

The Little

FILM HANDBOOK



HOW TO
MAKE A
FILM!

Content

From idea to finished script	page 5
Visual storytelling	page 8
Mise-en-scène	page 14
Shooting	page 15
Editing	page 20
Copyright	page 21
Show your film	page 23

Publisher: Marie Nilsson

Text: Ingrid Bergman, Måns Berthas, Anders Justin,
Erika Moll, Marie Nilsson, Katarina Sundman, Cecilia Träff, Karin Westin

Translation: Kevin Gater

Illustrations: Clara Lindegren

You want to make movies! Yay!

We are glad that this handbook has found you. You're interested in movies and want to learn more about how to make a film yourself! A lot of hard work goes into completing a movie, but it is also a lot of fun and creative. This book is for those who are just starting out and want to learn what is needed to make your own film.

A large film production may have hundreds of employees, all of whom have a specific role. When you start making movies, it's more common for a person to have multiple roles. You might write the script, direct, film and act in your movie - or perhaps only direct. No matter what, we hope you can find tips and inspiration in this book.

When you make film, there are many reasons to also **watch a lot of films**. First, to see what's happening in the film industry, and relate to old and new movies. Partly for inspiration and to see what others have done. But also, to learn how different films are put together, with the choice of camera angles, lighting and editing techniques. Once you start to notice the different parts of a film, a new dimension of viewing film is opened up. Even a "bad" film can provide valuable information – what is it that doesn't work?

This book contains a lot, but not entirely everything, about filmmaking. If you are interested in learning more, there are many good film schools on the internet. On our website (filmvasternorrland.se) there are links and tips, and you may want to contact us if there is something you are wondering about.

Good luck!

We at Film Västernorrland





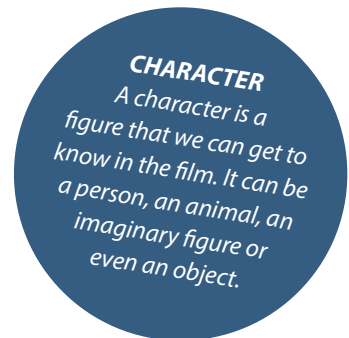
From idea to finished script

The first thing you need when making a film is an idea. Ideas can be found everywhere just by being curious, using your imagination and being inspired by others. A film idea can begin with a theme or a message, a character or a thing, or even an event. That first idea then needs to be a story that can be filmed.

A good story has a beginning, a middle and an end, as well as a conflict. By **conflict** we mean a contradiction or struggle between two "forces". For example, between what a person wants and a person's capabilities, between good and evil, or between two strong wills. The contradiction may, for example, be that a person is sick, but wants to become healthy.

The beginning, or the **introduction**, tells us who (the main character) is and what the film is about, where it takes place and the basic conflict. In the middle (**confrontation**) we get to know the characters, and the conflict rises. What happens? In **the end**, the conflict is resolved and the story ends. The end may be surprising, but should still be connected to the rest of the film.

To test your story, you can write a summary of the action in the movie, beginning, middle and end. This is called a synopsis. Allow others to read your synopsis and see if they understand your story.



Exercise:

Choose a movie you like. Divide the film into the beginning, middle and end.

- What is the conflict?
- Are there other conflicts?
- Who is the main character?
- What is the main character's mission?

Script is the text that describes what will happen in the movie. The more detailed a script is, the easier it is for everyone in the production to understand the idea of the film. Everything is based on the script both in planning, shooting and editing.

In a script, the story is divided into different scenes. A **scene** takes place in a certain location during a certain time. Each time the story changes location or jumps in time, it's a new scene. For each scene, the following information should be included in the script:

- Where and when the scene takes place.
- What will be seen onscreen.
- Who is talking and what they say.



Exercise:

Answer the questions:

- What do I want to say in my film?
- Why should my film be made?
- Who is the film about?
- Where is it set?
- What's going to happen in the film?
- What happens "outside" the film, what must the viewer understand without seeing it?

As a filmmaker you have the power to decide what events to include in the movie. For example, we rarely see film characters when they go to the bathroom or wash clothes - unless these events are important for the story. Sometimes the whole movie can be about something that nobody ever sees. Consider carefully what events are important to your film. Everything that is there should add something to the story.

GENRE

A genre is a certain type of film, which is recognised by its tendency to follow patterns. Here are some of the most common:

- Action • Documentary • Drama
- Fantasy • Feelgood • Disaster
- Comedy • Musical • Science Fiction
- Horror • Thriller • Western
- Adventure



Exercise:

Choose a genre:

- What's typical of that genre? Which patterns does it follow?
- Select a movie that can easily fit that genre.
- What genre does your movie belong to?



A script can look like this:

① SCENE 4: ② EXT. ③ HORSE PADDOCK – ④ DAY

⑤ MALOU and GEORGE are walking towards the horse paddock. Suddenly they see that a horse has escaped and ran away over the field.

⑥ MALOU

No, Alfie, stay! (to GEORGE) What should we do?!

GEORGE

I will call for help!

① Scene number. ② Outdoor (EXT = Exterior) or Indoor (INT = Interior).

③ Location. ④ Time of day. ⑤ Action. ⑥ Dialogue is centered.

Tip:

- Base your story on places and characters (actors) you have access to, but be creative with how they can be used!
- Often the simplest stories are the best movies – don't make it unnecessarily complicated!
- Think what different things are going to cost to shoot your film. Can you afford to carry out your film project?



Visual storytelling

When the script is complete, it's time to plan how the film will look. What is going to be filmed? Which locations will be used?

Storyboard

For everyone involved to understand how the film will look, all the scenes of the film are first drawn on paper, in a storyboard. It is usually the **director** and **cinematographer** (director of photography) who make the storyboard together. When it's finished it looks like a comic book.

Using the storyboard, you can see the movie in front of you before filming. It's when you make the storyboard that you decide angles, distances, camera movements and other things that shape the movie. Through distance, or **shot types** (see next section), you can choose what appears in the image. Sometimes you want to show the whole scene, sometimes a small detail. If you want the camera to move, you can draw the movement with arrows on the storyboard. A storyboard does not have to be drawn by an artist, stickmen are good enough.

The number of storyboard panels needed for a scene depends on the **tempo** of the scene. There are those that only have a single frame for one scene, and those that have a hundred. Often the pace follows the genre. An action movie has a faster pace than a drama. The tempo shouldn't be so fast that you can't follow what's going on. Neither should it be so slow that it becomes boring.

Exercise:

- Watch a scene from a film. Clap your hands every time there's a new shot.
- Test different types of scenes and see if there is any difference in the tempo.



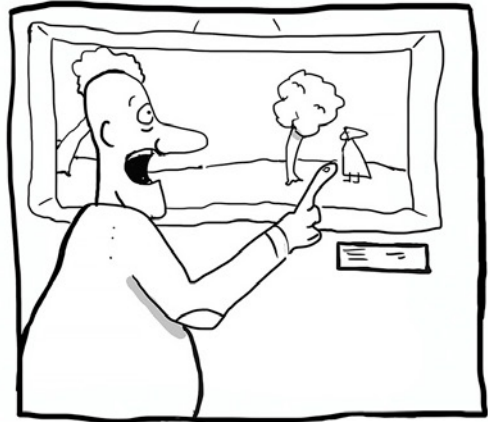
Exercise:

- Film an entire scene from multiple angles, so you have a lot of material to choose from when cutting.
- Always think about your story. The pictures you choose depend on what you want to tell.





Long shot art museum. Göran talks passionately about the painting. Gunilla stands with her back towards him and doesn't really seem to listen.



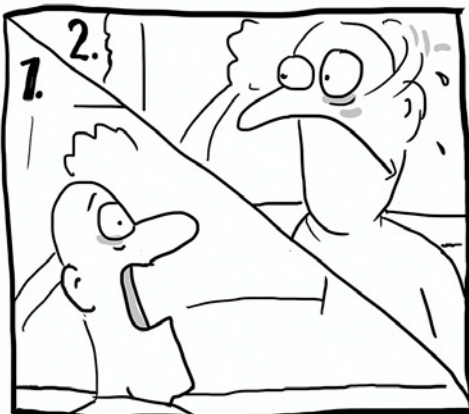
Medium shot of Göran pointing at the woman in the picture. Talking about her: "She was the artist's secret mistress."



Close-up of Gunilla looking bitter and uninterested. Göran's voice droning on in the background.



Wide shot. Both in picture. Göran continues to talk. Gunilla turns around and walks out of shot.



1. **Close-up** on Göran, still talking. Not noticing that Gunilla has gone.
2. **Still Close-up** He realises she has gone. Becomes surprised.



Wide shot, outdoors. Gunilla happily sits at the café. Art museum in the background.

Shot types

Often, the different shots used in a scene will vary. The shot type relates to how much of the subject is included in the image. For example, a subject may be a person, an animal, a car, or a tree. Because the screen is the same regardless of the shot type, it feels like we get closer when a smaller part of the subject fills the frame than if the subject is whole. Usually, there are five different shot types:



Long shot (LS)

The long shot is the largest shot type. It is used to show the environment where the action takes place.



Wide shot (WS)

The wide shot shows the whole subject and the environment around them. It is good to use body language to show the subject's relationship to the environment.



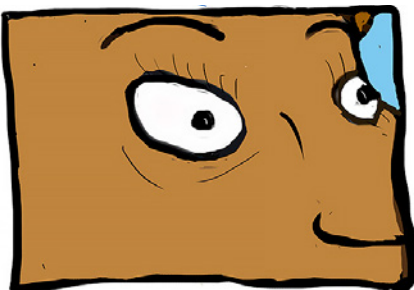
Medium shot (MS)

A medium shot allows the viewer to get closer and see body language and emotions. Common in dialogue and interviews.



Close-up (CU)

Close-ups are used when you want to get close to a person, then emotional expressions and eyes are clearer.



Extreme Close-up (XCU)

The extreme close-up is a type of shot that is used to draw attention to a detail or to create an effect. It's common in horror movies, for example.

Camera angles

The camera is always placed in relation to what is being filmed, which affects where it is put. We see a person in different ways if it is filmed slightly from above, straight from the front or shot from below.



Normal perspective

means that the camera is at the same height as the subject (person or case). This is the most common perspective and that which contains the least drama.



Birds-eye perspective

means shooting from a higher height than the subject so that the camera is facing downwards. The subject is then perceived as inferior.



Frogs-eye perspective

means shooting from below and upwards towards the subject, which then appears superior and larger.

Camera movement

There may be different reasons why you would want to move the camera during shooting, for example, to follow a moving object or to reveal something that is initially out of picture. Avoid moving the camera if it does not add anything. Note in the storyboard if the camera is moving in any way.

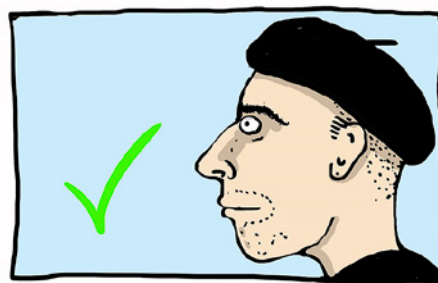
- **Panning:** Rotate the camera right-left or left-right.
- **Tilt:** Rotate the camera from down- up or up- down.
- **Dolly:** The camera moves via a cart on a rail or a tripod on wheels. Wheelchairs are also good.
- **Handheld Camera:** The camera follows a moving person. There are various tools for stabilizing a handheld camera.
- **Zoom:** Using a button on the camera, or by turning the lens ring, the image view changes.

Image composition

Image composition is about where you place people and things in an image. There are many different rules for making an image appear natural, and often you don't think about them much as long as they are being followed.

One such rule is to leave air in front of a person, in the direction they are facing. In a close-up of a person, one should allow for sufficient space between the nose and the edge of the frame, instead of between the neck and the frame edge.

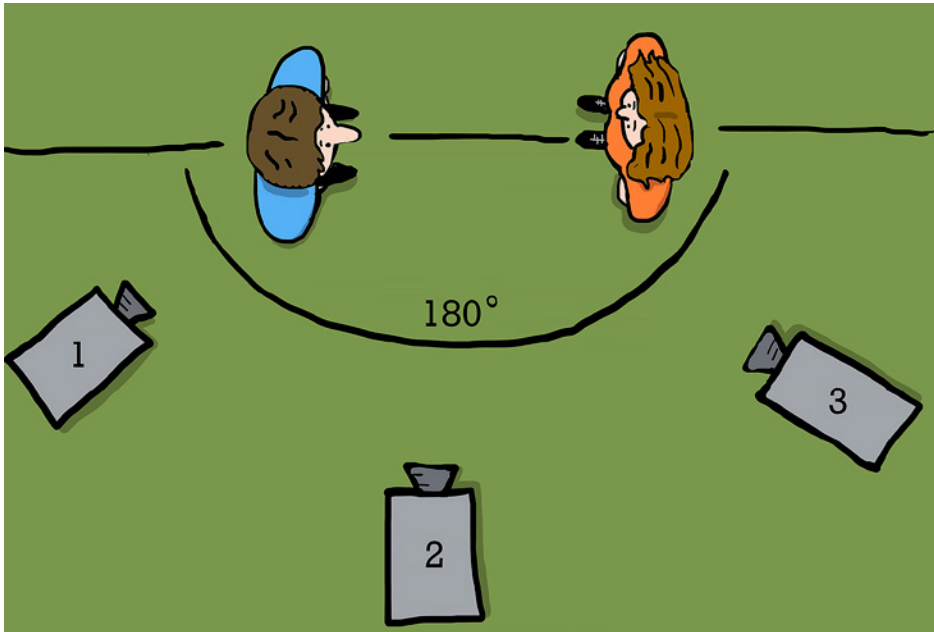
If an image does not follow the guidelines, it might appear that the person is facing a wall or doesn't really have enough room in the image.



Exercise:

- Film an event, someone enters a room for example, using all five shot types. First film the whole event with a Long Shot, then again with a Wide Shot etc. Test by editing the shots together so that the event only happens once, but contains all five shot types.



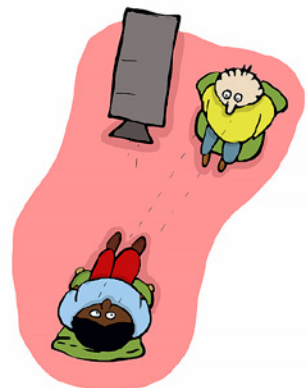


Screen direction

The screen direction is important for directing the viewer through the story. If we see that Character A looks out of the frame, then we understand when the movie cuts to Character B that we see Character A's point of view. Scene direction establishes an expectation to learn what the characters sees.

An important rule concerning viewpoints and screen direction is the so-called **180 degree continuity rule**. It is used, for example, when you film two people talking to each other, or when two people (or other subjects) move towards each other. Imagine that an invisible line goes through these two. Then select a side of the invisible line to place the camera and stick to that side. You can move the camera around and take different shots as long as you stay on that side of the line. You perceive that the subjects look at each other, even when the other subject is not in the picture. If you move the camera to the other side of the line, it will look like they are looking away from each other instead of facing each other, or talking in completely different directions. It can easily get confusing.

In a feature movie, people rarely look directly into the camera, as a news reporter or video blogger would. The best advice when filming is to make sure all actors NEVER look into the camera. A glance into the camera at the wrong moment breaks the mood of the story. If you want an actor to speak directly into the camera for effect then that works well.



Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène is a collective term for everything we see in a movie. It is French and means “staging a scene”. This includes set design, costume, masks, special effects, performance and lighting.

Set design

Set design is everything present in the frame excluding people and animals. The location where the movie is filmed can be indoors (interior) or outdoors (exterior). It is common to film a building’s outside (exterior) and inside (interior) in completely different places. By editing the images together, they appear to belong together. Often it is possible to build different types of environments in a limited space by using different angles, lighting and props. Use your imagination!

Props are the objects that are placed in the environment, such as a car, painting, telephone, chair, plates etc.

In order for actors to play different characters, **costume** and **masks** are needed. Costume is the name given to the clothes that the actors wear. Masks and makeup can include hairstyles, wigs, hair color, to create wounds, blood and so on.

Light

Lighting is an important part of visual storytelling. No light = no image. Lighting is often used to create a certain mood, it’s important to have it thought out before starting to film. There are some difficulties with light that are good to be prepared for:



– If the film is set outdoors, the weather must be included in the planning. What do you do if it rains when it shouldn’t? Harsh sunlight can be difficult to handle on film, as you get very sharp shadows, and the actors may have to squint into the sun. If the sun goes behind clouds, the light may vary from one shot to another, which looks strange when you edit them together. Try to find a location or time when the light does not change during filming.

– When daylight is not enough, lamps and special lighting can be used. Avoid pointing a strong lamp or spotlight directly at the person you are shooting. You will allow shadows and strong contrast to appear in the image, giving an unnatural look. Instead, try to create a softer, indirect light by pointing a lamp against a white wall or ceiling and allowing the light to bounce onto the person filmed. If you need to point a light towards the person, place it slightly from the side, rather than directly in front.



Filming

Now you have finished with the preparatory work and it's time to shoot. Despite how much you have planned it's also good to be prepared for things that happen that make plans change. A good plan-B if the weather is not on your side for example. Here are some last-minute tips to get everything organised before filming and help avoid surprises when you review the material in editing.

Do you need props that you don't own yourself? Ask everyone you know if they have something you can borrow. Sometimes it is also possible to borrow from second hand stores in exchange for giving

thanks in the end credits of your movie. Ask!

If you want to shoot in a public place or in a store, for example, you need permission. Make sure to ask in good time so that you do not show up on the day of filming and aren't allowed to shoot.

It's not always practical to record the scenes in the order they are in the script. Instead, you should film all the scenes in a particular place, that include a certain actor or props at the same time. Plan carefully where and when which scenes are to be filmed.

Camera work

A good strategy is to always have the camera on a tripod, if the image is not supposed to be shaky. It's hard to keep the camera completely still otherwise. The tripod can also be useful for different camera movements.

Check the filming location. Is there anything that appears in frame that shouldn't be there? Did you get everything that should be in the picture? Are there any fluorescent lamps/lights that blink or look strange (this amplifies and will be more obvious in camera)?

Always have extra camera batteries fully charged. Recharge empty batteries as soon as possible.



TAKE

A take is a single recording, that is, the point between when you press start and stop on the camera. If the recording does not go well, shoot another take. When you are editing you choose the best version of each take.

"Silence, action!"

Before recording a scene, it needs to be rehearsed. It's not just for actors and directors who decide what the characters do in the scene, but also for camera and sound. Everyone must know what to do. When everyone is ready to record, it is important to make sure that the camera and sound recording are running, as well as to clap. A **clapper** is used to sync audio and video in editing, and is necessary if you record these separately.

No one is allowed to stop or turn off equipment before the director has yelled cut.

Professional roles

A film team on a feature film is often very large. Here are some of the most common roles. Although you may have several roles yourself when making your first films, it may be helpful to know what tasks the different roles have:

The Director ...

- ... has a vision and an idea about how the film will look and how the story will turn out, in the best way possible. They are well prepared and supervise the script and the storyboard.
- ... is responsible for the whole of the film, and for the story to be told in the best way possible.
- ... instructs the actors and collaborates with them on the characters.
- ... contributes to a good mood on set by showing appreciation and giving positive feedback to everyone in the team.

Production manager ...

- ... coordinates the work at the filming location and ensures that everyone is ready for each take.

The Cinematographer ...

- ... decides together with the director how the images will look based on the storyboard and conditions at the filming location.
- ... takes care of everything to do with the camera, making sure that the batteries are charged and that there are enough memory cards or tapes.

The Sound engineer ...

- ... is responsible for the microphone and audio mixer during recording.
- ... processes the sound afterwards.
- ... creates or finds sound effects.

Continuity person ...

- ... keeps track of everything that is included in the picture, so it looks the same in the next shot. It is especially important if you record over several days. (If you do not have the ability to have a continuity person, you can take a still image to remember how it all looks.)

Production assistant (runner) ...

- ... perform errands or tasks that the team needs, for example, transport people and make sure there is food and coffee.

The Actor ...

- ... focuses on their role and rehearses their lines.

Exercise:

- Next time you watch a film, read the end credits to see who was involved in making the movie and what their role was.





Sound

The sound is an important part of the film story. The sound describes the environment and helps create mood in the film. This is done through dialogue, sound effects, environmental sound and music. Sound can also inform things that we do not see in picture, such as someone opening a door or a school bell ringing.

Sound recording

It's important that the sound recording is as good as possible for the finished movie's audio to sound great. It's very hard to rescue bad sound.

Distracting sound may ruin a recording. For example, avoid choosing a recording location near to a street with busy traffic. Too much wind when recording will sound thunderous during playback and will make the recorded sound useless. A wind shield can help dampen noise. Always be sure to switch off blowing fans, refrigerators and other machines. By using headphones connected to the microphone, you can hear if there's any strange noise, and try to eliminate it before recording. Do not forget to make sure everyone has switched off their mobile phones!

Tip:

- Always record environmental sounds (wild tracks) at each filming location. You do this by starting the sound recording by asking everyone to be silent so that you only get the sound in the environment. It may be necessary when you edit to bridge gaps between sounds in different clips.



Microphone placement

If you have the possibility to use an external microphone, that is, one that is not built into the camera, do it. The sound quality will be much better.

For all audio recording, it is important to place the microphone as close to the audio source as possible to avoid unwanted sound. When talking into the microphone, however, the microphone should not be closer than about 15 cm to avoid "lip and smack noise" from the mouth. In an interview in a documentary film, the microphone may appear in picture but otherwise not.



Examples of some microphone placements:

On camera

Having the microphone mounted on the camera is the easiest and most comfortable way, but has drawbacks. There may be unwanted sound if the camera is noisy or moves, the distance to the audio source becomes larger than necessary, and then the quality of the audio becomes worse.

On a tripod

A separate microphone can be placed on a tripod near the audio source.

On a boom

A boom is a pole that can be extended with the microphone attached to the front. Then a special person is used to hold the boom.

Hidden microphone

A small microphone that's placed on the actor's body is called a clip-mic and can be attached under, for example, garments or hair to be kept from view.

Tip:

- Take care of the equipment! This applies both if it is your own or if you have borrowed it.
- Always protect the technology from rain and snow (umbrella is good!) And do not leave the camera in direct sunlight for too long. Also, keep in mind that cold batteries do not last as long.
- Double-check script and storyboard to confirm you've recorded everything before packing up!



Editing

Once you've recorded your movie, it's time to put your filmed material together and structure it into a finished movie in an editing program.

Actually, a movie is made three times; when writing the script, during recording and when editing. While sticking to your basic idea and script, you must be prepared to make changes if they make the story clearer and improve the film. Take away anything that misleads the viewer, such as something that doesn't give the story a through line or prevents moving it forward.

Takes and scenes that you like, but aren't necessary for the story to flow should be removed. This is often called "kill your darlings".

Once you've edited your film, it's good to let someone else watch the film to see if the story comes across as you've imagined.

Practical approach

Start by looking through your material. A good aid during the editing stage is to use the storyboard as a guide.



Select a scene that you want to start working with. Review the takes and select the best. Then put the various takes together into a sequence. Vary the sequence with different shot types and camera angles to tell the scene as effectively as possible. Choose where each clip should begin and end. Trim the clip so that the transition from one cut to the next feels as smooth as possible. A rule of thumb is that good edits are invisible.

If you want to do something but don't know how, search the internet. There are lots of tutorials and tips for different editing software, everything from color correction to special effects.

Tip:

- Avoid cutting on camera movement.
- Cut when the subject moves in image.
- Avoid jump-cuts (cutting between similar images - the subject jumps too).
- Vary shot types and camera angles.
- Do not forget to thank everyone that's contributed and made the movie in the end credits!



Copyright

When someone has made an artistic work, such as a movie, music or a still image, that person has copyright of their own work. This means that no-one can view or use it without permission from the owner.

Music

If you want to use music for your movie, there are a few different ways to go about it:

- Make your own music or ask someone you know to do it. Not only is it cheaper, you also get music that is made to fit your film.
- Find music that is not copyrighted, that is, free to use, for example, by searching the internet for music + creative commons. Be careful that the music you find is really free to use (it's usually stated clearly).
- If you still want a particular song by a famous artist, you can contact the artist or go through STIM (Sveriges Tonsättares Internationella Musikbyrå), who can help you.

Copyright applies even if the actors themselves sing or perform music that someone else has written, also if the music is playing on the radio, a ringtone on a phone or similar.

Private and public viewing

If a movie is only to be used for individual use (a private holiday movie for example), no permission is required for copyrighted music. If your movie is to be displayed at a meeting, at school or at a festival, it's a public screening and permission is then required.

Other artworks

You may not use artwork, TV / computer games or clips from other movies if you do not have the author's permission.

Your copyright

It's not just other people who have copyright. Once you've made your movie, no one else can view, copy or spread it without your permission. You do not need to register the movie in any way, it is automatically protected by copyright.

If you have not done the movie completely by yourself, it's important to keep in mind that the camera operator and actors are authors of their performances. Therefore, make sure everyone knows from the beginning what is the goal of the movie, for example, to be displayed publicly or published on the web.



Once you've made your movie, no one else can view, copy or spread it without your permission.





Screen your film

Once your movie is ready, it can finally be screened for its audience. There are several places where you can show your film, such as at home, in school, associations, film festivals and on the internet.

Do not forget that everyone who has been involved in the movie has to view it. This applies, for example, to actors, crew, teachers, parents, friends, and so on.

To screen your film in other contexts, you can get tips on various festivals and competitions on our website: www.filmvasternorrland.se



The Little Film Handbook

The **Little Film Handbook** contains practical advice to help you get started with filmmaking. The **Little Film Handbook** goes through the basics of the different parts of creating a film: writing script, image editing, sound, light, set design, and providing good advice for shooting. Finally, tips for editing and viewing the finished film are provided.

We hope this handbook will provide you with new knowledge and inspiration for creating your own film!