



**Friends of
the Earth**

good.screenings

Lights! Camera! Action! How to put on a perfect film- screening

Reasons to put on a film screening...

- Attract more people to your event
- Educate people on a campaign issue
- Host a more informal event
- Raise money for your group/campaign
- Attract a different kind of audience
- Because you fancy showing a film
- To give more people the chance to see a specific film

This simple “How to” guide has been pulled together in collaboration with Friends of the Earth and the lovely people behind Good Screenings (www.goodscreenings.org).

“Every time I go to the movies its magic, no matter what the movie is about.” Stephen Spielberg

Film is one of the most powerful mediums available to communicate ideas, issues and inspiration to a mass audience. As a campaigning tool it is very valuable – not only as a means of educating and informing people, but also as a means of bringing people together, and introducing people to your campaign issues in a way that is accessible and social.

It's pretty straight forward to organise a film screening. Like any public-facing event, the more planning and preparation you can do in advance the easier and more successful your event will be. Once you've discussed and agreed on the idea of holding a film screening, and you are clear as to what you want to achieve with your screening event, there are a few simple steps you need to go through before you can hold your screening.

- Step 1: Decide on your film
- Step 2: Confirm your venue and screening date
- Step 3: Buy a license to show the film
- Step 4: Publicise and promote your screening
- Step 5: Host your screening. – Simple!

Steps 1 and 2 are usually the easy bit. Choosing what film you want to show shouldn't be too difficult. Often people want to show a film because it is topical in some way, or because it relates directly to an issue you care about or are campaigning on. Depending on where you and your group are based, another consideration may be that few people in your area will get to see a particular film unless you arrange a screening (for example, if you live in a rural area, or an area without a nearby cinema).

Deciding on your venue is something else to consider. Generally speaking somewhere that is accessible, welcoming and has sufficient chairs for the number of people you are hoping to attend will be your primary considerations. If you aren't able to use a proper cinema or lecture theatre it's also worth thinking through what equipment the venue has available – will you need to bring a projector, a screen and speakers for example? It is always a good idea to do a technical check in advance of your screening, and then again on the day well before you expect people to arrive so that you can remedy any technical glitches.

Step 3 – arranging a licence for your film screening – is often perceived as a trickier aspect. In order to show a film in a public environment, you need to have a license to show it. This is a legal requirement, and buying a license helps to support a thriving film industry – which in turn means that films can be made on the issues that matter. There are 2 different ways you can buy a license – see below.

Good Screenings: www.goodscreenings.org

This is a quick and often the cheapest way to arrange to buy a license.

Good Screenings provide an online booking system to hire films with a social or environmental justice focus. They calculate your license fee and also send you the film. The cost varies depending on what sort of organisation/group you are (it's cheaper for voluntary groups than for businesses). They also encourage you to use film screenings as a fundraising initiative, and won't take any of the money from the door!

Good Screenings has been set specifically to make it easier to hire and host award winning films of interest to campaigners and have a great library of harder-to-find films available.

Film Bank: www.filmbank.co.uk

The great thing about Film Bank is the amazing variety of films available. Unlike Good Screenings who have a specific focus on social justice films, Film Bank have one of the biggest film libraries in Europe, from current releases to films from the 1920's.

You can buy your film license directly from Film Bank online. However, the cheapest license is £75 for a non-commercial screening (i.e. a screening where you don't charge people to attend) – and this can rise quite steeply for commercial screenings depending on how many people your event is aimed at.

“The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder”

Alfred Hitchcock

Logistics: It's important to think through the practicalities of your screening when you are planning the event. Basic things like your venue being too hot or too cold will make a big difference to how much your audience enjoy the film. Think through things like what time your film will be shown, and what time the film will finish. Do you need to provide refreshments for people? Is your film going to finish before the last train goes? If you are having a talk after the film, think through whether you are going to need to allow for people to have a comfort break first. Remember what Hitchcock said about the human bladder...

“So, where's the Cannes Film Festival being held this year?”

Christina Aguilera

Promotion: Never underestimate the need for promotion. It's always better to think you've done too much, then to realise, as you are sitting in an empty hall after the film was due to start, that you've done too little. Most people need a fair bit of notice before they can commit to attend an event – at least 3 weeks is a good rule of thumb.

Think through all your different promotional tools. Poster, flyers, emails are all very valuable but these are no use if they are stuck up some where people won't see them, or if your emails aren't getting read. If you can persuade people to promote your event on different email lists or newsletters too that's very helpful. Get creative with your target audience – showing a film is a great way to reach beyond the usual audience for your events.

"If only God would give me some clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name in a Swiss bank."

Woody Allen

Fundraising: Putting on events can be a great way of raising money for your group/campaign. However, there is often a financial outlay involved in putting on events. Make sure you work out your budget very carefully, allowing for some contingency in case of unforeseen circumstances. Make sure your ticket prices are reasonable (check with friends and family how much they would be prepared to spend on a ticket) and that you are realistic about how many people will attend the event. If you can, pass round a bucket on the night too, and consider additional money-making options too – such as selling refreshments.

"I don't want to dress up a picture with just my face."

Grace Kelly

Venue dressing: Make sure that the route to your venue is well sign-posted with eye-catching, easily recognisable signs. People who struggle to spot your venue are likely just to give up looking rather than arrive late for the start of the film. Don't forget to have a stall in the entrance area that clearly identifies you as Friends of the Earth and include a sign-up list for people who want to stay in touch with your group. These are potentially future group members or supporters so make sure that someone has a clear role to encourage people to sign-up and stay in touch. There's lots of Friends of the Earth materials available to help you dress the venue and your stall, including flags, table cloths and banners:

www.foe.co.uk/get_involved/community.html

Make sure you have an audience guide prepared to hand out on the night. Suggested materials are available on the Good Screenings website for each film, but it is always good to include information about the film, what the issues are and how your audience to take action.

“Speeches that are measured by the hour will die with the hour.”

Thomas Jefferson

Speaker panels: Depending on the film you are screening, you may want to consider whether to organise a speaker or panel of speakers to lead a discussion after the film. This can really add to the quality of the event if done well. However, whether this is appropriate depends on what sort of atmosphere you are trying to create (informal/ energised/ thoughtful/ informative etc), the logistics of your event (what time you have the venue until/what time your event begins and ends/ the type of audience you want to attract) and what sort of person you would like to speak. Sometimes it is useful to invite the local MP or other key decision makers, especially if the film adds weight to an issue you are campaigning on locally currently. If you do chose to invite speakers, the following points may help guide your thinking:

- Who to invite – are you after just one speaker or several?
- Who is available – would you consider changing the date of your event in order to involve a specific speaker?
- What is going to be gained by having speakers – what do they add?
- What sort of brief are you going to give your speakers? Will they be able to speak about anything they like?
- Who is going to chair the discussion/debate?
- Will the audience be able to ask questions?
- How long will the speakers be able to talk for?

In considering all of this, bear in mind how long your audience has been sitting down for. If the film is lengthy, they may appreciate a break between the end of the film and speeches. On the other hand, people may also take that opportunity to leave too, so carefully consider the implications of this.

Best of luck with your film screenings – have fun!



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Making Real Impact**
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