



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When are the Deadlines/what are the Entry Fees for the 2026 Film Competition?

| | Feature Films | Short Films | Digital Series |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| Early Bird Deadline: 3/27/26 | \$65 | \$60 | \$50 |
| Regular Deadline: 5/20/26 | \$75 | \$70 | \$55 |
| Late Deadline: 6/19/26 | \$85 | \$80 | \$60 |
| Extended Deadline: 7/8/26 | \$95 | \$90 | \$65 |

Do you waive submission fees?

Austin Film Festival does not waive entry fees. AFF believes waiving entry fees hurts the integrity of the competition. The same rules and entry fees should apply to all applicants so no one film is favored over another. In a similar respect, AFF does not invite films to be in competition; only films submitted will be considered for competition.

However, we offer student, past entrants, alumni, and bulk submission discounts. Any inquiries about these discounts, please email programming@austinfilmfestival.com.

What are the different categories that I can enter?

- Narrative Feature
- Narrative Short
- Narrative Student Short
- Animated Short
- Documentary Feature
- Documentary Short
- Dark Matters Feature
- Comedy Vanguard

AFF is accredited by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences®, making all Jury Award-winning Narrative Short, Documentary Short, and Animated Short films eligible for an Academy Award®. Austin Film Festival reserves the right to change a film's submission category at its discretion.

Have a digital series? Check out our Scripted and Produced Digital Series Competition [here!](#)

Can I submit more than one film in a single category?

Yes! You can submit as many films as you want. Please be sure to complete separate entry forms and separate submission fees for each film.

Should I submit my film as a Narrative or Genre Category (Dark Matters or Comedy Vanguard)?

If a filmmaker is unsure whether to submit their film in the Narrative Feature category or in one of the genre categories (Dark Matters or Comedy Vanguard), we recommend the latter. However Austin Film Festival reserves the right to switch the entry category to fit programming needs and interests. Films will not be penalized if the festival chooses to change the category.

What are AFF's requirements for a film's premiere status?

Feature Films must be at least a Texas Premiere. AFF will not screen features in competition that have played at other Texas Festivals or have screened publicly in a theater in Texas (including a one night only screening in a rented space). We prefer World, North American, and US Premieres. All things being equal, AFF will often opt to program a film that has not yet had a release over one that has played several festivals.

Short Films must be at least Austin Premieres. Films that have played in Austin in a theatrical setting to a public audience prior to October 29, 2026 are not eligible to be screened at Austin Film Festival. This includes Shorts nights, public cast and crew screenings, and other festivals. The ONLY exception is that a Short Film may play as part of a class screening for the UT RTF Program.

Is my film a good fit for Austin Film Festival?

Due to the high number of submissions we receive we cannot consider films before they are submitted. Just remember, Austin Film Festival looks for strong narratives and storytelling first.

Check out our [Now Streaming](#) page to see past films that have been programmed!

My film already has distribution. Am I still eligible to submit to the AFF competition?

Films with U.S. distribution (obtained prior to being selected for AFF screening) or films produced, financed or initiated by a major film studio or television network are ineligible for competition, but may be considered for a special screening. Selection for screening will be determined no later than one month prior to the festival. Films that have been shown on US network or cable television or distributed to theaters prior to the festival dates are also ineligible for competition.

My film has screened previously in Austin. Will this be an issue for submission?

Films that have played in Austin in a theatrical setting to a public audience prior to October 29, 2026 are not eligible to be screened at Austin Film Festival. This includes Shorts nights, public

cast and crew screenings, or other festivals. The ONLY exception is that a SHORT may play as part of a class screening for the UT RTF Program. Features must be Texas Premieres.

I graduated in the past semester/within the past year from college/high school. Am I still eligible to submit to the Student Competition?

Yes, as long as the film was made while you were a student.

How many times is each accepted film screened during the Festival?

Each accepted film is screened twice during the Festival, generally once during the first four days and once during the second.

If my film is accepted into the competition, do I get any tickets or passes?

Each accepted feature film receives five complimentary tickets to each of its two screenings, a feature listing in the AFF Program Book, and two complimentary Producers Badges to this year's Austin Film Festival. Each accepted short film receives five complimentary tickets to screenings, listing in a shorts block in the AFF Program Book, and two complimentary Producers Badges to this year's Austin Film Festival. If a film advances to the final round of the competition, the film's team will also receive one ticket to the Awards Luncheon, taking place the Saturday of the Festival. Filmmakers may or may not know at the time of being accepted whether their film has advanced to the final round.

Can I submit my film by DVD?

We no longer accept films to be submitted by DVD. You may only submit digitally.

My film didn't get in. Can you tell me why? Do you offer feedback?

At this time we do not offer feedback on film submissions.

I submitted my film last year. Can the same film be resubmitted this year?

Yes, you can resubmit the film if you wish. However, we only encourage you to only do so if the film has substantially changed since your prior submission. Films must have been completed after January 1, 2025.

Do you accept international submissions?

Yes we do! We receive and accept submission from all over the world. Films must still be either in English or have English subtitles.

What should I include with my submission?

Along with the application (whether it be through FilmFreeway or our online entry form), all we need is a digital copy of the film.

I'm having issues submitting online. There is an error message. What should I do?

Due to possible high traffic on the website, you may need to wait a few minutes and try again. If you continue to have problems, try another web browser or try submitting from a different computer.

When uploading your screener on AustinFilmFestival.com or FilmFreeway, double-check that the file is in an acceptable format and size.

Do all writers/filmmakers involved need to be listed on the entry form? Should others (co-writer/director/etc.) also be credited on the application?

That is for you to settle with your collaborators. You will receive a notification if your film is submitted and can change acknowledgments at that time if necessary. Remember, all awards will be presented to the Writer of the winning films, with the exception of the Documentary awards, which will be presented to the Director.

What film formats are accepted for submission?

AFF screens films as digital files during the Festival and does NOT screen films on DVD, Blu-Ray, HD-CAM, or DCP. If you are unable or unwilling to provide us your film as a digital file for exhibition, DO NOT SUBMIT your film.

All online screeners are streaming only – we cannot accept a version of the film that must be downloaded. In the event of a password change or link change after submitting, you must email the Festival at film@austinfilmfestival.com immediately with that change so we may update your record. If the Festival is not notified of the change and the link is found to be inactive or the password to be incorrect, the submission may be deemed ineligible.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Austin Film Festival is not responsible for the streaming quality of Secure Online Screeners.

What are the options for uploading my film digitally?

If you would like to submit a SECURE ONLINE SCREENER, you may do so through our online submission form, or through the FilmFreeway submission system. All online screeners are streaming only – we cannot accept a version of the film that must be downloaded. For our online submission form: you will not be able to change the password on the film or the online location once you hit 'Submit.' If the film is not watchable when our selection committee attempts to access it because it has been moved, removed or has had the password changed, your entry will be disqualified and your entry fee will not be refunded. For the FilmFreeway submission system, you will not be able to make any changes to the film once it has been uploaded. Even if you upload a new version of the film, AFF will only be able to access the original version of the film.

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Can I send in a new/better/color-corrected/shorter/longer cut?

No. Please hold off on submitting your film until it is complete. Aside from minor post-production additions like color correction and sound mixing, we do not accept works-in-progress and will not update a submission with a more recent cut. Because our screeners focus on story, technical changes will probably not affect the judgment of a screener anyway. If the film is screened during the festival, you will have ample opportunity to supply us with the most recent version beforehand.

When will I hear about the results?

The selection for screening will be announced a month prior to the festival. Filmmakers will be notified regarding the status of their film by late September at the latest.

What are the prizes?

Jury Awards:

Jury Awards will be presented to the writer of the winning films of all nine competition categories, with the exception of the Documentary Awards, which will be presented to the Director. Jury Awards are based on the overall merit of the entries. Jury members reserve the right not to grant an award.

Jury Award Winners receive:

- Cash prize of \$2,500 (Narrative Feature and Documentary Feature) or \$1,000 (Dark Matters Feature, Comedy Vanguard Feature, Narrative Short, and Scripted Digital Series) or \$500 (Narrative Student Short, Documentary Short, and Animated Short)
- Reimbursement (up to \$500) of one round-trip airfare to Austin to attend the 2026 Festival
- Reimbursement (up to \$500) for stay at an AFF partner hotel during the 2026 Festival
- AFF Brass Typewriter Award
- The winning films in the Narrative Short, Documentary Short, and Animated Short categories are eligible to be nominated for an Academy Award®

Audience Award:

All films screening at AFF will be eligible for an Audience Award in their respective categories. Award winners are announced within one week following the Festival. The Audience Award is based solely on audience voting at film screenings.

Am I eligible for any awards if my film is not screened as part of the competition?

All films screened during the festival are also eligible for an Audience Award in their respected categories. Award winners are announced within one week following the Festival. The Audience Award is based solely on audience voting at the film's screenings.

When will the awards be given out?

The awards will be presented during the Austin Film Festival Awards Luncheon. Awards are based on the overall merit of the entries. In-competition awards are determined by a distinguished group of jurors, all established within the film industry. All awards will be presented to the writer of the winning films with the exception of the Documentary awards which will be presented to the director.

Do I need to obtain all rights for music and other copyrighted material in my film?

Yes. While AFF will not investigate these clearances, we will also not be held responsible for any copyright infringements. If your film is accepted into the festival, you must sign a waiver indicating all rights were legally obtained to the materials in your film.