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Movies that pass the bechdel test

If you want your script to stand out, you need more than witty banter and dramatic plot twists. You need characters—especially women—who actually talk to each other about something besides a guy. That’s where the Bechdel Test comes in, and honestly, it’s not as basic as it sounds. You’re about to dive into these movies that pass the bechdel test, and trust me, this list isn’t just another round of film trivia. It’s a look at how real conversations between women can make your story smarter, sharper, and more authentic. If you care about making better movies (or just want to survive your next film festival Q&A), understanding this stuff is non-negotiable. Before we dive into the list, let’s get one thing straight: What exactly is the Bechdel Test? Originating from a 1985 comic strip by Alison Bechdel, the test calls out how rarely women get meaningful dialogue in films. To pass, a movie must meet three simple criteria: It must have at least two named female characters. They must talk to each other. Their conversation must be about something other than a man. Sounds easy, right? You’d be surprised how many films fail this. But when movies pass—and do it with intention—they often end up with richer characters, smarter dialogue, and stories that reflect the real world a little more honestly.
Release Date: November 27, 2013Stars: Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel, Josh GadBox Office: \$1.28 billionBudget: \$150 millionFun Fact: "Let It Go" was written in a single day and changed the entire direction of Elsa's character. Yes, that Disney juggernaut with the ice queen and the earworm song passes the Bechdel Test. No, it's not just because Anna and Elsa share the screen—a lot of the time, they're actually talking about more than just men. Think about it: sisters hashing things out, plans to save a kingdom, or the whole "please stop freezing everything" debate. If you're writing for families, know that Disney finally got wise with Frozen. It's not just singing snowmen and moose—these women drive the plot without leaning on a prince. Screen time goes to female characters making choices that matter. Want to create stories with layered women? Take a page from Frozen's playbook. Give your characters real stakes, real dialogue, and let them talk about, well, anything besides Prince Charming. Your audience will thank you—and you won't have to explain why your movie flunked a 3-question test from a comic strip.
Release Date: November 23, 2016Stars: Auli'i Cravalho, Dwayne Johnson, Rachel HouseBox Office: \$687 millionBudget: \$150 millionFun Fact: Moana was Disney's first Polynesian princess and the film was developed with input from Oceanic cultural experts. If you're building stories with strong female leads, you've got to study Moana. This isn't your classic damsel-waiting-for-a-prince stuff. Moana drives her own adventure. She's the problem solver, and she takes action even when everyone else chickens out. Pay close attention to Moana and her interactions with other women—especially her grandmother, who kicks off Moana's journey. They talk about real stuff: heritage, leadership, and Moana's role in saving her people. No love interests needed. Just women discussing their futures and their responsibilities. This movie nails the Bechdel Test simply by letting women have meaningful scenes together. Disney finally abandoned the "Pixie Dream Girl" for a heroine who asks questions, pushes boundaries, and, honestly, is a bit of a rebel. If you want your scripts to pass the Bechdel Test, steal a page from Moana. Make your female characters talk to each other about things that actually matter. It's not just box-checking—it's better storytelling.
Release Date: March 5, 2021Stars: Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Gemma ChanBox Office: \$130 millionBudget: \$100 millionFun Fact: Raya is Disney's first Southeast Asian princess. If you still think major studio animation can't clear a simple Bechdel hurdle, here's your wake-up call. Raya and the Last Dragon doesn't just pass—it strolls right over. Multiple named women in this flick have real conversations about trust, saving the world, and the best ways to survive, not just about sidekicks or villainous dudes. You get Raya, Sisu, Namaari, and even her mom. They butt heads, make deals, argue strategy—all without dragging the script back to a guy. If you're crafting female characters, pay attention. Disney's team put real substance in these conversations, and it shows. Want your scenes to pass the test? Take notes here: give your female characters agency, conflict, and a mission that's bigger than high school drama or relationship drama. Raya proves audiences are hungry for this. No secret formulas, just honest dialogue. And for the indie filmmakers out there: you don't need a dragon or a \$100 million budget. You just need women talking about something that matters. Raya sets the bar. Time to raise yours.
Release Date: June 19, 2015Stars: Amy Poehler, Phyllis Smith, Mindy KalingBox Office: \$858 millionBudget: \$175 millionFun Fact: Each emotion's design is based on a specific shape—Joy is a star, Sadness is a teardrop, and so on. You don't need a PhD in animation to know Pixar's got skills. "Inside Out" puts emotions in the driver's seat—literally. Most of those emotions? They're women, and they talk. A lot. And not just about boys or crushes. Think core memories, honesty, and the occasionally awkward dinner table. If you're looking for a film that handles female characters with actual personalities, "Inside Out" has you covered. Joy, Sadness, Disgust—each one is distinct, motivated, and interacts with each other about real issues. There's not a love interest in sight, and that's refreshing. Here's the gotcha nugget: Pixar could have played it safe with talking animals. Instead, they gave you a lead cast of women who actually drive the plot. If your own scripts are still treating named female roles like rare birds, it's time for a rewrite. Take a page from "Inside Out"—if Pixar can do it, so can you.
Release Date: January 7, 2022Stars: Jessica Chastain, Penélope Cruz, Lupita Nyong'oBox Office: \$27.8 millionBudget: \$75 millionFun Fact: The film's title comes from Agent 355, a real-life female spy during the American Revolution. If you want proof that women can lead an action flick—and talk about more than boy drama—look at The 355. This is a globe-hopping spy movie where women are actually in charge, not just window dressing. The story centers on top agents from around the world teaming up for a mission. Forget those one-dimensional "token woman" sidekicks. In The 355, these women have names, agency, and plenty to say to each other. They're discussing strategies, double-crosses, and the job at hand—not just their love lives. You get dialogue between women that's about saving the world, not waiting for a man to do it. As a filmmaker, take note: The 355 doesn't just squeak by the Bechdel Test. It swings past it with confidence. If you're writing a script, this is your reminder to give your female leads something real to do—and something genuine to say. Audiences notice, and so do producers.
Release Date: September 2, 2021Stars: Victoria Justice, Midori Francis, Robyn ScottBox Office: N/A (Netflix release)Budget: Estimated under \$20 millionFun Fact: The film was shot in South Africa and blends comedy with supernatural elements. If you ever wanted proof that a party movie can handle the Bechdel Test without breaking a sweat, "Afterlife of the Party" is it. This Netflix romp throws out the usual romance-driven plots for something with more range—and yes, actual conversations between women about things that aren't boys. You get women talking about friendship, regrets, and growing up—real-life stuff you actually care about. Names got dropped, feelings got aired, and you don't have to squint to find it. That's how simple it can be. For indie filmmakers, take note: you don't need an epic budget to pass the Bechdel Test. Just let your female characters communicate like real people. "Afterlife of the Party" runs on authentic dialogue and a little supernatural charm, not gender stereotypes. This isn't some feminist manifesto in disguise. It's a movie where women exist as humans with their own stories. Take the hint—audiences notice when you treat this right, especially the ones tired of background girlfriends and token sidekicks.
Release Date: February 12, 2021Stars: Kristen Wiig, Annie Mumolo, Jamie DornanBox Office: \$32 million (VOD and limited theatrical)Budget: \$20 millionFun Fact: Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo co-wrote the film and previously collaborated on "Bridesmaids." If you're tired of buddy comedies where women only chat about men, cue up Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar. This film flips the script. Barb and Star, two middle-aged best friends, spend a lot of screen time chatting about just about everything—friendship, clouties, and slightly odd vacation plans. You want real, two-women conversations that don't orbit around a dude? You'll get them here. Their talks are weird, funny, and more authentic than half the character development workshops you've sat through. It's proof you don't need romance or heartbreak to drive a story. That's a wake-up call for screenwriters stuck in rom-com autopilot. The next time you're workshoping dialogue, think about Barb and Star geeking out over seashells and hotel amenities. There's magic in the mundane. Of course, passing the Bechdel Test wasn't even the movie's big agenda item. They nailed it by focusing on personality, oddball chemistry, and small stakes that somehow feel huge. You want character-driven comedy? Take notes, not just popcorn.
Release Date: December 21, 2021Stars: Nicole Kidman, Javier Bardem, Nina AriandaBox Office: \$450K (limited release). Amazon Prime debutBudget: \$40 millionFun Fact: Nicole Kidman won a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Lucille Ball. If you're eyeing Oscar-bait drama that passes the Bechdel test, toss between the Ricardos onto your watch list. This isn't just a Lucille Ball biopic. It's basically a master class in dialogue—especially if you're after scenes with more than two women trading gossip about men. Nicole Kidman and Nina Arianda don't just play iconic women. They actually get in the trenches, hashing out work, comedy, and the pressures of live TV. You see them clash, scheme, and joke—all about the job, not about a man. If you want proof you can write female characters with agency (and screen time), study how these scripts juggle strong personalities colliding over creative control and the nuts-and-bolts of making a show. No damsel. No sidekick. Just relentless professionals grinding through the chaos. You're not just watching history; you're seeing how to build tension and authenticity without falling back on tired tropes. Take notes. Your scenes could use a little less romance and a lot more rivalry.
Release Date: February 16, 2018Stars: Chadwick Boseman, Letitia Wright, Danai GuriraBox Office: \$1.34 billionBudget: \$200 millionFun Fact: The Wakandan language is based on Xhosa, a South African dialect. Here's the deal with Black Panther: it slips past the Bechdel Test, but it's not exactly doing victory laps. The bar for the test is pretty low—two named women talk about something other than a man. Black Panther makes it, mostly because the Dora Milaje and Shuri get actual screen time to swap lines about tech and Wakanda. If you're writing your own scripts, pay attention to how this movie gives space to its female characters. Okoye and Shuri aren't just sidekicks; they actually move the plot. That's rare in a lot of blockbuster movies, especially those swimming in testosterone. You want your script to have real women talking about real things? Look at scenes where Nakia and Okoye argue about Wakanda's politics. Watch how Shuri throws shade at T'Challa's fashion sense—banter and all. There's an easy lesson here: your female characters deserve more than background noise. So, if you're scoring your script against the Bechdel Test, Black Panther shows you it can be done. Barely, maybe, but at least it's not just checking boxes. Give your characters—and your audience—a shot at something a little smarter.
Release Date: December 25, 2016Stars: Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle MonáeBox Office: \$236 millionBudget: \$25 millionFun Fact: The film was nominated for three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Hidden Figures is your gold standard if you want a script that smashes the Bechdel Test. Three brilliant women—Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary—talk about math, computers, and rocket science, not just the dudes around them. They're too busy solving NASA's problems to waste time on boring love triangles. The scene work here is sharp. You see actual work tension, not billowed drama. When these women talk, it's about code, trajectories, and getting off at 80 miles per hour. Bonus for indie writers: George Miller didn't write these women as props. Their storylines have weight, their choices matter, and the camera never treats them like eye candy. Mad Max: Fury Road speaks fluent "show, don't tell," and it's a solid reference for building active, compelling female characters. So, if your script has two named women who do nothing but whisper about their love lives, level up. Fury Road proves the action genre can give women their own arcs, voices, and plenty of screen time. Your script can do the same—without sacrificing explosions.
Release Date: July 21, 2023Stars: Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling, America FerreraBox Office: \$1.45 billionBudget: \$145 millionFun Fact: Barbie was directed by Greta Gerwig and became the highest-grossing film by a female director. If you're aiming to pass the Bechdel Test, take a cue from "Barbie." This movie doesn't just squeak by—it checks every box cleanly. Named female characters talk to each other about plenty of things that have absolutely nothing to do with men. Clothes, identity, patriarchy, job descriptions—pick a topic. "Barbie" is basically a crash course for indie filmmakers on how to write female characters who aren't defined by their relationships to guys. Notice how the conversations keep the action moving and don't stall out with small talk. That's the trick: keep your dialogue about goals, fears, or even weird dreams—they all count. Even with its candy-colored style, the script never falls into lazy patterns. You're not stuck with stereotypes or one-note sidekicks. If you want your next project to pass the Bechdel with zero stress, watch how "Barbie" pulls it off. It's not about ticking off a box—it's about treating every character like they actually matter. Maybe try that in your next draft.
Release Date: September 23, 2022Stars: Florence Pugh, Harry Styles, Olivia WildeBox Office: \$87 millionBudget: \$35 millionFun Fact: The movie was directed by Olivia Wilde and drew significant media attention during its promotion. If you haven't seen "Don't Worry Darling," put it on your list—especially if you care about female characters who actually talk to each other about more than just men. Yeah, that's rare enough to celebrate. The film passes the Bechdel Test, so it's already ahead of plenty of big-budget titles. You get real conversations between women about their lives, their strange world, and what the heck is happening beneath the surface. No, it's not just about rom-com drama. Olivia Wilde, the director, doesn't just put women front and center—she lets them drive the story, question the rules, and challenge the setup. That's lesson one for your next script: let your characters think for themselves. Fake conflict gets old fast. You want to write scenes where women connect, push back, or even disagree without everything circling back to a man? Watch this one. Take notes. You don't need to reinvent the wheel, but at least give it four tires that aren't all the same. If you think the Bechdel Test is just a checklist for woke points, think again. It's a quick way to spot if women are actually doing anything in a movie besides orbiting the leading man. But don't get too comfortable—it's not a badge of feminist honor. The Bechdel Test came from a comic strip in the 1980s by Alison Bechdel. As mentioned above, the rules are simple: The movie needs at least two named women they have to talk to each other and the conversation can't be about a man. That's it. Why does it matter? Because for decades, women have been background noise in way too many scripts. The test blew up in pop culture circles, dragging attention to just how rare it is for women to exist on screen with their own goals, feelings, or basic personalities. Studios and critics started throwing around Bechdel stats like trivia at a bar. Some streaming services even filter movies that pass or fail, which honestly says a lot about demand. Is this test a meme? Sure. But it's also a mirror on lazy writing that still happens today. Here's the real talk: Passing the Bechdel Test does not mean your film is suddenly progressive. It just means two women had a conversation about literally anything other than a dude—even if it's about salad dressing. A film can technically pass and still treat its women as stereotypes, sidekicks, or props. You can check every box and still fail at writing deep, complicated, or even remotely interesting female characters. The Bechdel Test is the bare minimum. If your goal is richer storytelling, don't stop at passing—ask if your women matter to the plot. Anyone can follow three rules. Only good storytellers build characters who feel real, alive, and worth rooting for. Want your script to get that Bechdel Test seal of approval? Start by ditching boring conversations and flat female leads. Focus on real dialogue and show women as people with full lives—not just background props or plot tools for the guys. You know that moment when two women finally get a scene together...and talk about a boyfriend? Yeah, skip that. Start with honest, everyday topics. Maybe it's work frustration, a shared hobby, or world domination plans—just keep men out of it. Treat them like any character who has goals, opinions, or that weird allergy to shellfish. Bulletproof your scenes by writing lines you've actually heard real women say. Argue about pizza toppings, debate a plot twist in a favorite show, or vent about a broken laptop. Write conversations you'd want to watch, not background chatter that fades away. Here's a cheat sheet: Is this about a man? (If yes, cut it!) Would two guys have this convo? (If not, why?) Are both characters driving the scene? (Don't just let one nod along) Forget the "strong female character" trope—go for actual people. Give your female characters quirks, flaws, and weird obsessions. Dream up women who annoy you, inspire you, or could literally outwit you in a bar fight. Give them power, but also uncertainty. Motivation, but also hesitation. Write them angry, messy, and funny. Try this as a litmus test: Write a full scene where their main problem isn't a guy. Maybe they want a promotion, or they're trying to fix a car. If you can swap out a female character for a male and nothing changes but the name, you're doing it right. Before you call it finished, ask yourself: Would you actually want to see this woman as the main character? If the answer is "meh," keep digging. Authenticity always beats stereotypes. Hollywood has made measurable strides toward representation and equality in films over the past few decades, but even so, women still fall behind both behind the camera and in front of it. Even just looking at top-grossing family films, a 2017 study from the Geena Davis Institute found that male leads outnumber female leads, despite women making up about 51 percent of the U.S. population. Not only that, but fewer than 10 percent of action movies have female leads. Adventure and comedy films fare almost as poorly: Only 23.6 and 28.7 percent feature female protagonists. That's especially notable considering that—as Barbie proved—movies that star women actually can make good money. If Hollywood wants to turn these figures around, they'd be wise to employ the Bechdel test. Since its creation in 1985 by indie cartoonist Alison Bechdel, it has become the gold standard for measuring gender equality in media. Simply put, the Bechdel test asks just three simple questions: Does a movie have at least two named female characters in it? Do they proceed to talk to each other? And most importantly, do they talk about something other than a man?While all that might sound reasonable enough, the fact is that only about 57 percent of movies pass muster—even recent hits like Oppenheimer and Killers Of The Flower Moon fall short. Fortunately, there are a good deal of classics that do meet the standard, from sports comedies to sci-fi epics. Below are 10 iconic movies that pass the Bechdel Test.Alien (1979)Just because Alien has a kick-ass female lead in Sigourney Weaver's Ripley doesn't mean it automatically passes the Bechdel test. Still, the movie—which Ranker readers recently voted as the top Bechdel test-passing film of all time—manages to squeak by because of a few minor conversational exchanges between Weaver and Veronica Cartwright's Lambert, including a two-line exchange about the titular monster and another where they do a back-and-forth about how they'll escape their perilous situation. While Alien often gets brought up in conversations about the power of female leads, the film still depicts Lambert as weak, features Weaver stripping down to her underwear, and basically everyone dies because no one believes that Ripley, the highest-ranking female officer on board the commercial space tug Nostromo, knows what the hell she's doing. Now that's frustrating.Matilda (1996)This 1996 adaptation of Roald Dahl's beloved children's novel doesn't get everything right—especially in book form, where it's genuinely pretty horrible to plus-sized people. But the cinematic version passes the Bechdel test with flying colors due to conversations between Matilda (Mara Wilson) and her lovely teacher Miss Honey (Embeth Davidtz). Though interactions between kids aren't technically part of the test, if they were, Matilda's chats with best friend Lavender (Kiam Davae) and classmate Hortensia (Kira Spencer-Hesser) would also work in the film's favor, given that they're generally talking about the horrid Miss Trunchbull (Pam Ferris). Plus, there's the fact that Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull talk about things that don't involve men, either. As perhaps this list's best example of a film that exceeds all Bechdel test standards, Matilda is about the power of learning, of getting out of horrible domestic situations, and of women—young and old—who go out of their way to support each other.The Silence Of The Lambs (1991)To most casual observers, The Silence Of The Lambs focuses on the relationship between a rookie FBI agent (Jodie Foster's Clarice Starling) and a cannibalistic serial killer (Anthony Hopkins's Hannibal Lecter) who may help her catch another killer (Ted Levine's Buffalo Bill). Still, it manages to eke out a passing grade on the Bechdel test thanks to, yet again, a few minor conversations. In one exchange between Starling and fellow trainee Ardelia Mapp (played by Kasi Lemmons), the pair talk about one of Buffalo Bill's victims, trying to figure out if there is a pattern to the murders. Though the chat is related to a man, it's not exclusively about that man, although some argue that isn't quite enough for it to pass. Luckily for defenders of this movie as a feminist tale, there are at a few other instances of woman-to-woman interactions, including one where a jogging Starling and Mapp quiz each other about FBI number codes, as well as a brief exchange between Starling and the first victim's friend Stacy (Lauren Roselli).A League Of Their Own (1992)Another classic that Ranker voters believe passes the Bechdel test is 1992's A League Of Their Own. While it features more than a few conversations about lovers, husbands, and dads, this feel-good movie about the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League is, at its core, about the bonds forged between women, especially when they're up against adversity. Sisters Dottie (Geena Davis) and Kit (Lori Petty) run hot and cold with each other, but Doris (Rosie O'Donnell) and Mae (Madonna) are buds from the get-go. It's no wonder this movie holds such a place in so many women's hearts, even now, decades after its release.The Wizard Of Oz (1939)When The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz was first published in 1900, Dorothy was depicted as very young. Though her age isn't expressly stated, she seems to be about 10, a little country girl sucked into a wild, dream-like situation. In the 1939 movie she's aged up a couple years (one of several big differences between the book and film), with 16-year-old Judy Garland cast as the young Dorothy Gale. As such, Dorothy's on-screen conversations remain romance-free. Her three most popular on-screen counterparts—the Scarecrow (Ray Bolger), Tin Man (Jack Haley), and Cowardly Lion (Bert Lahr)—are all played by adult men. Still, Dorothy gets in a few conversations with the Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton) about dropping the house on the Wicked Witch of the East, and with Glinda, the Good Witch of the North (Billie Burke) about how she managed to land in Oz in the first place. And though Glinda is a fluffy pink confection who's pretty much beauty personified, she does manage to give Dorothy clear instructions about how to get out of Oz—something the bumbling Wizard can't even stumble into.The Terminator (1984) and Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines (2003)Here's a fun fact: While not every Terminator movie passes the Bechdel test, at least two do: 1984's The Terminator and 2003's Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines. The first one passes for a couple reasons, namely due to a scene where Linda Hamilton's Sarah Connor talks with her roommate Ginger (Bess Motta) about her pet iguana, and another exchange with a fellow waitress who tells her about the first female victim in the T-800's killing spree.Terminator 3 also passes because of pets, with Kate Brewster (Claire Danes) and Betsy (Moirra Harris) exchanging pleasantries when the latter brings her dog into the vet's office, believing it's sick. Gone with the Wind (1939)From stealing her sister's love to flitting about with a general air of brattiness, Scarlett O'Hara is certainly no sweet Georgia peach in Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind. Still, the 1939 film adaptation manages—perhaps shockingly—to pass the Bechdel test thanks to conversations Scarlett (played by Vivien Leigh) and other women have on-screen about charity, the Civil War, and proper party behavior. There's also a heated exchange between Scarlett, Suellen (Evelyn Keyes), and Carreen (Ann Rutherford) while the sisters work in the field outside Tara, their plantation, and are forced to pick their own cotton for a change. Though it passes the Bechdel test, it really doesn't make up for the problematic ways in which Gone With The Wind romanticizes life in the antebellum South.Die Hard (1988)Sure, 1988's shoot-em-up classic Die Hard is mostly about Bruce Willis's John McClane and his quest to thwart a group of skyscraper-seizing terrorists, but that doesn't mean women aren't part of the film. McClane's estranged wife Holly (Bonnie Bedelia) plays a prominent role and is the reason why it passes. While the two scenes that help Die Hard do it have undergone some scrutiny from Bechdel test purists, they do technically qualify. In one, Holly and young daughter Lucy (Taylor Fry)—a minor, so not technically a "woman" as the test stipulates—chat on the phone about when Holly is coming home. In another, Holly and her secretary Ginny (Dustyn Taylor) talk about joining the holiday party, albeit with a passing mention of the very male Ebenezer Scrooge. Still, we'll take it! Pulp Fiction (1994) Quentin Tarantino has occasionally been criticized for his portrayal of women in movies, and while Pulp Fiction passes the Bechdel test, it's sort of on a technicality. There's only one scene in the whole movie that would qualify, and it's when Jody (Rosanna Arquette) and Trudi (Bronagh Gallagher) are having a discussion about piercings. Bechdel test aficionados have long debated whether or not this conversation truly counts toward the film's grade, as near its end, John Travolta's Vincent, who is seated nearby, butts in with a question about why someone would get a tongue stud. Jody replies with a fairly sexual explanation, leading some fans to question whether a woman can mention a sex act typically involving a man without technically talking about men. It's an interesting debate, because while Ranker voters think the flick passes, some still disagree. But it all proves how fluid—and frustrating—the rubric can really be, and how狡猾 how tough it is to even have to try to figure any of this out, as this is something you wouldn't have to do if movies were all made in an equitable and interesting way. After all, as one BechdelTest.com poster puts it on the Pulp Fiction page, "if there's only a single conversation a few seconds long in an entire movie and we can't even clearly distinguish if it's about a/her guy, the test [has] failed."
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