

## ENTRY GUIDELINES

# We are thrilled you're interested in entering the Top of the South Film Festival.

We accept short films up to 15 minutes in length produced in the Top of the South Island region of New Zealand or by Kiwi filmmakers worldwide. Films are accepted in the following categories: narrative (fictional), animation, music video, documentary, secondary student-made film, and films made for the NZ-based "48Hours" film competition.

All films must be entered on FilmFreeway at: [www.filmfreeway.com/TopoftheSouthFilmFestival](http://www.filmfreeway.com/TopoftheSouthFilmFestival)

We have two entry sections: the Gold/Silver Screenings and the Aotearoa Screening. Please be sure you enter the correct Screening section. Your film can only enter ONE section.

The Gold/Silver Screenings are for locally produced films from the Top of the South Island, New Zealand only: Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough districts.

The Aotearoa Screening is for films produced anywhere else in New Zealand, and/or by NZ citizens/permanent residents internationally.

**Here are the rules and regulations to follow to ensure your entry is accepted.**

## THE GOLD/SILVER SCREENINGS

Celebrating our origins of showcasing short films created by Top of the South Island filmmakers, the Gold/Silver Screenings are exclusively reserved for local film productions. These screenings take place in Nelson, Blenheim and Motueka theatres.

### Eligibility

The Gold/Silver Screenings are open to short films solely from the Top of the South, New Zealand - Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough. Film produced and shot in the adjoining regions of Buller and Kaikoura may also submit to the Gold/Silver Screenings. If a film is NOT 100% locally written, produced, directed and crewed by Top of the South residents, then it must meet the following criteria:

- at least ONE individual among the positions of writer, director, or producer permanently resides in the Top of the South region, AND,
- the film has TWO MORE individuals fulfilling the functions of writer, director, producer, director of photography, editor, or lead actors who also permanently reside in the Top of the South region, AND
- 60% of production and post-productions days must be done in the Top of the South region
- Any films NOT meeting these criteria will automatically be submitted to the Aotearoa Screening competition. (Additional entry fees may be apply.) The Film Festival Director will determine the eligibility of borderline cases.



# 2024

4th & 5th October 2024 – Nelson  
6th October 2024 – Awards Gala Event  
12th October 2024 – Blenheim  
20th October 2024 – Motueka



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### Gold/Silver Screening Awards (22)

Best Film (overall)	Best Film Silver Reel
People’s Choice Gold Reel	People’s Choice Silver Reel
Best Narrative Film (fictional)	Best Documentary
Best Music Video	Best Animated Film
Best Secondary Student Film (yr 9 -13)	Best “48-hour” Film
Best Director	Best Screenplay
Best Cinematography	Best Actor
Best Actress	Best Supporting Actor
Best Supporting Actress	Best Editing
Best Sound	Best Original Score
Best Visual FX	Best Production Design

## THE AOTEAROA SCREENING

The Aotearoa Screening showcases some of the best short films from around New Zealand and by Kiwi filmmakers worldwide, and invites them to join us in an exclusive screening and awards ceremony at the Suter Theatre in Nelson. The Aotearoa Screening provides a chance for local Top of the South filmmakers to connect with those from beyond our region.

### Eligibility

The Aotearoa Screening showcases NZ films produced nation-wide, outside the Top of the South region. Films produced internationally by New Zealand citizens or permanent residents will be considered. The films can be of any genre and a maximum of 15 minutes. Borderline cases will be admitted at the Film Festival Director’s sole discretion.

#### Aotearoa Awards (7)

Best Film	People’s Choice
Best Director	Best Screenplay
Best Cinematography	Best Actor
Best Actress	

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# ENTRY GUIDE

## SUBMISSION FEES

1. Submission to the Gold/Silver Screenings is \$35. If you are a full member of Top of the South Filmmakers, your first entry is free using the specific discount code emailed to members. Each subsequent entry to the Gold/Silver Screenings is \$35. (If you did not receive your membership discount code, please contact [director@tsfilmmakers.org.nz](mailto:director@tsfilmmakers.org.nz))
2. Submission to the Aotearoa Screening is \$50.
3. Registered Students (yr 9 -13) submission fee: \$15
4. Submission fees are non-refundable
5. The Festival Submission Fee must be paid via the FilmFreeway payment service (credit card, debit card or PayPal) after you have submitted your film via FilmFreeway. If none of the available payment methods work for you, please contact us per contact info above.

## HOW TO ENTER

1. All submissions are accepted only via [Film Freeway](#).
2. You will be asked to sign up to create a free FilmFreeway account if you don't already have one.
3. Once you have an account, you will need to create a project with your film in FilmFreeway. Go to **My Projects**, then **Add a Project**, and follow the instructions.
4. Please create a new FilmFreeway project for each film submission.
5. Once you've created a project in FilmFreeway, you will see an option box. Click on **Add Project File**.
6. Be sure to upload all the press kit materials outlined below in your project file. These materials are all required. Your submission may be disqualified if any required materials are missing.
7. In the Project File, you must either upload your film directly to FilmFreeway (only viewable by our judges) or you can provide a link to your film on YouTube or Vimeo, with a password, if required. You must let us know the password somewhere in your submission documents.
8. Under the Privacy menu button, please check these boxes: **Visibility: Festivals Only** and **Download Permissions: Festivals that I submit to may download my video**.
9. Once you've completed creating your Project, then click on **Browse Festivals** and search for Top of the South Film Festival 2024. Click on **Submit Now**.
10. Then you must select the **Category You Wish To Enter** by choosing the **Aotearoa Screening** (\$50 – for New Zealand films produced outside the Top of the South) or **Gold/Silver Screenings** (\$35 standard or \$15 Secondary Student – for Top of the South regional productions). You must click on one of these payment options even if you have a free discount code. If you have a TSF members or Student discount code, you will enter the code when you're checking out.
11. Top of the South regional filmmakers must be sure to designate their submission as one of the following genres: Narrative (fictional), Documentary, Animation, Music Video, 48Hour, Secondary Student Film.

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12. Films produced OUTSIDE the Top of the South region MUST enter the Aotearoa category ONLY. If you fall in this category, do NOT designate a genre category also. All Aotearoa category films are judged against each other, no matter what genre they might be.
13. Once you've selected either the Aotearoa or Gold/Silver Screening category and fee, you will be asked a series of question which MUST be answered for your film to be accepted. Please have the required materials at hand for your answers. The questions are as follows:
  - Please indicate from the following choices which film genre your film qualifies for: narrative (fictional), documentary, music video, animation, secondary student, 48-Hour short
  - Please indicate an estimated percentage of how much of your film was written, shot, edited in the Top of the South region (Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough, Kaikoura, Buller, Hurunui - from 60% to 100%. (Less than 60% means you must apply in the Aotearoa section of the film festival.)
  - Logline - Please provide a 1-2 line description/summary of your film for promotional purposes.
  - Synopsis - Please add a film synopsis of 250 words or less describing your film's subject matter or storyline, major plot points, and key characters.
  - Actor Credit List - if you have not listed all of your Actors under the Credit section, please enter them here. Please indicate whether the actor is a LEAD or SUPPORTING actor. If not applicable, write NA.
  - Crew Credit List - if you have not listed all of your crew under the Credit section, please enter them here. If not applicable, write NA.
  - OPTIONAL Background Story - Please tell us about your film's background story up to 250 words: who produced the film; how did the idea come about; who was on your team; interesting behind the scenes stories; obstacles you overcame. If not applicable, write NA.
  - Specialty Award Categories Descriptions: If you wish your film to be judged in the 4 categories requiring specialty judges – sound, original music composition, production design, VFX – then please supply us with either a cue sheet or a letter outlining exactly what work was done in these categories and the in/out points of the work in your film. Without this information, we cannot judge your film for these awards. Enter in the box or as part of your Cover Letter (see button on Cart Summary Checkout page). Or email to [director@tsfilmfest.org.nz](mailto:director@tsfilmfest.org.nz) . If not applicable, write NA.
14. You may also add a cover letter with any additional information on your film at the Cart Summary page as you're checking out. Or upload a file under the PROJECT FILE menu tab under MY PROJECTS.
15. If you want your film to be considered for any of the following specialty awards - SOUND, ORIGINAL MUSIC SCORE, PRODUCTION DESIGN, VFX - you MUST answer the question in Filmfreeway or submit a letter outlining how the work was done, by whom and at what points in the film. E.g.: if you want your film to be considered for Best VFX, please explain where the VFX took place and how it was created. Or if you want to be considered for Best Original Music, please submit a Cue Sheet.

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## ENTRY RULES

1. Entry deadline is midnight 5th August 2024. Films entered after this deadline will not be accepted.
2. Films must be submitted in one of the following categories: Narrative film (fictional), Documentary, Animation, Music Video, 48 Hour Film Festival film, Secondary School Student film (yr 9 -13), Aotearoa film (NZ short films created outside of the Top of the South region and/or by New Zealand citizens/permanent residents).
3. In addition to your film, you must submit a press kit. Details below.
4. Films must have been completed after January 1, 2022. Some exceptions may be granted at the discretion of the TSFF Director.
5. Films must be 15 minutes or less, including credits. Films of longer duration may be accepted if deemed significant to filmmakers based in the Top of the South at the sole discretion of the Festival Director.
6. Black screen credits must be no longer than 30 seconds.
7. Films are preferred to be submitted as MP4 files.
8. Films must be shot in 24 or 25fps and are preferred to be rendered in 16:9 aspect ratio either as in 2560×1440 (2K) or 1920×1080 (1080p Full-HD) (H264 codec). Frame rates of 30fps will not be accepted.
9. Films not submitted in the above formats will be rejected.
10. Films accepted by other festivals or have previously been screened online are eligible.
11. Films must not contain copyright infringing content including music, video or photos. Any film identified as containing obvious copyright content without the appropriate license or written release will not be accepted.
12. By submitting your film, you grant the Top of the South Film Festival the following rights to your film, film excerpts and associated material (e.g. production stills) at no cost to the Top of the South Film Festival:
  - to publicly screen your film in association with TSFF events
  - to extract and edit excerpts from your film for current and future TSFF promotional purposes
  - to include, or not, your film into the TSFF public screenings
  - to use your film's excerpts and associated materials both on and offline for promotional purposes both current and future
13. Submitting your film is not a guarantee that it will be screened. All films are subject to quality control measures and will be viewed by a panel of judges made up of independent film industry professionals. To avoid conflict of interest, judges must be independent of the films on which they are making decisions. The curation team must declare if they are connected in any significant manner to the films entered.
14. Judges will rank order films and the curation team will fill the Screenings until the Screening run times reach capacity (105 to 120 minutes).

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15. Films will be rated by the FVLB and must achieve a rating of “G” “PG” or “M” (see below). Films that curators consider inappropriate for a mixed-age audience may not be screened, at the curators’ and director’s discretion.

## PRESS KIT DETAILS

Along with your film, you will be asked to submit the following Press Kit elements. Failure to submit these materials may make your film ineligible for screening and awards, and your submission fee will not be refunded.

1. Logline: 30 words or less
2. Film Synopsis: 100 words or less
3. A full list of actor and production crew credits
4. Production Stills: up to 5 Screenshots or on-set photographs which best depict your film
5. OPTIONAL Background Story for your film: up to 250 words – who produced the film; how did the idea come about; who was on your team; interesting behind the scenes stories; obstacles you overcame.
6. Trailer(s) – if you have one. Up to 1:45 in length.
7. If a Narrative film (fictional), please include:
  - Names of the actor(s)/actress(es) you submit for consideration as Best Actor/Actress and Best Supporting Actor/Actress.
  - Name(s) of the crew member(s) responsible for your Cinematography, Editing, Sound, Original Score, Visual FX and Production Design.
  - Details and descriptions of what parts (in and out timecode points) of your film have original music and VFX. Without these notes, your film cannot be judged in these categories.

## FILM RATING

The selected films for each Screening will be submitted by TSFF for classification by the NZ Film and Video Labelling Body (FVLB). (All films viewed by the public must have a FVLB rating.) For more information about NZ ratings please see: <https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/classification-info/classification-labels/>

1. Films can be “G” “PG” or “M” rated. An “M” rating means “more suitable for mature audiences 16 years and over.” Failure to obtain one of these ratings means your film is NOT eligible for TSFF public screening. Minimising content in the following areas will increase your chances of obtaining an “M” rating: Offensive Language, Gore & Violence, Explicit Nudity, Strong Themes.
2. If a film is rated by the Film and Video Labelling Body (FVLB) as harder than a “M”, a three-day extension to edit and resubmit may be granted. If you choose not to resubmit or miss the three-day deadline, your film will be removed from the festival. If you choose not to re-submit your film, you must let the Festival Director know immediately your intention to withdraw your film.
3. If a film is rejected for any reason, submission fees will not be refunded, with exception in hardship cases.



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## JUDGING & AWARDS

1. Top of the South regional filmmakers must be sure to designate their submission as one of the following: Narrative (fictional), Documentary, Animation, Music Video, 48Hour, Secondary Student Film.
2. Films produced OUTSIDE the Top of the South region MUST enter the Aotearoa category ONLY. If you fall in this category, do NOT designate a genre category also. All Aotearoa category films are judged against each other, no matter what genre they might be.
3. For both the Gold/Silver and Aotearoa Screenings, independent judges with industry experience will assess all films objectively, and give a one to ten score using the Film Freeway rating system. Judge profiles can be found at: [www.tsfilmfest.org/judges](http://www.tsfilmfest.org/judges) when festival entries close.
4. Narrative films will be judged in the following categories: directing, story/screenplay, ensemble cast/character engagement, cinematography, and editing. The cumulative score compiled from all the judges will be averaged to determine an overall average score out of ten for each of these categories.
5. The average cumulative score of these Narrative categories will determine the BEST NARRATIVE FILM.
6. The Best Films in the following genres will be determined by compiling then averaging judges scores on a one to ten basis: documentary, animation, music video, 48 Hour films, and student film.
7. Awards for the following categories will be selected by judge(s) whose expertise is in that particular field.
  - Best Sound
  - Best Original Score
  - Best Visual FX
  - Best Production Design
8. Aotearoa awards will be determined by a separate judging panel assembled by the TSFF Director.
9. If your entry is a narrative (fictional) film, please indicate:
  - The names of: Lead Actor and Actress, Supporting Actor and Actress, along with Director, Screenwriter, Cinematographer
  - The name of name of the composer if the music has an Original Music Score
  - The name(s) of the person(s) responsible for Production Design
  - If the film has Visual FX, the name(s) of the VFX artist(s)

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## JUDGING CRITERIA FOR FILMS

**Screenplay**

Story is original, creative, fresh, interesting and masterfully woven. Characters are compelling and distinctive. Dialogue is real and engaging. Has artistic merit. Story has a beginning, middle and end, a story arc, and a clear goal. The story resolves itself and pays off the premise it sets up.

**Direction**

Story is told in a cohesive, clear, distinctive style and tone. Acting is natural and believable. Combined elements of story, acting, visuals and music make for a rewarding experience.

**Cinematography**

Visually excellent; appropriate use of camera movement; lighting, composition and shot selection serve the story; colour grading enhances overall look and feel.

**Editing**

The organisation/pacing/structure/continuity of pictures and sound is rhythmic, moving, engaging and clear.

**Acting**

Acting performances are authentic, compelling, interesting and personify the story. Relational dynamics are strong and have emotional impact.

**Sound**

There is consistently clear dialogue recording; believable and creative use of sound effects; quality transitions between words and music. The music complements and enhances the story, tone and overall message.

**Original Score**

The originally scored music is creative, unique and suited to the film and helps tell the story as a character of its own.

**Production Design**

The look and feel of the locations and settings transports us to the world of the characters. Lighting, sets, scenery, wardrobe and props are used effectively and appropriately.

**Visual Effects**

The Visual Effects are so realistic the viewer accepts what they are seeing, and their disbelief is momentarily suspended. Or the effects illustrate the vision and artistry of the Visual FX artist. In either case, the VFX support the narrative and capture the viewer.

**Ready to Submit Your Film?**

Top of the South Film Festival 2024 proudly accepts entries on FilmFreeway, the world's #1 way to enter film festivals and creative contests.

Click to Submit on  
**FilmFreeway**[filmfreeway.com/TopoftheSouthFilmFestival](https://filmfreeway.com/TopoftheSouthFilmFestival)