

STRAIGHT 8

straight 8 2026 rules

intro

congratulations - you're about to make a short film in one of the hardest ways possible. we salute you for that.

now, don't make it harder by getting our rules wrong or missing out on some tips that follow here...

once you've entered you're committed to it - always a good thing. and there can be no backing out - and there are no refunds.

you can return to these rules at any time via your [straight 8 entry portal](#). which is where you and we keep track of your entry from start to finish, including submitting your soundtrack and entry form.

new!

even if you're familiar with straight 8 rules, we urge you to read all of these carefully as every year there are some important updates.

e.g. see the subtitles section - this is a mandatory requirement to ensure accessibility.

now read on...

safety / responsibility

you are responsible not just for the safety of yourself and your team during recce'ing, rehearsing, filming and recording but also that of the general public. please be safe and put safety above everything else. follow the law and all local guidelines. straight 8 / seven productions cannot be held responsible for your production in any way.

in the unlikely event that your film becomes lost or damaged whilst in our care, we will only be able to replace your cartridge. we will not be able to refund your production costs: the star talent, thousands of extras, catering, eight trashed skodas and so on.

keep going ↓

copyright

the copyright paragraph below is the law. please read it and consider it carefully at concept stage. you will be signing this as part of the film submission form and you must stick to it:

“as the entrant submitting the above straight 8 film, i confirm that i own all the rights to the film. i can show it anywhere i want to but only after i have received an official copy of the film from straight 8.

i grant straight 8 (a division of seven productions ltd) non-exclusive rights to show the above straight 8 film in part or whole, if they choose to do so, anywhere on any format at any time in the future under the banner of straight 8 including but not limited to the following: straight 8 events, straight 8 screenings at other events, straight 8 website or podcasts, straight 8 showtapes, straight 8 branded dvds, straight 8 feature films, straight 8 tv programmes or features within other tv programmes, straight 8 ‘channels’ within other websites, podcasts and the like.

i warrant that i am entitled to assign these rights for all contributors to, and all elements of, my film. i and all actors and crew appearing in or involved in the making of my film have completely released all rights to me for use with the film wherever and whenever it is shown as detailed above.

all composers and performers (and publishers if relevant) of any part of the film’s soundtrack have completely released all rights to me for unlimited use with the film wherever and whenever it is shown and as detailed above.”

so just for example... make sure your film does not contain any copyrighted material. spiderman costumes and footage on tv screens are a bad idea.

your soundtrack needs to be 100% original. if you use music it needs to be an original composition with no copyrighted samples, no library music, no creative commons, no free online music.

keep going ↓

the film

you need to supply your own super 8mm film cartridge - you can use any type of **super 8** film now. we can accept entries on **reversal** or **black & white** film by special arrangement. the film should be new or in excellent condition with no damage to the cartridge, otherwise the lab may not process it due to the risk of contaminating the bath. you must use one of the six types of super 8 film stock currently manufactured. you can see what these are in [our shop](#), you can buy from us - we ship globally or you can buy from anyone else. check out our list of [film outlets](#) we know of.

the first shot of your film, for a minimum of 3 seconds, needs to clearly show your unique entry number which you get from the portal beginning: s826... (this number is not your squarespace order number.) how you show your entry number in your film is up to you, so long as we can see it clearly when we see your film. check out some gr8 examples below:



we strongly recommend that you also include the title of your film visually. this can be at the start and combined with the entry number, but equally the title can come wherever you want it to land.

make sure you understand how to use your chosen super 8 film type with your camera, particularly regarding its 'asa' / 'iso' rating. not all cameras recognise all asa ratings. if in doubt ask someone who knows... or email us. if your camera is new to you, make sure you've thoroughly tested it.

everything about your film can only be made in-camera on that one cartridge. for this main competition, (not for our [shootout](#) competition) its maximum length is about 3 minutes 15 seconds (**we project / transfer at 18 frames per second**). you can make a shorter film but it is impossible for it to be longer, bar a couple more seconds if you're lucky but don't count on that. NB - if you use our special 250D see important info on length on our [shop link](#) - as you only have 3 minutes duration reliably.

keep going ↓

if you do make a film shorter than the maximum length, then when you've completed your last shot, cover the lens and viewfinder and run the film to the end before removing it from the camera. you should then see the word 'EXPOSED' stamped on the last part of film showing on the cartridge. we will then trim off the black. this is preferable to, say, filming your credits for the last 30 seconds. end your film in a great way, not a using up celluloid way.

similarly make your soundtrack the appropriate length for your film for a good audience experience. don't leave the audience literally in the dark for ages at the end of your masterpiece! more on this to follow under **“the sound”**.

once exposed, package up the exposed, un-developed cartridge and fix the labels - available from your portal - to the outside of your package. these labels include the wording: **'no commercial value / for cultural purposes only'**. this phrase is really important so please make sure this is also clear on the outside of all packaging and write the same phrase on any customs forms. we cannot afford to pay import duty on your multi-million dollar epic (though we'd love to see it). seriously, we or cinelab will contact you if any import duty needs to be paid and you will need to pay this for us to get your film - but it should not happen if you stick to these rules. if sending from outside of the uk we recommend DHL. please DO NOT use USPS or another national postal service in place of a courier, they usually take much longer to arrive and result in customs bills. again we will have to contact you for payment.

please do not include any lab instructions (no push / pull or cross-processing, bleach bypass etc and no special scanning instructions for straight 8, sorry / not sorry). please don't contact the lab direct about anything!

TO SHOOT REVERSAL (new tri-x, ektachrome 100d etc): please contact us & pay reversal premium in advance of shooting. we will let you know which partner lab to send it to (not cinelab).

TO USE EXPIRED FILM (new for 2026): please contact us in advance of entering. we will confirm stock eligibility, cost and which partner lab to send it to (not cinelab)

if sending from outside the uk, you should complete a customs form. if you need a tariff code use: HS TARIFF CODE: 3704001000. description: 'exposed, undeveloped super 8mm cine film x 1'. if you need to put a value we suggest £30. if you need an EORI number for cinelab put: GB935640221000

your unprocessed film must have reached us by the film delivery deadline in your portal - you're responsible for choosing suitable packaging and methods to ensure it arrives by that date.

one more thing...

you'll have noticed that we scan the films with an open gate which is why you can see a bit of the sprocket hole on the left of frame. this means the audience sees more than you see in your camera's viewfinder. so be careful what's on the edge of frame, especially on the left hand side! see this example below... that crew member wasn't visible in the viewfinder! you've been warned.



the sound

your film must have a soundtrack. **no silent films please**, we've all moved on! your soundtrack will have been made 'blind' as you won't have seen your film when you submit it.

make sure you've read and considered the copyright section above very carefully at concept stage. here's the key line again: "your soundtrack needs to be 100% original. if you do use music it needs to be an original composition with no copyrighted samples, no library music, no creative commons, no public domain recordings". we check all music rigorously and regularly have to reject submissions despite the clarity of the copyright para you need to sign off on.

we will sync your soundtrack to the first frame of your picture on your film. so imagine your film's sound starts while you are filming your entry number, a few frames after you press the trigger for the very first time. creative energy going into attempting perfect sync, in our experience, is better used on your concept and all the executional elements you really can control. :-)

we don't accept special instructions regarding sound playback or synching. so, for example, if you want the first 10 seconds to be silent, include 10 seconds of silence at the start of your soundtrack and we will still sync the first frame of picture with the start of your sound file. you'll get the ten seconds of silence you needed. we sometimes get asked to start the sound after shot 1 or 2. we say no. it just wouldn't be fair.

your soundtrack must not be any longer than your film. make the soundtrack end the way you want it to at 3'15" exactly. or less if your film is shorter. a couple of seconds over is ok if you feel there's good reason for it to fade off or finale after the end of picture - but please, no longer than 5 secs after picture ends! how you leave the audience feeling at the end is what you need to care about. make sure you're happy with the audio levels: that they're balanced throughout and at a good overall level - it's a shame to hurt the audience's eardrums and it will affect judging too. when your soundtrack is complete, create a WAV or AIF file. but not MP3's - they are compressed and not good enough for a screening in a big cinema. stereo sound is standard, and we try to accommodate 5.1 or more by special request if you email us in advance.

you do not need to include your entry number as the filename. it will be renamed in the portal which is now what you use to transfer the file to us. how cool is that? do so by the sound delivery deadline - see dates in your portal.

subtitles

to be more inclusive, everyone who makes a film with any speech in it must submit subtitles. so that's a transcript of the english, or for a non-english film a transcript of the original language and an english translation. they must be literally just subtitles and not something that adds creatively to the story/idea.

to do this, please supply an SRT subtitle file to accompany your soundtrack that is in sync with it - as well as sending your audio separately as normal. you'll upload both of these to your entry portal. you can make subtitles easily using [free](#) and [paid](#) video editing programs, or with free [online](#) tools.

we will only line it up like we do your audio, to the first frame, and as an overlay on your film. and that's it. no creative advantage but important for accessibility, so that more people can enjoy the films, and only fair if you want to make your film in your own language. so: if your film has any spoken words you must supply subtitles, and if not, you don't need to supply any.

keep going ↓

film submission form

please complete your film submission form which can now be found... guess where? in the portal!

this form is legally binding and by submitting it you'll be committing your entry. if you can't agree to everything on it, your film should not be submitted - even if something changed during production and your production does not comply, your entry will not be accepted and cannot be refunded either.

please submit your submission form by the date stated in your portal.

selection and screenings

we, together with our jury, will choose which films to show where and our decision is final. simply entering a film does not mean definitely getting it shown anywhere - except on a screen you want to show it on. everyone gets the digital version of their film back, with its sound.

films we select to show at our screenings will be kept totally under wraps ready for their premieres. no-one, not even the filmmakers, sees their films before their premiere.

we'd love to see you at the screenings but transportation and accommodation is down to you. we will get you one free ticket if your film is showing but can't cover festival access etc though we do try and make things smooth for you where we can - our 2020/21 premieres moved online and we reserve the right to adapt to any combination of real world, streamed / broadcast events as necessary.

film return

by default we do not return super 8 film spools, we store them in case of a need to re-scan in the future. however if you would like yours back, contact us as this can happen by special arrangement. you'll be responsible for carriage costs and a handling fee.

everyone will receive a prores digital version of their film, with its sound included (this will be your film as scanned at 18fps). these files will only be available at some point after the main premieres have taken place - no matter whether or not your film is selected.

please be patient. when it is ready you will be alerted to the fact it's in the portal waiting for you to download it.

your film, as part of the annual straight 8 competition, will be available to straight 8 to use in any of the ways mentioned in the copyright paragraph. you may not withhold or delay our use of your film at screenings in the real or online world. (e.g. for other festival submissions, or other reasons)

after you get your film back, resist the urge to tinker with it. you've made something with a spirit, let it stay that way! if you do make any changes, you must remove the straight 8 slate - as any edits mean it's no longer a straight 8.

keep going ↓

finally

check our website's [films](#) page, our [vimeo channel](#) and [youtube channel](#) for examples of great past straight 8 films. you should watch the 2024/25 premieres on our youtube if you haven't already. also check our site's [faq](#) page where you'll find answers to lots of questions, plus a link to the facebook group '[straight 8 entrants](#)' which you can request access to and where you may find people willing to offer advice. there's also a very useful guide for shooting titles, text and anything in close up that really matters for the audience to read (included at the end of these rules). you should check this out especially if a plot point requires reading something on screen!

we positively encourage social media posts from behind the scenes. please follow our socials, subscribe, tag us and use #straight82026 liberally! we look forward to seeing all your trials and tribulations and prop-making and progress

[instagram.com/straight_8](https://www.instagram.com/straight_8)
[facebook.com/straight8](https://www.facebook.com/straight8)
[vimeo.com/straight8](https://www.vimeo.com/straight8)
[youtube.com/straight8productions](https://www.youtube.com/straight8productions)
[linkedin.com/company/straight8/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/straight8/)

right that's it! sorry that's so long but after over 25 years of straight 8 we know a thing or two about avoidable mistakes and we want you to do absolutely brilliantly. so, if you skimmed this document, GO BACK NOW!!!

thanks for getting involved and we hope you and your team enjoy your straight 8 experience

be safe, be smart, have fun

and may the spirits of celluloid smile upon you, always

welcome to **straight 8**

deadline info ↓

**ALL DEADLINES AND DELIVERY MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS ARE FOUND
IN YOUR ENTRY [PORTAL](#)**

any questions you can always contact us (there's a link on the [portal](#))

top random tips

story story story...

even the simplest films have an arc.

examples: [dawn](#) (2021), [jour de gloires](#) (2003)

you have to earn your audience's attention and keep it.

what is happening at the beginning, the middle, and the end of your story?

**99% of people who channel their energy into making a sync sound straight 8 put all their
energy in the wrong place**

**clean the gate on your camera to reduce hairs and debris - see phil of pro8mm's video tip
[here](#)**

focus, focus, focus!!!

**every camera has an adjustable viewfinder to suit different eyesight. the first job is to set this
up for your eye. look up the manual to check the best way to do this for your camera.**

then....

before every shot, zoom right in, grab focus, then recompose.

if you can't get it sharp you may be too close

**every camera has a minimum close focus. so many people forget about this and shoot
plot-dependent close ups that no-one can see because it's all fuzzy.**

**if your camera doesn't have a macro feature it may have macro filters, or just move back and
zoom in!!**

**see the final page below and ask in online forums etc to understand more about shooting
titles well - it's worth it**

and check out our big [super 8 cheat sheet](#) for many more

title shooting tips ↓

title shooting tips from a straight 8 veteran. n.b. urn is what we used to call the entry number:

colin dewar's straight-talking straight 8 titles-shooting tips

title

however you choose to film your film's title and urn, make sure that they're big / bold enough to be read easily. if you squint and can't read it then it won't be clear on film



framing

make sure that the title doesn't go too close to the edge of the frame. for cameras that have a separate viewfinder (non reflex), bear in mind that what you see through the viewfinder is not what will be recorded on film. you can minimise this problem by moving the title further away and zooming back in. it's an effect called 'parallax' and it happens when close to the subject



focus

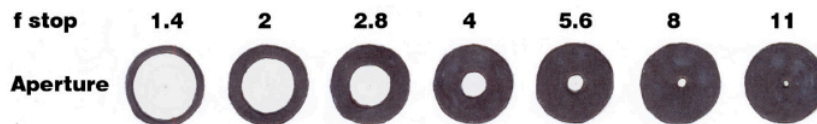
most cameras have a minimum focal distance of around 1.5m. check yours. to ensure the title is in focus, have it at least 1.5m from the camera's film plane mark – see pic below. you can always zoom in if the title is too small. you can also film closer than 1.5m with close up (diopter) or macro lenses which are accessories that may fit your camera. also, for all filming, make sure the viewfinder is set for your own eyes. set the focus on infinity, zoom in on a very distant object and adjust the eyepiece until it's in focus. for split screen focusing, adjust until both halves line up



exposure

the more light you have, the smaller the aperture (larger f stop) you can use. this helps with depth of field (how much is in acceptable focus in front of and behind the title) and you'll have a better chance of having the image in focus

if your title is very light or very dark it won't expose correctly. bear in mind that the camera's light meter is set up to give correct exposure for a mid tone (grey) object. you can use an 18% grey card to get the correct exposure in these cases and then make sure your artwork has sufficient contrast



time

finally, make sure you leave enough time for the audience to read any titles. a good rule of thumb is to read it twice yourself. time that. then shoot to that length

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