

United States

And elsewhere? The rules, country by country

AUTHORITIES AND PROCEDURES

Rights holders; city and state permits according to the project.

RECENT FILMS

Distributor availability.

KEY POINT

Contract covering ticketing, advertising and competition.

FILM RIGHTS

Federal copyright reserves public performance to rights holders (17 U.S.C. § 106): a free screening in a park or campsite is not royalty-free. There is no one-year federal deadline; availability depends on the distributor, date, and location. Swank licenses notably by film and by day.

MUSIC

No specific national procedure for film music in the sources consulted: it is the distributor's contract that specifies what it covers, and the welcome music is a separate use.

SESSION AUTHORIZATION

Local event permits — required by NYC Parks for over 20 participants, a threshold specific to New York — and, depending on the project, noise, fire safety, temporary installations, insurance, catering, road occupation and ADA accessibility.

YOUNG AUDIENCE AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The distributor contract covers ticketing and promotion: at Swank, for parks, the higher amount between the flat fee and 50% of the revenue, limited advertising materials, and restrictions against a commercial theater. A weather cancellation does not automatically erase the rights.

In detail

Federal copyright reserves the right to publicly display protected films for copyright holders. A screening in a municipal park, campsite, or public venue does not become free because spectators do not pay. Rights must be reserved for the United States and for the actual conditions of the event. There is no federal procedure for authorizing each screening comparable to the French CNC.

Sources :

- [U.S. Copyright Office — 17 USC, chapter 1 \(§ 106, right of public performance\)](#)

Film availability depends on the distributor, date, and location; there is no general one-year federal deadline specific to open-air cinema. Swank notably offers licenses per film and per day. For its park offering, its FAQ provides, in case of ticketing, the higher amount between the flat fee and 50% of the revenue. This is a

commercial condition of this offering, not a universal American tax.

The contract can also cover the promotion. The same Swank offer limits certain advertising media and provides restrictions in case of direct competition with a commercial theater. It is also necessary to agree on postponement conditions: a weather cancellation does not automatically erase the payment of royalties.

Sources :

- [Swank — Conditions for parks and recreation, booking and postponement](#)

Event permits fall under local authorities. As an example, NYC Parks requires a permit for more than 20 participants. This threshold does not apply to other cities. Depending on the project, noise, fire safety, temporary installations, insurance, catering, and road occupation must also be addressed. ADA accessibility obligations also apply to temporary events.

Sources :

- [NYC Parks — Event Permit](#)
- [San Diego — Special Events, event preparation](#)
- [ADA National Network — Accessible Temporary Events](#)

Common rules: three authorizations not to be confused

Film rights

Public screening of a protected work requires the consent of the rights holders, except where applicable legal exceptions apply. This consent must be obtained from the producer, distributor, or an authorized representative for the territory concerned. Purchasing a DVD, renting a file, or subscribing to a streaming service does not, in itself, grant the right to screen the film to the public. Free admission, non-profit status, or cultural objectives do not constitute a general exemption.

Sources :

- [GOV.UK — Showing films and TV shows in public](#)
- [U.S. Copyright Office — 17 USC, chapter 1 \(§ 106, right of public performance\)](#)
- [MPLC Italy — Outdoor Screenings](#)

Administrative authorization

It concerns the event, the venue or the operator's activity. A film license does not reserve a park and is not permission to receive several hundred people. Conversely, an agreement with the town hall does not transfer any projection rights. The exact scope depends on the country and, often, the competent authorities.

Music rights

They may require a separate procedure. This is particularly the case with SACEM in France, GEMA in Germany and SIAE in Italy. You need to check what the contract actually covers: the music incorporated in the film, the welcome music and any possible concert are different uses. Filmbankmedia also refers its British clients to PRS for Music for appropriate music coverage.

Sources :

- [CNC — Non-commercial screening, common provisions](#)
- [GEMA — Rate T](#)
- [SIAE — Film and audiovisual screenings](#)
- [Filmbankmedia — Questions about licenses and music rights](#)

Preparing a screening: decisions that prevent blockages

Define the project before booking the rights

Prepare a form indicating the country, municipality, site, organizer status, main date and fallback date, expected audience, film, language, format, entry-level price and partners. This data enables the distributor and administration to respond to a specific event.

Distinguish legal deadlines from processing deadlines

The French visa timeframe, the Spanish timeframe applicable to administrations, and the British TEN notice period do not have the same purpose. Planning several weeks of preparation is an organizational recommendation, not a universal legal deadline. A regional commission or a local permit may require a longer lead time.

Obtain a written agreement covering the outdoors

Specify the number of screenings, the territory, the authorized medium, advertising, revenue to be declared, and postponement conditions. An annual license, authorization for another country, or conditions from a partner cinema do not automatically apply to a new event.

Sources :

- [Filmbankmedia — Single Title Screening Licence](#)
- [Swank — Conditions for parks and recreation, booking and postponement](#)

Site preparation and operation

Have the gauge, circulation, emergency access, electrical installations, sanitary facilities, accessibility and noise levels validated according to applicable regulations. For the screen, request the installation, anchoring or weighting instructions and weather limits from the provider. Define who will monitor conditions and decide to interrupt the session. No single wind threshold can be given for all screens and all sites.

Sources :

- [Bari Municipality — Event file, technical documents and safety of temporary installations](#)
- [San Diego — Special Events, event preparation](#)
- [ADA National Network — Accessible Temporary Events](#)

Establish a budget and divide responsibilities

Separately plan film rights, potential music rights, site rental, technical aspects, insurance, security, communication, and applicable taxes. In the service contract, identify who reserves the film, declares the event, checks ages, manages ticket sales, and handles cancellations. A distributor's rates do not constitute a national legal scale.

The absence of a comparable authorization to the CNC does not therefore mean a lack of regulation. The relevant comparison concerns the actual project: recent or catalog film, free municipal screening or paid exploitation, already equipped venue or temporary installation. Official sources set the framework; local authorities and rights holders specify the conditions of the specific case.