

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL



Thank you for your interest in submitting your film to the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. The questions and answers in this document should tell you everything you need to know about the applications process. If you have a question that is not covered in this document, please e-mail us at programming@sundance.org.

1) WHEN ARE THE SUBMISSION DEADLINES AND WHAT ARE THE FEES?

EARLY SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILMS

Monday, August 17th, 2009 - \$35 ENTRY FEE

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILMS & DOCUMENTARIES

Monday, August 17th, 2009 - \$45 ENTRY FEE

OFFICIAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILMS

Tuesday, September 8th, 2009 - \$50 ENTRY FEE

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILMS & DOCUMENTARIES

Tuesday, September 8th, 2009 - \$75 ENTRY FEE

LATE SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILMS

Monday, September 21st, 2009 - \$75 ENTRY FEE

U.S. & INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILMS & DOCUMENTARIES

Friday, September 25th, 2009 - \$100 ENTRY FEE

These are the dates that films must arrive at our office in Los Angeles. They are NOT postmark deadlines. We handle all submissions fairly and equally, regardless of which deadline you choose. Late submissions are processed and screened in exactly the same manner as official submissions are-- the only difference is the higher submission fee. We encourage you to submit as early as possible!

Please note that your film MUST arrive at our office no later than the deadline for which you have registered. For example, if you pay \$50 to register your Short Film for the Official Submission deadline and we receive it after September 8th, you will be prompted to make an additional payment of \$25 in order to bring your account up to date. We will not view your film until this payment is received. For this reason, it is suggested that you mail your film to us well in advance of the deadline for which you have registered!

2) WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR FESTIVAL PROGRAMS AND YOUR SUBMISSION CATEGORIES?

Each year, we select 120-125 Feature Films and 80-90 Short films to play in one of 10 Festival programs. However, you may not submit your film directly to any one specific program. Instead, you must select from one of six submission categories, listed below. If your film is accepted, our Programming staff will decide which of the 10 Festival programs it will play.

U.S. NARRATIVE FEATURE FILMS

Any narrative work of fiction with a running time of at least 50 minutes, including films that are shot in a "mockumentary" style. In order to qualify as a U.S. Narrative Feature Film, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, and at least half of the project's financing must originate from within the United States.

U.S. DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILMS

Any non-fiction film with a running time of at least 50 minutes, NOT including entirely scripted or improvised fictionalizations of actual events. If your documentary contains some dramatization of actual events, you may submit in this category, but we will ultimately decide which program is best suited for your project, if accepted. In order to qualify as a U.S. Documentary Feature Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from within the United States.

INTERNATIONAL NARRATIVE FEATURE FILMS

Any narrative work of fiction with a running time of at least 50 minutes, including films that are shot in a "mockumentary" style. In order to qualify as an International Narrative Feature Film, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, and at least half of the project's financing must originate from outside of the United States.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILMS

Any non-fiction film with a running time of at least 50 minutes, NOT including entirely scripted or improvised fictionalizations of actual events. If your documentary contains some dramatization of actual events, you may submit in this category, but we will ultimately decide which program is best suited for your project, if accepted. In order to qualify as an International Documentary Feature Film, at least half of the project's financing must originate from outside of the United States.

U.S. SHORT FILMS

Any narrative or documentary film of U.S. origin with a running time of less than 50 minutes. In order to qualify as a U.S. Short Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from within the United States. Short Films have no premiere requirements-- they may have had any number of public theatrical exhibitions, been released on DVD, and may have been broadcast on television or the internet and still retain eligibility.

INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILMS

Any narrative or documentary film of International origin with a running time of less than 50 minutes. In order to qualify as an International Short Film, more than half of the submitted project's financing must originate from outside of the United States. Short Films have no premiere requirements-- they may have had any number of public theatrical exhibitions, been released on DVD, and may have been broadcast on television or the internet and still retain eligibility.

3) WHAT ARE THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMS AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH?

Please be aware that these programs may vary from year to year-- the information listed below is subject to change at any time.

At the core of our Festival program are our Competition categories. Films that are selected to be in one of these five categories are eligible for Jury Prizes in their respective category:

U.S. DRAMATIC COMPETITION (16 U.S. Narrative Feature Films):

Films in this program must be **WORLD PREMIERES** in order to be considered. If your film has screened at any other film festival, been released on DVD, broadcast on television or the internet, or had a public theatrical screening anywhere in the world, it is not eligible for this program. In order to qualify, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, have a total running time of at least 50 minutes, and at least 50% of the project's financing must originate from within the United States.

U.S. DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION (16 U.S. Documentary Feature Films):

Films in this program must be **WORLD PREMIERES** in order to be considered. If your film has screened at any other film festival, been released on DVD, broadcast on television or the internet, or had a public theatrical screening anywhere in the world, it is not eligible for this program. In order to qualify, the submitted project must be a non-fiction documentary subject ("mockumentaries" do not qualify), have a total running time of at least 50 minutes, and at least 50% of the project's financing must originate from within the United States.

WORLD CINEMA DRAMATIC COMPETITION (16 International Narrative Feature Films):

Open submissions must be **INTERNATIONAL PREMIERES** in order to be considered for this program. If your film has screened outside of its country of origin, whether at a film festival or other public theatrical exhibition, it is not eligible for this program. Your film is also ineligible if it has been released on DVD or broadcast on television or the internet. In order to qualify, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, have a total running time of at least 50 minutes, and more than 50% of the project's financing must originate from outside of the United States.

WORLD CINEMA DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION (16 International Documentary Feature Films):

Open submissions must be **INTERNATIONAL PREMIERES** in order to be considered for this program. If your film has screened outside of its country of origin, whether at a film festival or other public theatrical exhibition, it is not eligible for this program. Your film is also ineligible if it has been released on DVD or broadcast on television or the internet. In order to qualify, the submitted project must be a non-fiction documentary subject ("mockumentaries" do not qualify), have a total running time of at least 50 minutes, and 50% of the project's financing must originate from outside of the United States.

SHORTS COMPETITION (80-90 U.S. & International Short Films):

All short films are selected to play before features or in one of eight Shorts Programs, and all accepted shorts compete against each other in one single competition. Short Films must have a total running time of less than 50 minutes. Our Shorts Competition does not have any premiere or prior screening restrictions. Shorts may have been released on DVD, broadcast on television or the internet, and/or publicly screened anywhere in the world and still remain eligible for our Shorts Competition.

The following Festival programs are out-of-competition, and the eligibility requirements are not as strict. Eligible films do not need to retain any sort of premiere status, and are allowed to have screened at up to two other film festivals before Sundance:

SPECTRUM (18-24 U.S. & International Feature Films):

This program is a varied selection of out-of-competition dramatic and documentary films from some of the most promising new filmmakers from the U.S. and around the world. Non-competition films do not need to retain any sort of premiere status, and are allowed to have screened at up to two other film festivals prior to Sundance. However, they may not have been released on DVD or broadcast on television or the internet in their entirety.

PARK CITY AT MIDNIGHT (8-9 U.S. & International Feature Films):

A treat for true cinephiles and casual filmgoers alike, this non-competition section presents an eclectic mix of horror, sci-fi, over-the-top comedies, surreal tales, explicit animation, and bizarre stories that defy categorization. Films selected for this program do not need to retain any sort of premiere status, and are allowed to have screened at up to two other film festivals before Sundance. However, they may not have been released on DVD or broadcast on television or the internet in their entirety.

NEW FRONTIER FEATURES (5-6 U.S. & International Feature Films):

The New Frontier program highlights experimental works that push the boundaries of the traditional aesthetics and narrative structures of filmmaking, both scripted and documentary. Films selected for this non-competition program do not need to retain any sort of premiere status, and are allowed to have screened at up to two other film festivals before Sundance. However, they may not have been released on DVD or broadcast on television or the internet in their entirety.

Additionally, we have two Festival programs that are by invitation only. They are non-competition, and you may not submit your film to either of these programs:

PREMIERES (14-18 U.S. & International Feature Films):

To showcase the diversity of contemporary cinema, our Premieres program offers a selection of brand new work from more established American and international directors. In 2008, the latest films from directors such as Michel Gondry, Brad Anderson, Alan Ball, and Barry Levinson had their U.S. or World premieres within this category. Acceptance into this non-competition category is by invitation only, but films that are selected must maintain a U.S. or World Premiere status.

FROM THE COLLECTION (2 U.S. & International Feature Films):

Established as a joint partnership between Sundance Institute and the UCLA Film & Television Archive, the Sundance Collection at UCLA is a groundbreaking archive devoted to the preservation of the history of independent film. Each year, we select two films from this archive (usually newly preserved or restored works) for special screenings at the Festival. Acceptance is by invitation only! Open submissions will not be considered for this program.

4) HOW DO YOU DISTINGUISH SHORT FILMS FROM FEATURE FILMS?

As of this year, the requirements for documentaries and narratives are the same. If the film is up to 49 minutes in length, it is a Short. If the film is 50 minutes or longer, it is considered a Feature.

5) HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHETHER A FILM IS CONSIDERED U.S. OR INTERNATIONAL?

In almost all cases, this is determined by the primary source of the film's funding. If 50% or more of the film's financing came from sources within the United States, it qualifies as a U.S. Film. If more than 50% of the film's financing came from international sources, it qualifies as an International Film. There are exceptions to this rule, as oftentimes the sources of financing do not reflect the content of the film. We reserve the right to make judgment calls in those cases.

6) MY FILM WAS REJECTED LAST YEAR. CAN I SUBMIT IT AGAIN?

Yes, but only if it has changed significantly. We are not interested in seeing the same cut again-- it should be a complete reworking of the previous version that was submitted to us. If you are in doubt, it probably hasn't changed enough.

7) IS IT TRUE THAT SUNDANCE WILL NOT SCREEN MY FILM IF IT HAS BEEN SCREENED ELSEWHERE?

This is a common misconception, though the answer varies depending on the circumstances. The Sundance Film Festival has always been about discovering new talent and fresh works of independent film. To that end, we prefer to play U.S. films that are world premieres and international films that are U.S. or world premieres, but this is only an eligibility requirement in our feature-length competition programs.

For example, a U.S. Narrative Feature Film **MUST** be a world premiere in order to play in our U.S. Dramatic Competition (outlined in Item #3 above). This means that it cannot have played at ANY other film festivals in the world, but it **CAN** play at up to two other festivals anywhere and still be eligible for our out-of-competition programs (also outlined in Item #3). International Feature Films may have played within their country of origin and still be eligible for our competition programs. Short films have no such requirements-- they may have screened at any number of other festivals and still qualify for our Short Film Competition.

8) WILL A PREVIOUS SCREENING FOR CAST & CREW DISQUALIFY MY FILM?

Generally speaking, no. Private screenings are not a problem, but we do require that a feature film has had no ticketed screenings that were open to the general public. If people were not able to purchase tickets to the screening without an invitation, you should be okay.

9) WILL A WORK-IN-PROGRESS SCREENING DISQUALIFY MY FILM?

If an incomplete film has been publicly ticketed and screened as a work-in-progress in order to raise completion funds, this is perfectly fine, as long as the finished cut will be significantly different from the version that was screened. This includes films that play at film markets as work-in-progress screenings.

10) CAN I SUBMIT MY FILM AS A ROUGH CUT?

A large percentage of the films submitted to us every year are unfinished versions with incomplete or temporary sound, missing scenes, no credits or titles, unfinished effects, etc. However, it does need to be complete enough for us to be able to make a decision. If you expect that your final version will be two hours long, it's probably not a good idea to send us a 45 minute rough cut. Whenever possible, you should provide an on-screen description of missing scenes or elements. If an on-screen description is not possible, we will also accept detailed notes on paper that include specific timecode references for each missing element.

11) HOW OLD CAN MY FILM BE AND STILL QUALIFY FOR SUBMISSION?

Any film submitted for 2010 Festival consideration must have been completed in either 2008 or 2009. If your film was completed before 2008, it is no longer eligible for submission. If your film's production took place before 2008 but your final cut was not completed until 2008 or 2009, your film is still eligible.

12) MY FILM HAS AIRED ON TELEVISION. CAN I STILL SUBMIT IT?

If your film is feature-length and had a nationwide television broadcast in one or more countries, that particular cut is NOT eligible for submission. However, it may be submitted if the version that aired on TV is significantly different from the one you wish to submit. An example of this would be a documentary film that was cut from 80 minutes to 45 minutes in order to air on television-- you may submit the 80 minute version to us for consideration, but not the 45 minute version. Though we reserve the right to make a final determination, films that were broadcast on a local affiliate (such as a local PBS station) would still be eligible to submit. Short films that have aired on television are still eligible.

13) DO I HAVE TO OBTAIN RIGHTS CLEARANCE FOR MUSIC OR OTHER COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN MY FILM?

From a legal standpoint, you must clear all copyrighted material included in your film before you can publicly screen it. However, Sundance does not check to make sure that you have cleared these materials at any point during the application process, nor will we be held responsible for any inclusion of uncleared materials in your film. It is the sole responsibility of the entity submitting the project to secure permission from the copyright holder of the material in question, whether it is music, stock footage, or any other elements that could violate an existing copyright. Quite often, rights holders offer reduced rates for festival films, so you should contact them directly to avoid any possible rights infringements.

14) CAN I SUBMIT MY FILM WITH A TEMPORARY MUSIC TRACK?

Temp tracks, scratch music, and temp scores are perfectly fine for your submission, but please include a paper list of missing or temporary elements along with the submitted DVD.

15) WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION?

Films should be submitted to us on a single DVD-R or DVD+R disc, and we would prefer that they be sent in a simple paper CD/DVD sleeve in order to cut down on waste. Once we receive your DVD, the case or sleeve will be recycled, so it doesn't matter what type of packaging you use to submit your disc. DVDs must be compatible with standard set-top DVD players-- do not simply burn a quicktime or AVI file to a disc as data. Please ensure that your disc plays in a standard DVD player before you mail it to us! We will also accept submissions on dual-layer discs (DVD-DL or DVD+DL), but if you choose to submit your film in that format, please include a standard DVD-R or DVD+R disc as backup.

16) DO YOU ACCEPT ANY OF THE HIGH-DEFINITION DVD FORMATS?

We will accept submissions in both Blu-Ray and HD-DVD formats. If you choose to submit your film in one of these formats, we ask that you also provide a standard, single-layer DVD-R or DVD+R as a backup.

17) WILL YOU ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS IN VHS FORMAT?

We do not accept submissions on VHS, not even for backup purposes. All VHS tapes we receive will be recycled.

18) WILL YOU ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS IN ANY OTHER FORMAT?

No! Please do not send us your film on Beta, Mini-DV, HD-CAM, 16mm, 35mm, or any other format not referenced in items 15 and 16. We will not be able to watch or return them!

19) CAN I SEND YOU MY DVD IN PAL FORMAT, OR DO YOU ACCEPT NTSC ONLY?

It is highly preferred that you send us an NTSC, Region 1 or region free (Region 0) DVD when submitting to us, but we will also accept PAL and SECAM formats as well. If you are sending a DVD that has a region code other than 0 or 1, and/or a format other than NTSC, please mark this CLEARLY on the disc AND on the DVD case.

20) CAN I ARRANGE A SCREENING OF MY FILM INSTEAD OF SENDING A DVD?

No, you may not. We can only screen films on DVD, Blu-Ray, and HD-DVD.

24) IF MY FILM INCLUDES NON-ENGLISH DIALOGUE, DO YOU REQUIRE ENGLISH SUBTITLES?

We will be unable to screen your film if on-screen English subtitles are not included on your DVD. A translated list of dialogue on paper is not sufficient!

21) WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE WITH MY SUBMISSION?

After you have completed the online application, all we will need from you is your film, along with a copy of the confirmation page that was sent to you upon completion of the application. In an effort to cut down on waste, we ask that you do not send printed press or promotional materials to us-- we will not keep anything in your package except for your DVD. Even the case it is sent in will be recycled, so there is no need to spend time printing artwork for your case.

Please do not use a paper label on your disc! There are many different variables with stickers and paper labels that could render your disc unplayable-- a permanent marker (such as a Sharpie) will work just fine. Discs with text or graphics printed directly on the surface are also acceptable. Please write or print your film's title and tracking number directly on the face of the disc AND on the outside of the envelope that you send it in!

22) WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO GET MY DVD TO PLAY?

We will make every effort to play your DVD, but in the event that we are unable to view your film, we will contact you to request another copy using the primary contact information that you provided on your application. However, there is no guarantee that we will get your replacement disc in time, and we must give preference to those who sent in a working copy to begin with. For this reason, we ask that you make absolutely sure that your disc plays all the way through BEFORE you submit it to us!

23) WILL YOU NOTIFY ME IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE MY FILM?

Due to the volume of submissions we receive, we are unable to notify each individual person when we do or do not receive his or her film. It is your responsibility to make sure that your package makes its way to our office. Once your film has been marked as received in our system, you will be able to log into your account at withoutabox.com and see that it has been marked as such. Alternately, you may also include a self-addressed, stamped postcard, which we will mail back to you once your submission has been processed. Due to the volume of submissions we receive (9,000+), we ask that you allow up to three weeks for us to process your submission.

25) CAN I SUBMIT A NEWER CUT OF MY FILM AFTER I'VE ALREADY SUBMITTED AN EARLIER VERSION?

To avoid confusion throughout the screening process, we would prefer that you only send us ONE version of your film. If you MUST send in a more recent cut of the film, you may send an e-mail to programming@sundance.org and, if replacing the old cut with a new one is possible, we will give you instructions as to how to do so. What you do NOT want to do is send in a new version without notifying us in advance, and we can only guarantee that the FIRST version of your film will be viewed-- if you expect to have a more complete cut done before the final deadline passes, you should wait until that time to initially submit your film to us. Also, please do not submit an updated cut that only contains minor changes, such as titles, credits, or a final sound mix. Our programming staff is very used to viewing films that are missing minor elements such as these, so sending in a new cut that isn't significantly different from the previous one will only cause confusion for the people viewing your film.

26) MUST I SUBMIT ONLINE, OR CAN I FAX OR MAIL MY APPLICATION FORM INSTEAD?

All submissions must be issued a unique Tracking Number in order to be recognized by our system. The only way to get a Tracking Number is to fill out the online application at www.sundance.org/submissions or by using www.withoutabox.com. Once you finish all required fields on the application, you will receive a confirmation page that includes a unique barcode for your film, which you must print out and include with your DVD. If you are having trouble with the online form, please e-mail us at programming@sundance.org and we will be glad to help guide you through the process.

27) HOW MANY FILMS CAN I SUBMIT?

You may submit as many films as you'd like, but you only need to create one account. Upon doing so, you may fill out individual applications for multiple films. We do not offer reduced rates in fees for multiple submissions. If you submit three films, you must pay the submission fees for all three of them. Please do not submit multiple projects on the same DVD. If we receive a submission with multiple films on one disc, we will only consider the first film included.

28) WHAT IF MY CONTACT INFORMATION OR ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT MY SUBMISSION CHANGES AFTER I'VE FILLED OUT THE APPLICATION?

You may log into your account at www.withoutabox.com at any time to update or revise your application.

29) WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF MY FILM WAS SELECTED?

We will contact you via e-mail during the first week of December. Please make sure that the e-mail address you provided on your application will be operational at that time. If your e-mail address changes, you may log into your account and update it at any time.

30) DOES SUNDANCE PROJECT DIGITALLY AT THE FESTIVAL?

Yes, Sundance has utilized digital projection technology since 1999. However, with the stability of digital standards and equipment changing every year, we do not announce our digital projection options until after films have been accepted into the festival.

As a reference point only, in recent years our required digital projection format has been HDCAM 1080i 59.94 (NTSC), 16x9 (1.78), with no anamorphic squeeze. For Audio, we require either standard stereo or LTRT on channels 1 & 2, and have been able to accommodate Dolby E mixes on channels 3 & 4. We have played many films that were shot on DV CAM, and you will have no issues making a transfer from that to one of our preferred formats.

31) IF I FILL OUT THE ONLINE APPLICATION BUT NEVER SEND YOU MY FILM, CAN I GET A REFUND OF THE APPLICATION FEE?

No. The application fee is non-refundable.

32) WHERE DOES MY SUBMISSION FEE GO?

Sundance Institute is a non-profit organization that provides many different programs and initiatives for film and theatre writers, directors, actors, producers, and composers. Fees from festival submissions help fund programs such as these, and also help us keep the submissions process thorough and democratic. We strive to process every package promptly and watch every film with an attentive and unbiased eye. For more information about Sundance Institute's many programs, please visit us at www.sundance.org.

33) DOES IT MATTER IF MY FILM IS LOW BUDGET AND DOESN'T FEATURE ANY CELEBRITIES?

Absolutely not! We have a longstanding and trusted reputation of screening and selecting a wide array of projects without prejudice (if you don't believe us, please check out our competition programs over the past twenty-five years). Furthermore, we depend on unknown filmmakers to uphold our mission as a Festival of discovery. If your account is paid in full and there are no playability issues with your DVD, **YOUR FILM WILL BE SCREENED** in its entirety and given the same level of consideration as any other film that is sent to us. Discovering new talent and fresh voices rank amongst our top priorities.

34) IS THERE A SCREENPLAY COMPETITION AT THE FESTIVAL?

We do not currently have a screenplay competition, nor do we accept screenplay submissions. While we do award a screenwriting prize to films at the Festival, it is only open to completed films playing in one of our competition categories. Please visit www.sundance.org for more information about our non-festival programs that do accept written materials.

35) WHAT TYPES OF FILMS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? WHAT STANDS OUT?

We celebrate the independent spirit of interesting and original storytelling. Diverse voices and films that push the limits of style and narrative also excite us, but there is no single aesthetic that we look for over any other. We are mainly looking for great films and interesting points of view.

36) IF MY FILM IS NOT CHOSEN, MAY I SPEAK WITH A PROGRAMMER FOR NOTES OR FEEDBACK?

Unfortunately, no. With over 9,000 films submitted each year, it isn't viable for us to correspond with each individual applicant in this regard. Don't be discouraged if your film isn't accepted-- we view far more worthy films each year than we have room to play.

37) WHEN DOES THE 2010 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL TAKE PLACE?

The Festival will take place in Park City, Utah on January 21 - 31, 2010. We hope to see you there!