

# Showing a Movie on Campus

This document is for students and student organizations planning to show a movie publicly on K-State campus. When showing a film at a campus public event, students will need confirm permission (aka "rights") prior to the event.

## Why is permission needed to show a film publicly?

Permission or rights are a part of copyright law. If you were to create a movie, then it would be your right to say where and under what circumstances it could be shown to others. On the other hand, showing a movie without an owner's permission at an event would violate these rights. This could result in legal consequences for your student organization and K-State Campus.

While this typically happens in extreme cases, it is important that our community respect the work of creators, and follow the polices of not only the University, but also state and federal regulation.

## What is a public viewing?

Permission and/or a Public Performance License is needed when a film is to be shown publicly, meaning outside your personal private space and open to a wider audience than close friends or family. Examples of public events where permission would be required might be:

- Showing the entirety of a film in K-State Union or any other public University space for free. This can include and is not limited to:
  - Classrooms
  - Library Study Rooms
  - Dorm common areas or lounges

These spaces are considered "public" spaces, and showing a movie in these areas is the equivalent to showing them in a theater even if you are not charging money to see it.



If you *are* charging admission for the showing, it is even more important to obtain a license. If you are making money, the copyright holder of the film you showed could take you to court to receive compensation. This is true whether the event is public or private.

- If you have used publicity to invite your audience to the showing (this includes but is not limited to mass emails, letters, flyers, and web postings) then this may constitute a public viewing.

## What if this showing is for educational purposes?

- You will still need a license or permission when showing an entire film for educational purposes. If the distributor has special permission for films shown for educational purposes, they will still need to give you the written confirmation you need to protect your event under the law and Union policy.
  - In order to ease this process, K-State purchases blanket licenses for film showings. See the next section to learn more about what is covered.
- If you are showing segments of a film for educational purposes, you may not need a license. This is called “fair use.” Examples of a fair use film showing may be when:
  - The event is both educational and free
  - The film is shown in conjunction with scholarly criticism
  - The snippet does not reveal key plot items to the film
  - The length of the showing is not substantial
  - The segment does not affect people's likelihood of seeing the entire film.

## What is covered under K-State’s Film License?

- Your department may already have permission to show the film. If you are showing the film in conjunction with an academic department, that department may already have permission. Check to be sure. If permission is already granted, they need to be able to show you written proof of the fact. If the source of the film is K-State Libraries, public performance rights may have been purchased with the film itself.
  - K-State obtains group film licenses for educators and studies. You can see the library of films K-State has obtained rights in by reviewing Libraries’ [Streaming Video](#) Guide or ask a librarian to help you.

## K-State does not have this film’s license. Where can I get permission or a license instead?



What if I pay for rented movie?  
Because movie rentals are intended for private use, renting them *does not* provide you with the permission you need to have a public showing in which an audience is invited. You will have to get formal permission.

Getting permission for showing most films is fairly simple. For some rare or international films, it may prove to be a bit trickier. However, there are resources on campus to help you if you should have problems. Most "mainstream" films that are distributed for non-commercial use (which is what most campus showings would be) come from one of two main distributors, or you can search for the proper source.

First, conduct a web search — a good place to start is [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com), the Internet Movie Database. Simply go to the site, type your film in the search area at the top, and choose the correct film out of the results. Once you choose your film, go to the “Company Credits” and look for “Production Co.” Select “See more,” and look under “Distributors.”

Look for a distributor that is in the USA; from there, you can do a Google search for that distributor's contact information. From there, you can contact the distributor and inquire about purchasing a public performance license.

If this method does not work check these resources for more information:

#### Large Distributors:

- SWANK Motion Pictures, Incorporated: The list of films they distribute is on their web page, but they add new films every day.
  - [www.swank.com](http://www.swank.com)
  - 1-800-876-5577
- Criterion is another large distributor.
  - <http://www.criterionpicusa.com/>
  - 1-800-890-9494

#### Alternative Resources

- Motion Picture Academy's Reference Library
  - <https://www.oscars.org/library>
  - (310) 247-3000
- Independent film producers often provide contacts from the film's website and may have special promotions for educational, public library, or non-profit organizational use. Many will be happy to see their film in circulation, and some are willing to negotiate the public performance fees.

#### What is a film distributor going to ask me?

- Your name, and the name of the organization you are working with;
- How you intend to show the film (advertise all over campus vs. to a small group, whether you are charging, what kind of venue you are showing the film in);
- If there is a charge, how your organization will pay for the rights to show the movie
- Contact information for your organization;
- Whether or not you need them to send you a copy of the film.

## Will getting the film from the distributor cost money?

It might. The only way for you to determine this is to call or email the distributor, explain under what context the film will be shown, and see what they can do for you. If there is a fee, it will matter whether or not you are charging for the showing, how many people you expect, whether or not you need a copy of the film sent to you, and how often you show films. Have all the information handy about your event when you speak with the film's distributor.

## After I have obtained permission, what "proof" do I need to have?

Once you have obtained the rights, you will receive a written record of your permission to show the film. This is commonly called a "confirmation." If you are being charged, an invoice will follow this confirmation once you show the film. Confirmations can come via the mail, or via email, and will have the film, the date(s) you have permission to show the film, the contact information of your representative from the distribution company, and the format you requested the film in (if the film is being sent to you), and other pertinent information. If a distribution company is unable to provide a confirmation, they should send you a letter or via e-mail that certifies that you have legally obtained the rights to show the film. This should be on letterhead with all contact information of the distributor available.

## This is so complicated! Why don't I just show a film without written permission?

Even though it sounds complicated, it really is not difficult to obtain the proper permission to show films on campus. It will definitely take less time and money than defending yourself or your organization in court if you are caught! Intellectual copyright infringement is being prosecuted more and more on college campuses. It is just not worth the risk.

## I have more questions. Who can I talk to?

If you have questions specifically regarding the need for permission when showing films, or more about copyright information in general, visit the [K-State Copyright Consultation Service](#) or send your questions to [cads@k-state.edu](mailto:cads@k-state.edu).