

# How to make a great film

Films can be funny, informative, sad, uplifting, exciting, inspiring or serious. They can be an amazing way of sharing a story or persuading people to take action.

And the good news is that, with a bit of help and instruction, anyone can make a film. The following tips will help you with planning and making your film.



## Planning your film

**Step 1.** Work out what your film will be about and what your limitations are. The very first thing you will need to do is to think about what your film will be about. It might be that you have to think up an idea, or it may be that your teacher gives you an outline or instructions. This will give you an idea of what themes the film should be based on, how long it should be, what it needs to include, what it shouldn't include, and any other important information.

Some important details to consider at the beginning of your filmmaking process include the following:

- How long have you got to make it?
- How long will the film be?
- What equipment will you have?
- How many people will be involved?
- What does the film need to include (i.e. is it for a competition and needs to meet certain points)?

**Step 2.** Come up with an idea. Brainstorm some ideas and start with some big dreams. You can then hone your dreams in line with what's possible or feasible considering your resources (e.g. timeframe, budget and equipment).

You can then develop a final message, main idea or basic story outline. You should be able to summarise your idea in one sentence so you can easily share it with people and get them on board with your idea. Keep a record of this sentence and use it to refer back to when deciding what needs to be included in your film. For example, does this scene help tell the story of the film? If not, keep it out. You should also think about what genre of film you will make, for example, a drama, action, comedy, or documentary.



**Step 3.** Storyboarding and writing a script. Storyboarding means visually planning your film. Sketch out scenes from your film showing characters and events. Add ideas you have for visuals and audio (such as music or sound effects). When you're happy with the structure and flow of your film, you can write your script.

**Step 4.** Location, sets, props and costumes. By now, you know what will happen in your film, so it's time to start planning where you will film your film and what sets, props and costumes you will need. What sets you need depends upon the type of film you are making (e.g. short film, animation or documentary). You may be able to use locations around your school or in your neighbourhood as sets (just check there is enough light for filming and that it is free from background noise). Or you may want to make some sets if you can't find suitable locations. The same goes for props and costumes. You may be able to use what you've already got. Create a list of what you need and check if anyone in the group can lend you items to make your film. You could also check with the drama department to see what they've got before you start buying or making loads of stuff.

**Step 5.** Consider copyright. Images and music sourced online or publicly available could potentially be subject to copyright and so cannot be accepted as part of the competition. You are encouraged to create your own props, models, sets, images, music etc. These do not need to be complex or elaborate: sometimes, the simplest props, sets and music are the most effective. The important thing is to demonstrate creativity and good messaging, not expensive sets and props.

**Step 6.** Get consent. Anyone who is acting or speaking in your film needs to sign a consent form. This is also called a 'model release'. Make sure you don't film anyone without their permission, as this is a breach of their privacy.

**Step 7.** Practicing lines. Knowing your lines before you start filming will make the filming process much easier and faster. Create cue cards for actors if needed and encourage actors to rehearse scenes.

## Production

It's time to SHOOT! You don't need a whizz-bang blockbuster quality video camera to make a great film - a mobile phone, camera, computer, ipod, or ipad will work very well too. Keep a record of anything you film, as it may be useful later, even if you think it's a dud at the time.

## Post-production

**Step 1.** Editing and post production. It's time to pull all your scenes together, add music and polish the overall look and feel of your film. Use editing software to:

- Put the scenes together
- Add music, edit sound (be sure to use music not restricted by copyright)
- Add special effects
- Add credits

**Step 2.** Sharing. Before you submit your film to be assessed, share it with a friend or family member and listen to their feedback. Maybe you missed something, maybe a simple tweak would improve the plot line or flow. It can be hard to listen to criticism – even when it's constructive - but it can help to make your work stronger and more engaging.

Finally, there are lots of great videos on YouTube that talk you through the steps of creating a film, spend some time researching and watching these clips before you start your own film-making process to make sure you're not missing anything important!

