

SHORESCRIPTS

DISCOVERING NEW WRITING TALENT

GETTING YOUR SCREENPLAY PRODUCED

Having a finished screenplay is just the first step of many towards the ultimate goal of getting your movie made and having it viewed by as many people as possible, and as a writer, you may feel that your job is done. It isn't. That brilliant screenplay sitting on your hard drive isn't going to make itself. It's up to you. We're going to explore several different steps you can take to increase the chance of your screenplay being produced as well as help you understand what other skills you'll need to develop if you're going to have a successful and lengthy screenwriting career. What cannot be understated before you read on is that none of the avenues we're going to look at will matter if you haven't crafted your script into the absolute best draft possible. With no room for errors, your script needs to be ready, even if you're not.

NETWORKING

Yes, you can make a movie on your own, but it's extremely difficult, and probably not much fun. That's why building a network of potential collaborators is vital. Filmmaking really is a team effort, so think of networking as you simply building long-term relationships with like-minded creatives (aka making friends). Finding people who are going to be as passionate about your project as you are is pivotal to getting your script produced, and networking is a necessary skill that all writers need to conquer. Thankfully it's one that becomes easier with practice.

FILM FESTIVALS

Attending festivals is a great way to meet a whole host of varying industry professionals and you don't need to submit a film to attend. Whether it's one of the big major festivals or just a small local one, seek out film premiers or screeners where the director or producer will be present, as well as ones with presentations or talks afterward.

Do your homework and attend showings of the movies that are similar to yours or the festivals that are dedicated to the same types of projects as your own. Not only will you be inspired, but you'll also be surrounded by other fans and potential collaborators too.

Festivals are also great for meeting up with fellow screenwriters. Don't think of them as competition, they're your allies, with potential connections of their own to share. Fellow screenwriters are also great for helping you to hone your craft, so don't think that they're people you don't need to meet.

Participate in Q&A sessions, whether you're on the panel or in the audience, talking, sharing experiences, and learning in front of a crowd can help your public speaking skills, plus give you the opportunity to make a meaningful connection with an industry professional at the same time.

Get to know the festival programmer. They are the gatekeepers to lots of different filmmaking professionals, so actively seek them out and pick their brains about the industry.

Attend Workshops. Festivals often run practical workshops led by working professionals and these are a great place to not only soak up the knowledge from someone in the business, but there's also a chance to impress them and your peers.

Volunteer. Being a familiar face, and one that's helpful, is a great way to network with attendees. Yes, you'll have to put in long hours with little or no pay, but you'll make some great friends, see lots of movies, and maybe meet some celebrities too. Do be mindful not to approach celebs and thrust your script into their faces. That's not the needy, forceful, impression you want to make.

Check out this comprehensive list of worldwide film festivals [here](#) to get you started.

5 DO'S AND DON'TS

Networking isn't pitching. Don't plunge straight into a rant about your idea. It makes you sound amateur and desperate.

Try and find a common connection. Are you both into the same sports, music, and yes, movies, etc.? Make a connection on a personal level rather than talking business all night.

Listen & pay attention. Don't be the guy who's just waiting for you to stop talking so that he can start babbling on about himself. Ask people about themselves; where they're from, how their night is etc.

Find out what you can do to help someone instead of trying to assess what he or she can do for you. Make yourself valuable and people are more likely to want to keep in contact.

Ask for advice instead of asking someone to read your script or represent you. You might not make a long lasting connection, but you could learn something worth knowing instead. People love to feel needed and appreciated, so rub their ego a little to make them feel good.

NETWORKING EVENTS

There are tons of different places to start connecting with other professionals including screenwriting networking events, conventions, talks, and seminars. Enrolling in writing and filmmaking classes is not only great for learning new skills and techniques, but if you find

courses taught by practicing screenwriters, you may be able to tap into their circle of industry connections too. Don't expect to sell your script at a Pitchfest, but they can be useful in terms of learning how to hone the perfect pitch as well as get valuable feedback from execs you may have difficulty accessing elsewhere. Learn by watching other people pitch and gauge the market appeal of your own idea against the competition. Preparation is key here. Don't pay to attend one of these events if you haven't practiced your pitch.

Script Angel has a great calendar of screenwriting events available [here](#).

THE ELEVATOR PITCH

If the opportunity does arise, it's handy to be able to quickly and proficiently pitch your idea to anyone who's interested. Here are some tips to help you perfect your one minute pitch.

1. Keep it short. Very short. Lead with your logline (that's your idea summed up into one sentence) and make sure it's got a captivating hook to it.
2. Ask questions. Engage with the listener by prompting them to interact and they're more likely to remember the content. "Have you heard of [insert movie here]? Well, my idea takes that concept but turns it on its head," for example.
3. Focus on your protagonist and your major story beats. What inciting incident propels them into a new world, what's their point of no return, and what's their darkest moment etc. Take us on a short emotional rollercoaster.
4. Last impressions count more. As well as opening with a hook, close with one too. Ending on intrigue and leaving the listener wanting to know more is ideal.
5. Have more than one project ready to pitch. It's fairly common for someone to say "that's not for me, what else have you got?", so it's a good idea to have your full arsenal prepared. You don't want to be seen as a one hit wonder.

5 EVENT STRATEGIES

Attending organized industry parties and events is also a common way to mix with professionals, and while the emphasis is on having fun, going in prepared can really help you feel more at ease. Here are five tips to help you have a productive evening.

1. Go with an aim to talk to at least five different people (and that doesn't include your friends). If you stand in the same spot and chat to your mates all night, you may as well have stayed at home.
2. Be attentive. Don't scan the room for someone else to talk to while you're speaking to another person. It's just plain rude. If you realize you're not going to connect with someone, be polite and move on.
3. Have a business card ready if you need one, but don't walk around handing them out to everyone you meet. A screenwriter handing out a business card is a surefire way of showing that they're an amateur. You'll find that most people just exchange numbers/ emails on their phones, so only use a card if asked.
4. Do a follow up. Check in with connections you've made within at least one week of meeting them. If there's no reply, leave it another week and try again, but don't start pestering people relentlessly. That's not going to impress anyone.
5. Don't take it too seriously. If someone's rude or isn't into the same things as you, don't take it personally. Be polite and move on. You're not having a job interview; you're there to have fun, after all.

There are various different places to find networking opportunities. Look for trade events or meet-ups to attend, and if there aren't any near you, create one! Meet in a bar or cafe and take it from there. Don't sit and wait for people to come flocking to you, be proactive and get the ball rolling yourself. And while engaging with people face to face is the preferred

method, building relationships online is just as valuable. Talent connectors, creative hubs, and job listings are great places to find potential collaborators. Social media is also a great way to start interacting with your favorite directors and producers as long as your mindful about not overstepping boundaries and don't share posts that could cause offense.

TRADE EVENTS

[The Tracking Board](#) – Hollywood's industry insider information trade website.

[Script Magazine](#) – Industry magazine with extensive sources on events, guides, and screenwriting resources.

[International Screenwriting Association](#) – Events, job opportunities, and talent connector.

Peer by Peer reviews. Receive feedback on your script from fellow writers in return for reviewing other screenplays at places such as [Talentville](#), [CoverflyX](#), and [Zoetrope](#). Be aware, that a peer review isn't the same as professional script analysis, but it can help you get some early responses to your work.

MEET-UPS

[Stage 32](#) – Find meet-ups near you or network online with fellow creatives.

[Meetup](#) - Find filmmakers, writers, or just similar movie fans near you.

[London Screenwriters Festival](#) – An annual event that hosts panel discussions, pitching sessions, and much more.

[Screenwriters Network](#) – Hosts monthly meetings, networking opportunities, and special events for writers.

[ISA](#) - The International Screenwriters Association also has a great list of networking events listed that's regularly updated.

ONLINE

[Shooting People](#) – A place where independent filmmakers can pitch projects and find collaborators.

[Talent Bases](#) – A talent platform that aims to connect freelancers with the UK's leading TV indies.

[Mandy](#) – Post and apply to jobs in the film, TV, and theatre industry looking for cast and crew.

[InkTip](#) – Find producers looking for scripts within a specific genre, budget, and casting criteria.

[Reddit](#) - This online forum is a perfect place to interact with a community of screenwriters ranging from both beginner to pro.

COMPETITIONS

It goes without saying that entering and placing in reputed screenwriting contests can really open doors for unsigned writers. The key is to target the contests that offer the most long-term benefits for you. While winning a large cash prize isn't to be sniffed at, is it going to help you advance your career? Look to enter competitions that offer industry access, mentor programmes, and have the ability to send your script out to be read by producers seeking top screenplays. Those are the competitions that'll help you get that all-important foot in the door.

Coverage services are also useful. Not only is it a great way to build a relationship with a reader who could open doors, some companies, like us at Shore Scripts, have the ability to send any script we give feedback on to our roster of 100+ production companies and agents if we think it has potential.

Check out our list of screenwriting competitions in 2019 that we think offer the most benefits to writers [here](#).

FREE/DISCOUNTED

Download Bang2Write's free One Page Pitch Template [here](#) and Stage 32's Free Pitching Template [here](#).

If you blog, post, or tweet regularly about all things movie related and have a decent number of followers, you can use this to get into film festivals on a free limited press pass by submitting the details on a festivals website.

Screenwriting and filmmaking students may also find that their university offers a discounted entry into particular festivals.

Film Freeway often has exclusive deals on international film festivals [here](#).

Also check online to see if you can find discount codes to join networking sites such as Stage 32, Shooting People, or other any other organization that asks for a signup fee.

FURTHER READING

Read how screenwriter Graham Moore made his big break with 'The Imitation Game' by networking [here](#).

More tips on networking for screenwriters [here](#).

Learn how screenwriters should and shouldn't use social media [here](#).

FILM FUNDS

If you want to produce your script, whether on your own or with a team, you're going to need money. Applying for film funds and grants, which are effectively loans you don't need to pay back, can benefit you in more ways than you might think. While the process itself can be cumbersome, time-consuming, and there's a high chance you'll be rejected, applying to grants will force you to understand how to write a realistic budget as well as understand the filmmaking process, which in turn can have positive effects on your writing.

When applying for funding, you're effectively taking on the role of producer, as you'll need to provide detailed line-item budgets that require you to get quotes on everything from cast, crew, equipment, permits, and insurance, but not only that, having to frequently explain your concept also forces you to think about exactly why your making this movie. Having to justify your movie over and over again allows you to question whether your idea is currently strong enough before committing even more time and money on it.

To get access to the big bucks, you'll often you'll need to show that you've got a history of receiving smaller grants that resulted in finished projects in order to prove that you're worth the risk, but it's still worth applying even after being rejected. Becoming a known entity to a funding body can make them more confident about spending their money on you. And if you don't get the money, you can still be eligible to receive aid such as goods and services like free or discounted equipment and postproduction facilities.

Don't be dismayed if you've been rejected. Take a funders comments on board and try again. You, or your feature idea, could well have made a great impression, but the board simply don't think you're ready. If they also have a short grant, apply for that instead. And if you don't have a short script, write one! You're more likely to be remembered and accepted next time around if you've acted on their comments

WHERE TO FIND FUNDING

Find out if your government provides funding for filmmakers. Europe alone has 20+ programmes for filmmakers, but be aware that these schemes are very competitive. Read the guidelines before applying, you may find that there are restrictions on funds, which may potentially compromise your creative process.

Tax incentives are also worth exploring. In the UK, EIS and SEIS investors get tax relief on their investment in your film. You need to create a business plan and a budget schedule to convince investors that you aren't too much of a risk. It's another competitive market where everyone is trying to find cash, so do your homework and make your project stand out.

Outside the UK, there are more millionaires looking for various places to invest their money, and many can be attracted to the idea of being part of the cool and sexy film industry. Places such as [Angel List](#) have investors waiting to find the right proposal, but again, with lots of competition, your project needs to be able to stand out from the crowd. Over-saturation of the market means that small projects can easily be swamped by the ones that already have monetary backing.

THE SHORE SCRIPTS SHORT FILM FUND

There are plenty of other organizations out there offering grants, awards, and aid for filmmakers, and that includes ourselves. Entering our short film fund could win you access to a production budget between \$10-15k to make your own film plus have access to thousands of dollars' worth of free equipment rental from ARRI. With every produced film being sent to all 36 OSCAR, BAFTA, EMMY & GOLDEN GLOBE winning judges on our roster, it's no wonder our first-year winner went on to premiere her film at 2018's Tribeca Film Festival. We've also helped 50+ writers gain representation, option, sell, and produce their screenplays too. For all the information you need about our fund, click [here](#).

FUNDING

Fiscal sponsorship with a non-profit organization. This works especially well for documentary makers but is also worth looking at for feature writers too. This is where your film gets umbrella non-profit status via the sponsor. Admin fees do apply, but don't always look for fiscal sponsors that cost the least amount, instead look at what the overall benefits can be beforehand.

International collaboration. You can sell your script cheaply (pre-sale) and find producers abroad, which is great for gaining access to whatever funding benefits they have in their country. Co-production is also attractive in many funders eyes, but be aware that too many cooks, each wanting to take creative control, can lead to difficulties.

Product placement. Find branch managers who are willing to give you money for including their product on set. This is a good deal for them, as it usually works out cheaper than advertising, but you'll need the pulling power of a blockbuster to make it worth their while. Company sponsors may want to know your marketing strategy before investment.

Deferrals. This is when you agree to pay everyone after the job is done and you can offer a percentage of profits as well as organizing a pre-determined fee. This means that someone's salary is dependent on the success of the film, and while that may galvanize people into working harder, there's a lot of reliance on trust here. A good team is essential, but even then, it's not uncommon for people to be left unpaid, even if the film is a success.

Using a Film Financing Company. Places like [Red Rock Entertainment](#), [Movie Investor](#), and [The Movie Fund](#) can help take the strain off finding investors on your own, but again, these companies are going to be highly selective over which films they choose to invest in. Having a business plan, proof of concept, and your team collected together will certainly help.

TOP FUNDS TO TARGET

[The BFI Film Fund](#)
[The Film Fund](#)
[Sundance Institute Labs and Fellowships](#)
[Initiatives for Women in Film](#)
[TFI Sloan Filmmaker Fund](#)
[Film London's Microwave Fund](#)

Self-funding. Paying for your movie by plastic means that you don't have to deal with investors, but it is worth asking yourself whether you decide to do this to maintain control, or is your project possibly not strong enough to gain interest from any other parties? Be realistic. Don't remortgage your house or put yourself into extreme difficulties. Yes, we hear about the filmmakers that did this and succeeded, but for each one of these, there are 1000+ who didn't.

FILM FUND TIPS

- Always read the remit. Research what each initiative is looking for and tailor your project to suit, if need be.
- The stronger the team, the more chance of success. Show that you are serious by already having a committed crew ready to go and/or cast.
- The process can take months, so factor that into your schedule.
- Attend grant workshops if possible and ask lots of questions.
- Pitch like a pro and make a business plan to show that you've done all your homework making you a low risk investment.
- Study other indie movies to find out how they got funding. Read the credits, read articles on the film, or even contact the filmmakers directly.

CREATE A BUSINESS PLAN/FILM PROPOSAL

Approach your film like it's a business because that's what it is. If you want someone else to finance your film, getting them passionate about your idea is just the first hurdle. If they're going to invest, you need to supply some convincing arguments on why. Find free samples of film proposals, forms, and templates [here](#).

You can also find a great directory of film grants [here](#) and search for funding by country at Olffi's website [here](#)

FURTHER READING

Read an interview with Shore Scripts Short Film Fund winner Claire Fowler [here](#).

Check out even more reasons why you should be applying to film funds [here](#).

Learn more about the application process [here](#).

WRITING & SHOOTING A PROOF OF CONCEPT

Increasingly, a screenplay on its own isn't enough, and producers, execs, and investors are also looking for something visual to help encapsulate just what it is you're trying to sell. A proof of concept (PoC) is a short taster of the writing, directing, and cinematography that also shows a project's viability on the big screen. Unlike a short film, a PoC isn't a concluded narrative, it's a scene, or list of shots plucked from the script, that teases the story, stirs emotions, and piques interest. Ultimately, it's a device to showcase your talent, help you raise funds, as well as sell your idea.

WHERE TO START?

The logistics of filming can be complicated, no matter what budget you've got. If you're unprepared or unconfident, finding a willing and able producer will help you get the ball rolling, but where do you find one, and how do you collect the rest of your cast and crew together?

Crew: [Mandy](#), [Shooting People](#), [The Knowledge](#), and [ProductionHUB](#) are four great resources for finding both paid and free working crew. Be aware that professionals may stay away from listings that sound amateur and don't use the correct terminology. Those willing to go unpaid will usually be fledglings themselves, but even then, working for nothing isn't really appealing. Try to at least offer an unpaid worker some sort of opportunity that is beneficial to them. A credit, a foot on the ladder, to gain experience, something to take away from all of that time and effort you're asking them to give. The crew are more likely to help out on a PoC, than a feature, as they are going to be more willing to work for a low fee for 2/3 days, over 20/30 days on a feature. If you have a crew member you know or work with, see if he/she can recommend other crew for your project. Recommendations are always the best way to find the most talented crew members.

Cast: The same applies when casting your film. Your low budget PoC is there to help you sell your script, so unfortunately, using your friends as actors isn't going to cut it, unless you know some great actors! Again, [Mandy](#) is useful for advertising for the cast as are platforms such as local Facebook groups, [Backstage](#), [Shooting People](#), and other local casting agencies.

Equipment: While it's true you can now shoot a movie on your phone, there are still plenty of other things that you'll need to gather, such as lighting equipment, sound equipment, wardrobe, props, and locations. Do some research to find exactly what you need beforehand and then try to source these items, keeping your budget in mind. You may need to hire specialized equipment but look to second hand buys, rentals, borrowing from friends who aren't using their gear, or universities. If you have a student on your team, there's a good chance they can access their university or college's film equipment, as well as mining for potential cast and crew while you're there. Non-profit charities and organizations such as churches, local radio stations, and government-funded youth media services may also have various pieces of equipment or venues you can use too. Be resourceful, think ahead, and look at what's on your doorstep before going further afield.

FIRST TIME COLLABORATION TIPS

Connecting with someone who wants to make your film on the Internet is great, but when dealing with a veritable stranger, make sure to protect yourself.

Research your collaborator. Do they have a history of past work that showcases their work or is there a backlog of failed and unfinished production complaints?

Option your script. It isn't always a case of just selling your script to an interested producer, you can write up a contract that returns the scripts rights back to you if the production isn't complete after an agreed length of time, which is useful to protect your IP.

Know your rights and what you're signing up for. Get familiar with the legal side of the film industry to make sure you don't get scammed. Join a professional body or guild such as [WGA](#), [WGGB](#), [AWG](#) or [IWAG](#), and employ lawyers that specialize in the entertainment business if you need to.

POC DO'S AND DON'TS

- Don't try to cram everything in. Focus on the A-story and forget subplots, minor characters, and spectacle shots if they're not pivotal to the main story.

- Limit the size of the cast, the number of locations, and even the dialogue, if possible. Not only will this help with budget constraints, but it'll also help pull focus on the emotional conflict that's unfolding on screen.

- Don't scrimp on the essentials. Sound and editing can often be neglected on a low budget shoot, but these small elements make a large bad impression if done poorly.

- If your cast and crew are working for free, make sure you feed them well. This is an area often forgotten about, but if you don't treat your workers well, you risk them walking. Find sponsorship from local supermarkets or restaurants willing to donate food for a mention in the credits etc.

- Research whom you're going to be pitching to. Look for producers, financiers, and directors that align themselves with your type of movie. Check to see if the company has a remit. Does your PoC fit it? If not, can tweaks be made to make your idea more appealing to them?

CROWDFUNDING

Funding for your PoC can be the beginning of your projects online presence and a means of building a following, gaining funding, and some much-needed positive exposure. [Kickstarter](#), [Indiegogo](#), and [GoFundMe](#) are your top three contenders, but to reach a wider audience, you'll have to get busy with social media too. Use [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), as well as setting up an email list in order to begin connecting with prospective funders. Promoting your movie can be a full-time job in itself, so it's worth giving this job to just one person or finding a promoter or marketer willing to take the heat off, which is something else to budget for.

KEY CROWDFUNDING TIPS

- Have a crowdfunding strategy before you start. Watch other successful campaigns to see what worked and what didn't. The first 48hrs is the most pivotal time of your launch, so do some work to generate a buzz around your project before you begin.
- Create a video. Yes, you're trying to raise money to shoot a bigger one but having a short intro video on your landing page is a must, even if it's just you and your crew talking to camera giving an impassioned plea telling us why this film must be made.
- Set a reasonable goal and don't get greedy. While you can surpass your goal, if you don't reach it in the first place, you won't get anything if you use Kickstarter, but can if you use Indiegogo, so choose your platform wisely.
- Content is key. Write frequent updates, blog posts, give reccy shots, write cast backgrounds, and anything else you think that funders will be keen to know about. Use lots of different platforms to increase your social footprint. And keep connected. Reply to comments and give shout-outs and thank yous' to your supporters.
- Choose your minimum donation amounts carefully. While some people wouldn't think twice about donating five or ten dollars, will you still get as many minimum donations if you increased it to fifteen or more? Do some research on what the most likely donation from your target audience will be.
- Create some generous and creative perks to entice big donations, but make sure you leave room for any costly rewards to come out of your budget. Be inventive with your perks, offer something unique, special, or rare, and always follow through with the promise of delivery.

HOW TO USE YOUR POC

If you've successfully raised the capital, gathered your team, and cut together one hell of a PoC, you'll want to know what to do next.

- Simply posting your piece online and gaining lots of hits and likes is one way to show that there's public interest in your idea.
- Use your PoC to create a dynamic landing page or investment pitch and keep the momentum gathered during your crowdfunding campaign to raise even more money that you can use towards making a low budget feature.
- Along with your screenplay, use your PoC as your calling card to help you get representation. Check out our list of agents and managers accepting non-solicited material [here](#).
- Use your PoC alongside an application into a development lab or funding programme as a means of showing not only your concept, but also your dedication to getting it developed.
- Incorporate it into your pitch. You're going to get a quicker response by sending your PoC along with your logline to producers and execs rather than waiting for someone to ask for your screenplay and for it to be picked up off the bottom of the reading pile.
- Obviously make sure to get the file format correct when sending out to investors. If they can't watch the footage, you've wasted your time right there.

FREE/DISCOUNTED

A good resource for selected free filmmaking documents & templates such as storyboards, crowdfund planning, and press kit samples can be found [here](#).

No Budget Film School has a brilliant list of resources to scour that cover all aspects of filmmaking [here](#) and download a free film budget template [here](#).

Find a list of free or budget filmmaking software, such as editing, graphic design, and audio on the Raindance site [here](#).

There are also thousands of filmmaking tutorials all over the web, detailing how to do certain shot setups, light scenes effectively, and basically anything you want to do, but aren't quite sure how. Check out [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#), and other specialized websites.

There's lots of screenwriting advice, screenplay analysis, industry interviews, and downloads to be found on our [Articles](#) page too.

Source royalty free music to save on your expenses. [Freesound](#), [SoundsCrate](#), the [Free Music](#) channel, and the [Free Music Archive](#) are great places to start, plus the BBC made 16,000 of their sound effects free [here](#).

FURTHER READING

Check out 8 great proof of concept films that got picked up by Hollywood [here](#).

Read an interview with filmmaker Jennifer Kent who went on to produce the successful horror movie 'The Babadook' after filming a PoC [here](#).

Read tips on shooting a PoC from filmmaker Tayo Amos [here](#).

SHOOTING A LOW BUDGET FEATURE

The next step on the ladder is to fund and produce your feature screenplay. Hopefully the experience of shooting a PoC has given you a taste for production as well as the confidence you'll need to tackle a larger project. Before you start, figure out what you can do yourself to save money and when you'll need to find an expert, such as a lawyer, agent, or marketing manager.

FURTHER CROWDFUNDING

If you used crowdfunding to fund your proof of concept or short film, great news, you already have a following. You can now use that finished piece to help you gain even more funds on your chosen platform. Keep the momentum growing by posting even more content, interacting with followers, and turning your movie into a brand. Again, with hundreds of projects vying for funding, standing above the crowd can be difficult. Having another campaign strategy in place can help you stay focused.

Generate awareness of your project by reaching out to the online community. Bloggers, podcasters, and genre fans on social media are the places on which to build more of a presence. Start an email list to keep supporters involved, monitor your campaigns performance, run competitions and polls to keep people interacting, and remember the 20/80 rule. Only spend 20% of your time asking for money, the rest of the 80%, you should be offering engaging news, helpful tips, and insights that will help others, and that ratio applies to every platform you use.

Offer movie credits to bigger investors. People with money like the bragging rights of saying they were an Executive or Associate Producer on a project, especially if they are invited to the Premiere. Creating big or rare rewards that make the donor feel like they were truly part of the filmmaking process, such as being an extra on screen, can really appeal to the genre fans keen to become involved.

BE PREPARED

Shooting a feature on a low budget means you'll likely have to adopt some guerrilla filmmaking techniques. As always, do your homework. Preparation is key to a smooth production.

- Use the techniques we've already discussed to source your crew. A good solid team is invaluable, but if someone's causing too many problems, don't be afraid to fire and re-hire. It could save you time and energy in the long run. Similarly, try to source budget filming equipment, but realize it may be a little bit harder to find equipment for a longer shoot. Decent camera equipment is relatively cheap now. Consider whether it's more cost effective to buy a DSLR or something like a RED Scarlett or BlackMagic camera over hiring an ARRI Alexa, etc. You'll need to keep equipment storage and insurance in mind too.

- Find a champion. Having a big name attached to your script is a great way to help you generate more finances. Whether this is a professional you've met through mentoring, your agent, a director, or an actor, use their pulling power to help you generate a buzz for your project. Many big-name actors run their own production companies, specifically looking for projects to star in themselves. If you have someone in mind for your lead role, it may be worth contacting them or their company directly. Having an actor attached can be a great asset but be prepared to budget for big names.
- Understand scheduling. Not only will you be juggling who is available and on what day, but you'll also have to consider what location is free, when, and how to get everyone there. If the cast and crew are working on a low or no fee, try to schedule shooting on weekends, especially if everyone is already working during the week, and always be prepared for delays. Christopher Nolan famously shot his first film 'Following' on weekends to work around his cast and crews schedules. There is software out there to help you break down the script into location, cast, props, costume, time of day etc., but these usually cost money to buy, so do your research.
- Be aware of the legalities. Having public liability insurance is a legal requirement when filming, but joining the [IATSE](#), [PGA](#), [BECTU](#), or [MEAA](#), could give you access to low rates. Certain locations will need permission granted before you can film there, people have a right to remain private, so license plates, public faces, and street names on screen can be an issue, and copyright law means that you can't use anyone else's art, music, or footage in your film without clearance. Any illegalities may make your finished film harder to sell.
- If you're working with a micro-budget, there's a chance that you may have to rewrite some of your script to fit realistic expectations. That exciting car chase you wanted may need to be adapted to something less costly, maybe there isn't time to move the production to a specific location, or maybe you realize that some scenes simply don't move the story forward enough to warrant the need to be filmed anymore. Rewriting during production while on a tight deadline is something a writer needs to get used to. Be prepared to fix problems on the fly, but remember, limitations can often lead to the most creative solutions too.
- Scout locations in advance. Use what's around you to keep costs down and save on moving cast and equipment. Be resourceful, are there any public halls, schools, or non-profit organizations that can be transformed into studios? Where do you work? Could you use that as a location? Do you know someone who owns a great location you could shoot in? If you're going to go full-on guerrilla, keep crew to a minimum so as to not draw attention to yourselves while trying to be covert, work quickly, and hide audio equipment as best you can. If you're shooting in a city without a permit, the chances are you will get moved on. Learn what you can get away with and what you can't as you don't want to lose a day's worth of filming, and money, because you don't have a permit.
- When it comes to scoring your film, look to find royalty free music or source composers willing to work to your budget. You can find composers amongst your crew listings, but unsigned bands may be worth approaching. Signed bands are also viable because their contract usually omits scoring films, meaning that any revenue from extra work they do in this field, is their own. Using a well-known or up-and-coming band also has the advantage of the number of followers and fans you can have access to. That's a whole lot of free advertising for your film. Deals can also be struck in terms of revenue from the

soundtrack. The low budget modern day musical 'Once', is now a show on Broadway for example.

FREE/DISCOUNTED

Find every filmmaking form your likely to need [here](#) at No Film School.

[Celtx](#) is a free all-in-one pre-production piece of software and the free [Shot Lister](#) app is also a useful tool to organize your shoot.

Contact your local authority regarding locations. There may well be a department that is more than willing to help you showcase their piece of the world on screen and can be very helpful when it comes to gaining permissions, but not so much if you're painting the location in a bad light, so be careful what you say.

Contact equipment companies directly to see if they have programs set up to help filmmakers. [Panavision](#), for example, offers equipment loans at little to no cost.

Filmmaker magazine offers a list of seven recommended no-budget post-production tools [here](#).

FURTHER READING

Read the lessons learned from first-time writer/director Shane Carruth from shooting his low budget movie 'Primer' [here](#).

Find 25 low budget feature films that launched careers [here](#).

Discover Steven Soderbergh's process on how to make a low budget feature in 18 days [here](#).

DISTRIBUTION

Once you have a product, be it a short film, low budget feature, or web series, the next step is getting it in front of an audience, which really is the ultimate goal. There are two main avenues to do this; the traditional route is to find a distributor who will buy the rights of the film and work out how best to achieve maximum exposure with little input from yourself, or there's the self-distribution route, where you and your team keep control, the monetary returns, but have to do all of the marketing and hard work in return.

THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE

Entering your film into a major international film festival, such as [Cannes](#), [Sundance](#), [Toronto](#), [London](#), or [Berlin](#), is the common way to get your movie viewed by global distributors who will hopefully bid against one another for the right to distribute it in their perspective territories. International sales agents are also great in terms of getting good deals for territories that you may not have even considered. A distribution company is more likely to take a film seriously if it comes to them via a recognized sales agent, rather than yourself. Once your film is picked up by a distributor, it will hopefully find its way into cinemas and from there, TV, DVD, and online markets, but this can sometimes be a lengthy process and in some cases, filmmakers might not seeing a return from their feature's distribution cycle for up to 15 years. That's a long time, especially if you need to pay salaries, loans, and investments back.

TRADITIONAL ROUTE TIPS

- Festivals are not free; in fact it can be hugely expensive. Securing a booth, hiring a publicist, travel expenses, and attending multiple festivals can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. Make sure you budget appropriately.
- Choose the right festival. If you're trying to sell, you need to submit to a festival that has plenty of acquisition executives attending. More importantly, you need to make sure that they attend your screening.
- Choose your premier wisely. Every major festival wants the world premier, North American premier, or European premier etc., and you can only have one. Make sure it counts.
- Most movies don't sell at their first festival with distributors only attending a small number of festivals; so don't focus all of your time solely on finding sales opportunities. Instead work on marketing your movie to the press, getting positive reviews, and making an impact on the viewers.

THE SELF-DISTRIBUTION ROUTE

Either your film didn't get picked up by a distributor while doing the festival circuit, or you simply want to keep control, and now you need to jump into the role of marketer. Taking charge of producing your own marketing materials, paying for your own advertising, getting reviews, and contacting cinemas directly, is just some of the tasks you'll need to turn your hand to, so it's certainly worth investing in hiring a specialist PR company to help here. If you thought making the film was the hard part, the marketing is a whole new step up, both in terms of time commitment and money investment. And yet, there are plenty of success stories out there proving that this is a viable option to take.

THEATRICAL VS. ONLINE

Approaching cinemas directly is an option but do your homework first. Analyze which cities and cinemas would best suit your target audience, and contact them well in advance, as cinemas will have a 3-4 month programme already set. Make sure your movie is using the correct format to be shown on the big screen. Most cinemas use 4k digital files and it may cost a few hundred dollars to create a DCP. Before you can start showing your film, check whether you need to get a license in place. Use a distribution scheme such as [Tugg](#), [Gathr](#), the [Independent Cinema Office](#), or a local touring cinema to help you find venues and promote your screenings.

Bypassing the cinematic route and releasing straight to DVD, Blue-Ray, or Video on Demand is also an option if the dream of seeing your movie on the big screen isn't feasible. VOD platforms are going to enable you to reach a much wider audience. In most cases, you're going to need to employ the services of an approved aggregator such as [Distribber](#) or [Quiver](#) to help you get worldwide VOD distribution to the major companies, but the upfront fee is low and these companies let you keep 100% of the royalties and rights.

10 SELF-DISTRIBUTION PLATFORMS

[Vimeo on Demand](#)
[iTunes](#)
[Amazon Instant Video](#)
[Netflix](#)
[Hulu Plus](#)
[Mubi](#)
[Google Play](#)
[YouTube](#)
[Fandor](#)

[Shore Scripts](#) - Yes, that's right! We're always open to viewing projects and seeing if we can help, so keep us in mind too.

UNDERSTAND THE THREE TYPES OF VIDEO ON DEMAND

Transactional Video on Demand (TVOD) – This is when audiences can only watch your movie after they click a “buy now” button and transact. Platforms include Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, and iTunes.

Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) – This is where subscribers sign up for a specific service by paying a monthly fee and gain access to unlimited programming. Platforms include Netflix, Hulu Plus, and Amazon Prime.

Advertisement Supported Video on Demand (AVOD) – This is where content free for consumers but subsidized by commercials and other forms of advertising. Platforms include Hulu and YouTube.

SELF-DISTRIBUTION TIPS

- Have a marketing team ready. You're going to need posters, artwork, trailers, and video ads. This is where you start to hit the hard sell with your finished product.
- Organize a release pattern. Have a strategy in place to budget for theatrical release, TVOD, and SVOD releases. Yet again, you're going to have to set a budget for all of this.
- Generate free press. Turn your movie into a reportable story that makes news. Send your movie to reviewers and hope for a positive review and endorsement.
- Identify links with upcoming events. Does your movie explore an element of mental illness for example, and are there any specific communities or organizations with events that are willing to show your movie?
- Use an approved aggregator such as [Distribber](#) or [Quiver](#) to help you get worldwide VOD distribution quicker.
- Make sure all of your files are encoded properly, ready for upload.
- Make your movie free to generate interest, following Radiohead's experiment of releasing an entire album for whatever price buyers were prepared to pay for, including nothing. The result claimed that 39% of downloaders were still prepared to pay towards the purchase.

FURTHER READING

Read about self-distributor, Jim Cummings, journey on getting his movie 'Thunder Road' in front of audiences [here](#).

Discover 5 advantages of self-distribution your next feature film [here](#).

Learn more about the self-distribution process [here](#).