

**RULE FOURTEEN
SPECIAL RULES FOR THE
DOCUMENTARY SHORT FILM AWARD**

I. DEFINITION

- A. A short film is defined as an original motion picture that has a running time of 40 minutes or less, including all credits.
- B. This excludes from consideration such works as:
1. Previews and advertising films (product sales, commercials, etc.)
 2. Alternate or re-edited versions of short films which have previously been publicly exhibited
 3. Short films created from materials substantially taken from or cut down from completed, publicly exhibited feature films. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Credit sequences
 - Re-edited scenes
 - Segments taken from a feature film
 4. Works originally created as episodic television (for broadcast and/or streaming) or as part of an ongoing, multi-part or limited series
 5. Short documentary films created for an anthology series are eligible for consideration provided that the films meet all other eligibility criteria under Paragraph II.
- C. An eligible documentary film is defined as a theatrically released nonfiction motion picture dealing creatively with cultural, artistic, historical, social, scientific, economic, or other subjects. It may be photographed in actual occurrence, or may employ partial reenactment, stock footage, stills, animation, stop-motion, or other techniques, as long as the emphasis is on fact and not on fiction.

Documentary short films that are animated may be submitted in either the Animated Short Film category or the Documentary Short Film category, but not both.

II. ELIGIBILITY

- A. To be eligible for awards consideration for the 99th Awards year, a documentary short film must fulfill one of the following qualifying criteria. The eligibility period begins on October 1, 2025, and ends on September 30, 2026. This qualification must take place within two years of the film's completion date.
1. The picture must have been publicly exhibited for **paid admission** in a commercial motion picture theater in one of the six qualifying U.S. metro areas: Los Angeles County; City of New York [five boroughs]; the Bay Area [counties of San Francisco, Marin, Alameda, San Mateo and Contra Costa]; Chicago [Cook County, Illinois]; Dallas-Fort Worth [Dallas County, Tarrant County, Texas]; and Atlanta [Fulton County, Georgia], for a run of at least seven consecutive days in the same commercial motion picture theater, during which screenings must occur at least one time daily. The picture must be advertised and exploited during the theatrical qualifying run in a manner normal and customary to theatrical distribution practices.

All motion pictures qualifying under this paragraph shall satisfy the theatrical exhibition format requirements of Rule Two, Paragraph 2.B.

Student films cannot qualify with a theatrical release.

OR

2. The film must have won a qualifying award at a competitive film festival, as specified in the Short Film Qualifying Festival List, regardless of any prior public exhibition or distribution by nontheatrical means. Proof of the award must be submitted with the entry. The Short Film

Qualifying Festival List is available at www.oscars.org or may be obtained from the Academy.

OR

3. The film must have won a Gold, Silver or Bronze Medal award in the Academy's 2026 Student Academy Awards competition in the Documentary category or Alternative/Experimental category.

All films must be submitted in a standard theatrical exhibition aspect ratio and in formats currently accepted by the Academy under Rule Two, Paragraph 2.B, no matter which other formats may have been used during their theatrical run or festival screening.

- B. Works that are essentially promotional or instructional are not eligible, nor are works that are essentially unfiltered records of performances.
- C. A short film qualifying under Paragraph II.A.1 above may not be exhibited publicly or distributed anywhere in any nontheatrical form until **after** its qualifying theatrical release. Nontheatrical public exhibition or distribution includes but is not limited to:
 - Broadcast and cable television
 - Pay Per View/Video on Demand
 - DVD and/or streaming distribution
 - Inflight airline distribution
 - Internet transmission

Up to fifteen percent of the running time of a film is allowed to be shown in a nontheatrical medium prior to the film's theatrical release.

Films qualifying under Paragraph II.A.2 or II.A.3 above are exempted from this rule.

- D. The Documentary Branch Executive Committee shall resolve all questions of eligibility and rules.

III. SUBMISSION

- A. Entrants must complete the online submission form located on the Academy's Awards Submission site and submit to the Academy the digital upload of the film for streaming purposes, including English captions or subtitles, as well as all required submission materials.
- B. Submission forms must be signed by all credited directors and producers. This is to ensure that all potential awards-eligible parties are properly informed of the submission.
- C. The short film submitted for Academy Awards consideration must be identical in content and length to the print or DCP that qualified. Films must have the necessary clearances for commercial theatrical exhibition. Festival clearances are not sufficient.
- D. Dialogue or narration must be substantially in English, or the film must have English-language subtitles. Entrants must refer to the Academy Screening Room Guidelines for any additional required materials.
- E. For films qualifying between October 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, entrants must submit all submission materials, including the digital upload of the film and captions for streaming purposes, by 5 p.m. PT on **Thursday, August 13, 2026**. For films qualifying between July 1, 2026, and September 30, 2026, entrants must submit all submission materials, including the digital upload of the film and captions for streaming purposes, by 5 p.m. PT on **Thursday, October 8, 2026**.
- F. **Monday, December 1, 2026**, is the last day to withdraw a film from Academy Awards consideration. Withdrawing and/or failure to complete the qualifying standards may risk future awards

disqualification.

- G. If a short film advances to the Nominations round of voting, additional materials including a film print or DCP of the film may be required after the shortlist is announced.
- H. The Academy may retain for its archives one ProRes file and one DCP of every film receiving a nomination. By submitting a film, the filmmaker agrees that the Academy has the right to make copies and distribute them for voting purposes only.
- I. No short film may be submitted more than once for Academy Awards consideration. A short film must be submitted in the same Awards year in which it qualifies.

IV. NOMINEES AND AWARD RECIPIENTS

- A. The nominee(s) should be the individual(s) most involved in the key creative aspects of the filmmaking process. **A maximum of two persons may be designated as nominees**, one of whom must be the credited director who exercised directorial control, and the other of whom must have a director or producer credit. Companies or organized groups shall not receive nominations or awards.
- B. Persons with the screen credits of executive producer, co-producer, associate producer, line producer, produced in association with or any credit other than director or producer shall not receive nominations or Academy statuettes.
- C. If a producer is listed on the submission form as a designated nominee, that individual must have performed a major portion of the producing functions. If there is more than one producer credited in the legal billing, all individuals with a “producer” or “produced by” credit on films that reach the Nominations round will automatically be vetted. The Documentary Branch Executive Committee will determine which producer(s) is eligible to receive a nomination.
- D. Final determination of designated nominees for each shortlisted film will be made by the Documentary Branch Executive Committee.

V. VOTING

- A. All active and life members of the Documentary Branch will be invited to view the eligible submissions in the category and will be required to see a minimum number as defined by the current procedures. Members will vote by secret ballot in the order of their preference for not more than fifteen motion pictures. The fifteen motion pictures receiving the highest number of votes shall advance to the next round of voting.
- B. To determine nominations, all active and life members of the Documentary Branch will be invited to view the fifteen shortlisted Documentary Short Films. A member must view all shortlisted films for the ballot to be counted in the Nominations round. Members shall vote by secret ballot in the order of their preference for not more than five motion pictures. The five motion pictures receiving the highest number of votes shall become the nominations for final voting for the Documentary Short Film award.
- C. Final voting for the Documentary Short Film award shall be restricted to active and life members of the Academy who have viewed all of the nominated documentary short films.