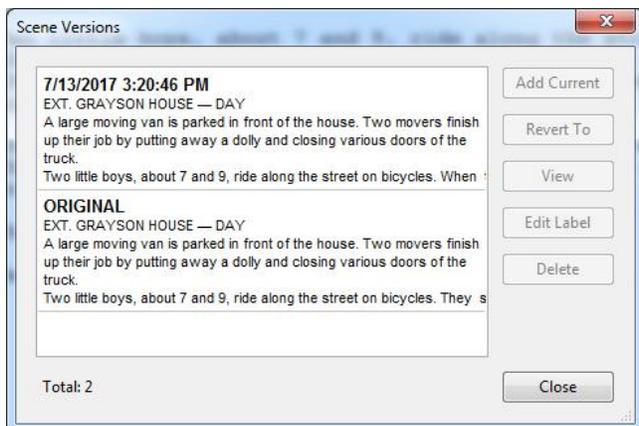
Having revised my scene for a second version, I right-click anywhere in the scene to bring up the menu that I have already seen.



The Scene Versions dialog pops up.

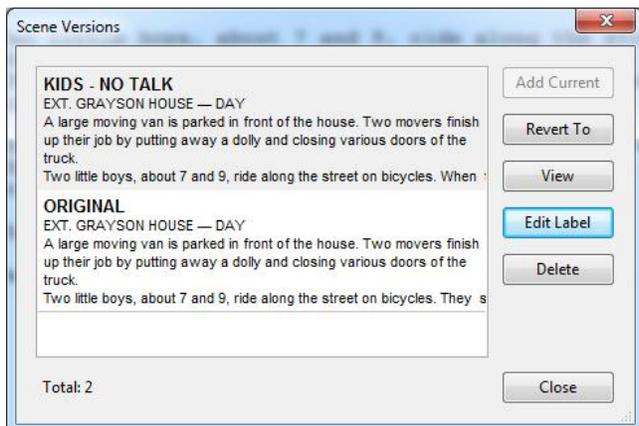


To add the second version (which is currently displayed) I click **Add Current**. The menu now shows the second version, which has a date-and-time label.



To change the label, I click on the text, just as before, and then click **Edit Label**. I change the

label to KIDS - NO TALK, and now my Scene Versions dialog looks like this:



When I close the Scene Versions dialog, I am back in the editing screen. I am ready to create a third version.

Creating the Third Version.

In this third version, the kids are gone entirely. But one of the movers speaks and reveals some tantalizing information.

The first step, of course, is to revise the scene to be the way that I want it for the third version.

Altered or new text is in **blue**. After I create the version, I will edit the label to be NO KIDS - DRIVER SPEAKS.

(VERSION) NO KIDS - DRIVER SPEAKS

EXT. GRAYSON HOUSE — DAY

A large moving van is parked in front of the house. Two movers, a DRIVER and a HELPER, finish up their job by putting away a dolly and closing various doors of the truck.

The Helper slides the loading door of the van closed. The Driver passes a clipboard to Pierce, who signs something on it.

PIERCE

Thanks a lot, fellows.

DRIVER

You know, we delivered here a year ago. Then we had to do a pickup for the same people about six months later. They didn't say much. They just acted nervous, and muttered something about snakes.

PIERCE

Oh, yeah ... I understand.

DRIVER

I'm glad somebody does. Good luck.

The movers get into the van and drive off.

Hesper pops out of the house and yells at Pierce.

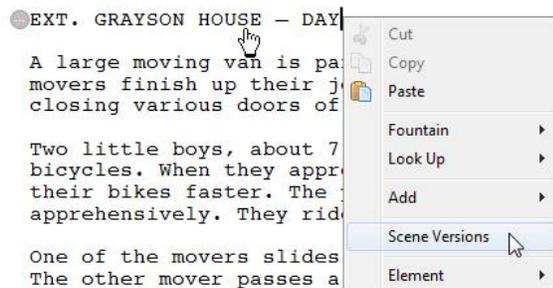
HESPER

Hey, slowpoke, let's get to work. It's ten o'clock. We can open some boxes before lunchtime.

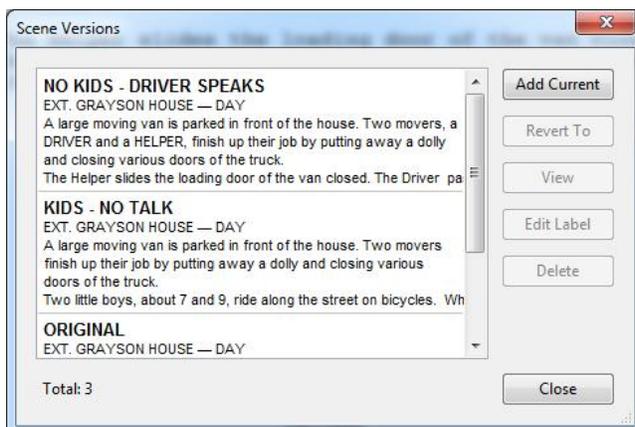
I go through the same steps again to add this scene to the Scene Versions list. And, of course, I edit the label to be something descriptive.

Check the Scene Versions. Now that I have three scenes, I want to see what the list looks like.

This time, instead of right-clicking just anywhere within the scene, I am going to right-click specifically in the scene heading. I select the Scene Versions item in the pop-up menu:



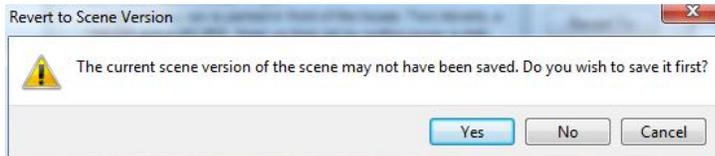
And then I see my three scenes:



If I decide that I want to go back to my ORIGINAL scene, I click on ORIGINAL. The buttons become active, and I select **Revert To**. As soon as I do this, my scene in the script reverts to

the ORIGINAL version.

NOTE: Let's say that I have three scene versions in the list. I go back to the editing screen, where I may or may not make some changes. But then I decide that I really want to stick with one of the three versions that I already have. So I go to the Scene Versions list, where I try to revert to, maybe, the ORIGINAL version. When I click **Revert To**, a warning pops up to ask me if I want to save my work.



Fade In issues this warning because it thinks that I may have forgotten to save a new (fourth) version. If I revert to another version without saving any recent changes to a fourth version, those changes are lost. However, this warning is confusing, because **Fade In** issues it even if I have made no changes to the current scene. If I do not want to create a fourth version, I just click **No** and move on.

The Scene Versions feature is yet another powerful tool that **Fade In** provides.

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