# Applying to and organising film festivals and competitions

## Introduction

Finalising your film can be a long and challenging process, but it’s not the end of the journey. Now comes the time to present your film to a wider audience.

It would be a real shame not to share your film with others. Many films carry important messages, or offer a rare glimpse into unfamiliar social and cultural settings.

In this chapter you’ll learn how to find film festivals where you can promote your film, and even organize your own.

### Vision *in action*

- Look for film festivals in your area and apply with your films.
- Look for international film festivals.
- Organise a screening or film festival yourself. Remember – it can be a big task, so start small and get as much help as you can with logistics, funding, and so on.

## Equipment and tools

The basic tools you’ll need are a computer with internet access. If you want to try to organize a festival, you will also need a place to screen films, together with a projector, screen, DVD player or computer, and powerful speakers.

## Main section

### Applying to film festivals

Preparing your movie to be screened at a festival means extra work, but taking part is a great way to meet

other film makers. It's also a chance to get the attention of producers and possible future partners, even if you don't win any awards.

Many festivals also offer lectures, workshops and discussions on topics related to film.

Steps for applying:

1. Select the film festivals where you want to screen your work, and see if the film is a good match for them. Study the terms and conditions – each festival has their own. Note any application deadlines.
2. Fill in the application form, giving all the required information. This will usually include a short description of the film and crew. You may have to include images from the movie and encode the film to a specific format. Subtitles (usually in English) are often required for non-English-language films at international film festivals.
3. Send the film, and wait for a response.

> *You may have to re-edit your film to satisfy the festival's conditions. This can include shortening it slightly or adding a scene or two.*

Check the website of the festival in more in detail and see what movies were screened the previous year or won prizes.

Some festivals have a competition section and a screening section. Some invite film-makers and/or their crew, and cover their accommodation and/or travel costs. Think about whether you can attend the festival where your film is being screened and cover your costs if the festival won't.

Festivals are divided into various categories. There are festivals for young film makers, documentaries, low-budget films, short feature films and animation; there are also festivals by topic, including mountains, sports and dance. Some festivals are big, with prizes and a large audience, while others are small and local.

*Be aware that some festivals may have an application fee, as well as*

## Renowned international film festivals

There are many established festivals, showing both amateur and professional films. Productions are usually expected to be of very high quality, so some experience in film-making is necessary to succeed.

Established film festivals are a good starting point for young but experienced film-makers. You can get attention and feedback, and discover new partners and opportunities.

The festivals often include workshops, lectures and pitches (presentations of ideas for film productions).

> *Film pitching is presenting an idea for a new film to a production company.*

Here are a few selected international film festivals:

https://www.german-films.de/festivalguides/selected-international-film-festivals/mode/int/

Lists of international short film festivals and competitions:
https://guru.bafta.org/opportunities/short-festivals-competitions
https://www.german-films.de/festivalguides/selected-international-short-film-festivals/

## Youth film festivals

Youth film festivals are divided into those showing professional films *about* young people, and festivals for films made *by* young people.

Festivals for films by young young people offer plenty of  opportunities for young film makers to screen their productions. They are not as strict about the level of the production, and are a chance to show your work and get some experience.

Overview of international festivals for young film-makers:
https://www.you-film.net/festivals.php

## Independent film festivals

Independent festivals screen productions that aren't part of the main stream, including guerrilla, experimental and art film.

> *Guerrilla film-making is usually done on a low budget, with a small crew, on real locations and without obtaining permissions.*

## Online film festivals

In the digital age, you don't always have to physically travel to film festivals because some exist entirely online. The films are available to watch over a certain period, and viewers can vote on the films they've seen.

There are many more types of film festivals. You can find them by search online.

## Organising a film festival or screening

Can't find the sort of film festival you're looking for, or they won't accept your film? Don't be discouraged – you can still organise your own film festival or screening! This is another great way of sharing your film with others.

Here's how to get started:

1. Define the following parameters for the movies you want to invite to your festival or screening: area (local, national, international), type of production (youth, independent etc), topic (cultural, social, sport, etc), length (90 seconds, short, full length, etc) and format (feature, documentary, music, etc).
2. Think about what resources and services you'll need: a project team, place for screening, design and print

of promotional material, budget, travel and accommodation for invited guests, etc.
3. Create a website with all the necessary information about your festival. You might want to include a platform for uploading movies and other film details.
4. Send out an open call for films. You could use a short video for this. Spread the word through a mailing list, social networks and any other appropriate channels.
5. Try to get the media to report on your festival. Start at least three months earlier by sending press releases – for example to regional newspapers or websites focusing on specific film formats. Promote your event through posters, flyers, and other printed materials. You could even organise a press conference.
6. Make a pre-selection of submitted films. You could form a selection team to help you.
7. Organize the event. This will involve booking the place and the screening equipment, dividing tasks between members of your team, forming a jury, printing screening schedules and programmes, finding prizes, and providing accommodation and food for invited guests.

> *Ask your local youth center, community or cinema for partnership and support, and try to find sponsors. Don't forget to invite media to the festival/screening itself!*

## Open calls for films

From time to time different organizations announce an open call for films on a specific topic. This can relate to environmental, political, social, cultural and many other issues. All kinds of filmmakers are invited to submit their work. The best films often receive a prize and may be used by the organisers in their campaigns and promotions.

> *If you're interested in the topic, go for it, but not just for the money – do it as a challenge!*

# Terminology

*film festivals, encoding, competition section, screening section, pitch, open call for films*