

# Distributing Your Film or Video Work: A Guide for Students

As a student in Film and Video, completing your project is only the beginning. Getting your work seen by an audience—whether classmates, communities, or industry professionals—is key to developing as a filmmaker. This guide outlines the best ways to start distributing your work, beginning locally and expanding into national and international platforms.

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## 1. Start Local: Connecticut & Regional Film Festivals

Submitting to local festivals is a smart first step. These festivals are more accessible, provide real-world screening experience, and help build your confidence, audience, and professional network.

**Start here:**

[Digital Media CT – Film Festivals in Connecticut](#)

### Recommended Local Film Festivals:

- [Norwalk Film Festival](#)  
A community-centered festival focused on storytelling, education, and social impact. Offers Q&As, workshops, and a platform for emerging voices, including student filmmakers.
- [Trinity Film Festival](#)  
One of the premier undergraduate-only film festivals in the U.S., hosted at Hartford's Cinestudio theater. Includes jury awards, cash prizes, and industry networking.
- [Mystic Film Festival](#)  
An international film festival that highlights narrative, documentary, and student films. Offers in-person screenings, filmmaker panels, and opportunities to meet industry professionals in the scenic town of Mystic.
- [Greenwich International Film Festival \(GIFF\)](#)  
A non-profit festival that bridges film and philanthropy through year-round programming and special events. GIFF showcases 60+ international film premieres, educational panels, and workshops. The festival offers a student

discount on submission fees and supports various charities with proceeds each year.

- **[Bridgeport Film Festival](#)**

A dynamic, community-focused festival dedicated to discovering and supporting independent filmmakers. Offers screenings, workshops, panel discussions, and networking events. The festival also provides scholarships to local high school seniors pursuing arts and communications, fostering the next generation of creatives.

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## **2. Take It National: Student Festivals & Awards**

Once you've had some success or gained experience locally, the next step is submitting to national-level student festivals and competitions. These platforms provide broader exposure, networking with other student filmmakers, and—if you're lucky—potential distribution.

### **Top Picks for Student Creators:**

- **[BEA Festival of Media Arts](#)**

A premier national competition organized by the Broadcast Education Association. Categories include narrative, documentary, animation, and more. Widely recognized by media professionals and educators.

- **[Student Academy Awards](#)**

Sponsored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, this is one of the most prestigious student competitions globally. Winners may qualify for the Oscars in short film categories.

- **[National Film Festival for Talented Youth \(NFFTY\)](#)**

One of the world's largest youth film festivals, accepting filmmakers 24 and under. It provides workshops, panels, and awards, with an emphasis on diversity and innovation.

- **[Campus Movie Fest](#)**

- The world's largest student film festival, hosted on college campuses. Winners may have their work shown at Cannes Short Film Corner and receive production deals with partners like AMC and Panasonic.

- [\*\*American Pavilion Emerging Filmmaker Showcase at Cannes\*\*](#)  
Offers U.S.-based student and emerging filmmakers the opportunity to screen their work at the Cannes Film Festival, providing international exposure and networking with global industry leaders.
  - [\*\*New England Emmy Student Awards\*\*](#)  
If your film has been distributed—streamed, screened, or shown publicly—you may be eligible to compete for a Student Emmy Award. Recognition here is a powerful resume and reel credential.
  - [\*\*PBS Short Film Festival\*\*](#)  
Accepts submissions with a focus on social impact, documentary, and cultural storytelling. A great opportunity for students connected to PBS affiliates or university media centers.
  - [\*\*BlackStar Film Festival\*\*](#)  
While not exclusively student-focused, this Philadelphia-based festival showcases work by Black, Brown, and Indigenous artists and is very open to emerging voices.
  - [\*\*HBO Max Latino Short Film Competition\*\*](#)  
Supports emerging Latinx filmmakers by offering distribution opportunities through HBO platforms.
  - [\*\*SFFILM Youth Filmmaker Camp & Festival\*\*](#)  
Based in San Francisco, this offers both hands-on training and film exhibition opportunities for younger and early-college-level filmmakers.
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### **3. Understand the Festival Tiers**

As you gain more experience, you'll start to distinguish between different levels of film festivals. Not all festivals offer the same level of exposure or competition.

#### **Top-Tier (A-List) Festivals**

Extremely competitive with global reach:

- [\*\*Sundance Film Festival\*\*](#)

- [Tribeca Film Festival](#)
- [SXSW](#)
- [Telluride](#)

### **Mid-Tier & Indie-Friendly Festivals**

More open to students and independent filmmakers:

- [Slamdance](#)
- [Austin Film Festival](#)
- [Cleveland International Film Festival](#)

### **Niche/Genre-Specific Festivals**

These highlight specific themes, formats, or communities:

- [Outfest](#) – LGBTQ+
- [Fantastic Fest](#) – Horror and genre cinema
- [Big Sky Documentary Film Festival](#)

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## **4. Budget Wisely: Submission Fees Add Up**

Film festivals typically charge **\$20–\$80** per submission, and those fees can add up quickly. Be strategic:

- Target festivals that suit your genre, tone, and length.
- Use a spreadsheet to track submission dates, fees, and status.
- Watch for student discounts, early-bird fees, and fee waivers.

*Pro Tip:* Spending hundreds on a dozen random submissions won't help as much as carefully choosing 3–5 smart options where your work is more likely to stand out.

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## 5. Use FilmFreeway for Submissions

[FilmFreeway](#) is the most widely used and trusted platform for submitting to festivals. It's free to join and offers tools to simplify the process.

With FilmFreeway, you can:

- Upload your film once
- Submit to hundreds of festivals
- Track your submissions in one dashboard
- Build an EPK (Electronic Press Kit) with bios, trailers, and stills
- Filter festivals by category, cost, deadline, and location

Most professional and student festivals now accept submissions only through FilmFreeway, so it's essential to get familiar with it early.

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## 6. It's About Growth, Not Just Trophies

It's natural to want awards and recognition, but keep perspective: festivals are competitive and subjective. Winning isn't everything. The real value lies in:

- Gaining exposure
- Watching your peers' work
- Attending Q&As and workshops
- Learning from feedback and rejections
- Building a community of collaborators

Whether your film is selected or not, submitting is part of your professional growth. The only way to improve and eventually succeed is to keep creating, keep submitting, and keep learning. **But yeah, you need to win some too!** After all, those trophies do look good on a shelf.