



SHORT FILMS

A Step by step

Production Guide



How long does it take to make a short film?

Longer than you think.

This short, easy to use guide is geared towards filmmakers starting out as producers, or writer/directors who can't find a producer, or even worse, writers or directors who have a producer, who has turned out to be less than useless. Yep! We've all been there!

Once you've finished your short film script or have found a script you're happy with and ready to shoot, you need to give yourself a good 4-6 months before shooting it. This is especially true if you're an "independent" filmmaker, ie you don't have any actual money to make the film. You're not alone, that's most people's experience.

Unless you have some extremely generous and rich relatives, or have suddenly won the lottery jackpot prize or have scrimped and saved money from a job, your best bet of funding your movie is through crowd funding. The idea might feel icky and feel like begging, which it sort of is but there's no shame in that, even Spike Lee's done it). This is where the 4-6 months comes in.

It is really important to factor in fundraising time for your project. A crowd in any crowd funding campaign takes time to inform, gather and capture. Fundraising sucks up a lot of time and energy. You're less likely to succeed and get the money if you don't give yourself time to prepare.

So let's say you want to shoot your short film four months from today, what do you need, to make it happen? First, you'll need to set aside at least 2 months to prepare everything you'll need before your fundraising campaign goes live, ie a video pitch, tons of photos, gifts and incentives, as well as the campaign you'll use to entice people to give you some of their hard earned cash during a cost of living crisis/recession.

You'll need to target the right people to big up your campaign on social media, through word of mouth, emails etc. You personally have to gather in one place, the contact details of everyone you have ever met since you were born (I'm not kidding!) Also add your neighbours, long lost acquaintances, family friends, distant relatives and organisations you have ever had any contact with including the staff at the hospital you were born in (Well, now I'm kidding a little bit). 😂

There's a part of filmmaking that requires steeliness, perseverance and a bit of shameless self promotion. (Those of us who are bad at it need to take a page out of Kim Kardashian's playbook, horrifying as that may seem). Failing that beg, steal or borrow, whatever it takes, to get your movie made. This guide is a tried and tested, step by step guide of all the tasks needed to get your short film made.

Things will inevitably go wrong or some things just don't pan out. However your movie is your mission and like James Bond, you can't stop until your mission is accomplished. The information in this guide is not set in stone. Use what is useful and ditch what isn't. I've broken down all the tasks week by week and if you have a core crew but no designated producer then divide the tasks amongst you. Also be warned, the paperwork in filmmaking is a lot, especially if you get some money from a grant/funding body. You usually have to jump through quite a few hoops to get your paws on that money. If you're in that situation, check out our Production Templates, it has all the film paperwork templates you will need to satisfy funders/investors so they release the funds for your movie.

What do I need to make my short film?

The tasks are broken down into week by week chunks - a production schedule from start to finish:

The tasks in **blue** are writing/directing tasks.

The tasks in black are producing tasks.

The tasks in **green** are for your heads of department (HODs) such as your:

1st AD(assistant director), DOP (Director of photography or cinematographer), Production designer, Editor, Casting director etc

Bold tasks are really important TO DOs and often have huge negative repercussions if you don't do them in a timely manner! Preparation is everything in filmmaking, so get started and I hope this makes the process easier, more organised and enjoyable.

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Four months before the shoot.

TARGET	TASK	COMPLETION
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DATE		DATE
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To do Week 1.

Script rewrites if required
Director to **storyboard** script
-Write **synopsis** for attracting interest & funding
(Look in Production Templates for how to write a synopsis
Research images for **mood board** also the DOP

To do Week 2.

Search for DOP, storyboard artist, HODs - also director does this
Start thinking about a website for the project.
Continue storyboards if unfinished
Buy **Domain name** for your movie or production company
Make a list of contacts who can help you in any way (**database**) -also
Writer & Director's contacts for the database
Continue script rewrites if required

To do Week 3.

Breakdown the script
Sift through applicants for storyboard artists, DOP and HODs- Director helps
Make initial contact with potential HODS you are interested in
Put together images for mood board
Put together images for website/social media re look and feel of the film
Write text/copy to accompany images on website

TO DO Week 4.

Interview Crew/HODs and make offers - Director too
-Organise a **read-through/workshop** of the script with friends/actors-
(take Photos of event, could be useful for social media posts later)
-Make a list of people who can be **potential funders/investors** (ie anyone
who can give you stuff for the film)
Make a list of people who are **potential audience** -Director too
Make a list of people who can donate stuff for crowd funding **perks**
Contact organisations, charities with shared interest in subject of film

Three months before the shoot.

TO DO Week 1

Begin production prep
Start putting together a **production schedule**
Refine script breakdown
Contact organisations & charities for endorsements if needed
Discuss & put together Web design layout on paper
[Have 2nd read through of next draft](#) with other people you trust/ actors you might know - and some potential crew, take photos of read-through

TO DO Week 2

[Prep meeting with DOP](#)
Start **web design**
[Refine storyboards with DOP input](#)
Prepare **cast breakdown** for actors and agents
Write **shoe string budget** and **ideal budget** for film

TO DO Week 3

Brainstorm crowd funding pitch ideas & other funding sources, (get something down on paper)
Prepare **social media & crowd funding campaign**
[Write script](#) for crowd funding **video pitch**
Contact people who can donate or help with perks and rewards
Prepare adverts for remainder of HODS, designer, editor, composer
Contact other funding possibilities
Contact [people to crew](#) for the crowd funding pitch video

TO DO Week 4

Write **delivery schedule**
Place **casting call** for actors
[Shoot](#) crowd fund **video pitch**-(Not more than 1 day)-
Ask for 20% more money than you need to cover crowd fund costs
Set up facebook fan page & twitter accounts for the film
Send reminder to people donating perks
Send reminder to crew shooting crowd funding video

Two months before the shoot.

TO DO Week 1.

Prepare possible **location lists**

Sift through replies from potential Hods

Web design & **storyboards complete or near completion**

Edit crowd fund pitch video-(1 to 2 days)

Take photos of crowd funding perks and add them to campaign sites

Plan **audience strategy** for the film

Sift through reply from actors or casting director if you have one

Organise audition space and schedule

Submit crowd funding pitch to crowd funding platform

TO DO Week 2.

Interview remainder HODS and make offers

Complete perks and rewards

Social media goes live (**face book, website & twitter**)

Email database re website and other social media activities

Call actors & agents with audition slots

Everyone working on the film to contact their network via social media and your database, to direct them to crowd funding pitch.

TO DO Week 3

Crowd funding goes live

Preproduction meetings with HODS

Auditions actors

Organise recces

Start remainder of crew search or ask HODS for recommendations

DOP suggest post production places & contacts

Prod meetings logistics-transport, catering, insurance etc -everyone

-Contact & update database re crowd funding at least 2X a this week and twice every week until at least 6 months - a year after the film is done.

TO DO Week 4.

Pre-production meetings with various department heads

Continue audition for actors if needed

Get remainder of crew

Go on recces with available **HODS**

Contact and update database at least once a week

One month before the shoot.

TO DO Week 1.

Continue **recces** and complete where possible
Develop **shot list and story execution**
Initial **shooting schedule** - with **1ST AD**
Production **meetings** with **HODS**
Production Prep catering, insurance, equipment hire, locations etc
Contact and update database at least 3X a week

TO DO Week 2.

Production Prep continues- everyone
Secure Actors with **Cast Release forms**
Secure Locations with **Location Agreements**
Production **meetings** with crew
Complete as much production tasks and paperwork
Contact & update database about end of crowd funding campaign
End of crowd funding campaign

TO DO Week 3.

Production Prep - adjust budget and shoot if necessary
Production **meetings** with **crew** to complete all tasks
Secure equipment & other production logistics
Finish shooting schedule with **1ST AD**
Create **unit list** and **facilities list**
Buy a drive for the film
Director rehearse actors include specific action rehearsals
-Contact & update database (hopefully you got some money if not all of it-
don't forget crowd funding platforms take a cut!

TO DO Week 4.

Complete production prep - **everyone**
Director rehearse with actors if needed
Production enquiries filtered through Producer & **1ST AD**
Any final adjustments with actors + fittings, stills sessions etc
Contact post-production companies
Complete paperwork, **Insurance** & contracts etc
Send out **call sheets, movement orders & unit lists** to cast and crew
Complete **delivery schedule**
Contact & update database also website & social media platforms

THE SHOOT.

SHOOT DAY 1 Photos & Behind the scenes (bts)

SHOOT DAY 2 Photos & Behind the scenes

SHOOT DAY 3 Photos & behind the scenes

SHOOT DAY 4 Photos & Behind the scenes

SHOOT DAY 5 Photos & Behind the scenes

YOU MADE IT!

Post Production Month 1.

TO DO Week 1.

Compress all **rushes**

First **assembly** of film- **Editor & director**

Secure post production house for **grade** and **online** if you haven't

Discuss and Prep Electronic Press Kit (**EPK**) + **Director**

Research **Film Festivals & VOD** platforms that show short films

Add bts photos, videos & other content to website & social media

Contact database re completion of shoot

TO DO Week 2.

Rough Cut watch and discuss, take notes from trusted people

Director - take a couple of days with rough cut b4 giving notes to editor

Update/email database with progress report

Refine delivery schedule

TO DO Week 3.

Edit notes from execs- especially if making a funded short

Let film breathe

Put together your **EPK**

Contact database with updates

TO DO Week 4.

Fine cut - show a few trusted people, **test the film** and (adjust to make story clearer if necessary)

Complete delivery schedule

Contact database, update website and social media

Post Production Month 2.

TO DO Week 1.

Picture lock

Start of **sound design**

Prep **titles & credit sequence** (Get **logo files**)

Contact database

TO DO Week 2.

Start grade- Director & DOP in post house

Organise venue for wrap party/First screening

-Contact database, make sure they have received gifts & rewards from crowdfunding campaign

TO DO Week 3.

Sound design complete

-Refine **festival strategy**-register your film on sites like film freeway, short film depot,

-Invite relevant funders, interested parties and **potential funders of your next film(s)** **Local press**, film reviewers/bloggers, people you might want to work with in the near future, filmmaking organisations, to screening(s)

TO DO Week 4.

Grading and **online** complete- Don't forget to get the film in different digital formats eg DCP, Quick time,

EPK ready (Take screen grabs from graded shots if required)

-Get digital copies ready- the odd film festival still insists on DVDs 🙄 screeners, so it might be worth burning a few copies

Contact database with your plans for the film

Post Production Month 3

And Beyond

TO DO in the coming Weeks

Apply to first [film festival](#) from your festival strategy.
Organise Cast and crew screening cum wrap party
Put Distribution plan in action (Do at least one **Q & A** screening/month)
[Start writing the next script or start ideas for your next film](#)
-Go to at least [one film industry](#) networking event per month to promote your movie
Contact database regularly with updates

Apply to minimum 50-100 film festivals
Continue DIY Distribution
-Contact database at regular intervals with updates, offers, screenings with [Q & As](#), acceptance to festivals and other free content of interest
-Get your glad rags ready for attending festivals and maybe getting an award?!

And that's a wrap...almost!

You're now ready to dive headfirst into the madness of making a short film. It might feel like you've got a mountain to climb, but breaking it all down into manageable chunks will make it a hell of a lot easier. Don't let the stress get to you—trust me, we've all been there. The key is to stay organised, stay calm, and keep plugging away at it, even when it feels like you're chasing your tail.

If you learn one thing from this guide, let it be this: prep is everything. If you get that right, the rest of it will fall into place, and before you know it, you'll be holding that finished film in your hands. Things might go off-piste from time to time, and that's fine. Be flexible, adapt, and keep your eye on the prize. When in doubt, just remember, a bit of persistence, a splash of creativity and a whole lot of tea will see you through. Now, grab your crew, fire up the camera, and get cracking. You've got this—good luck!

Afia x