

OOTC48 Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Out Of The Cellar 48-Hour Horror Film Challenge?

It's your chance to stop thinking about making a movie and start filming! Teams have just one weekend to make a short horror film. All creativity—writing, shooting, editing and adding a musical soundtrack—must occur in a 48-hour window beginning Friday evening at 7:00pm and ending Sunday at 7:30pm. The completed films are screened to an eager audience at the Out Of The Cellar Horror Film Festival in November.

2. How much is the registration fee? Is it per person or per team?

The registration fee is for the entire team. Early \$60 to Late \$90. **Register early and save!** The fee is based on when you register (Early, Regular or Late)--the sooner you sign up, the more you save.

3. If I have to drop out, how do I withdraw?

To withdraw from a competition please check section D on the competition rules for the conditions and instructions.

4. Why are they horror films?

We are a horror film festival. The story is up to the filmmaker; however, each team must select the sub-genre for its movie in a random drawing before the start of the competition. There are 38 different sub genres of horror. Each team will receive two sub genres from which to choose.

In addition, teams are given a character, a prop and a line of dialogue that must appear in their film.

5. Who sees the films?

The films screen in their dedicated block to live audiences at the Chabot Theater during the Festival. Of course the filmmakers, actors, family and friends are there to enthusiastically support the premiere of the weekend's work. But also supporters of our local film community, and discriminating viewers who want to see something new—something raw and undead—are there to feel the creative energy.

6. Who are the filmmakers?

The OOTC48 Horror Film Challenge is open to all filmmakers, beginners, pre-professionals and pros. Even hobbyists are encouraged to participate. The Rules state that all team members (crew and cast) must be volunteers.

7. Is there a limit to the number of people on a team?

No. It can be a single person team—who works in front of and behind the camera. The average, though, is about 15 people per team.

8. Am I allowed to be on more than one team?

Yes, you're allowed. We hope you can make the scheduling work out! And be sure the Team Leaders on each team know.

9. How do I find people for my team, or how do I find a team to join?

Come to our monthly filmmaker mixers where a guest speaker will talk about the business of horror movies, then mingle and network with other attending filmmakers. We also have a Discord Server to introduce yourself, promote your craft and find your teams.

10. How long are the films?

The films are short; they must be a minimum of 4 minutes and a maximum of 7 minutes long. Short is good. Not only are shorter films tighter, they are usually more interesting.

11. Where and when are they shown?

The movies are screened at the Chabot Theater in Castro Valley in the OOTC48 block during the Out Of The Cellar Horror Film Festival in November.

12. What should I do with my film after the competition?

Get it out there! Enter it into festivals, play it in public screenings, upload it to websites, get it on television, and show it to anyone you can. Be sure you abide by any restrictions in the Team Leader's Agreement.

13. May I show a modified version of my film?

Yes, presuming that the showing adheres to the Team Leader's Agreement that you signed when entering the OOTC48 Horror Film Challenge. If it is a modified version of an OOTC48 Horror Film Challenge film, please include a title card and a mention in the end credits that say:

The concept for this film was developed during the Out Of The Cellar 48-Hour Horror Film Challenge. www.outofthecellarfilms.com/OOTC48

14. What will I win?

Your 48-hour horror short film will be eligible for all of the audience choice awards plus the 'Best-Of 48' determined by the audiences who come to the festival and vote. Plus you will get a heavily discounted pass for you, your family, your crew and your friends. All of the Festival winners will be invited to be included in the Out Of The Cellar Horror Film Festival 2026 Anthology, distributed by Blood Pact Films.

15. Will I get rich?

Probably not.

But if your film is included in the Anthology we will have a distribution deal for you. While the market for general short films is nearly non-existent, the market for Horror short films is in demand. We currently have a partnership with Blood Pact Films for distribution.

16. Does the maximum length of the film include credits?

No. Your film may be 7 minutes long plus 1 minute of End Credits.

17. Are credits in the beginning permissible?

Opening credits are allowed. They do not count against the credit time limit. However, they do count against the 7 minutes of film. Remember, the audience is here to watch, not read.

18. Are we allowed to have footage under our closing credits?

Yes, however, the narrative must end before the closing credits begin. So outtakes, Ferris-Bueller-like antics, or bonus scenes are allowed. But if we removed the credits, the movie should still feel complete.

19. Are stock footage and photos allowed?

Stock photos—yes, provided you have permission to use them. Stock footage—no, unless it is composited with footage shot during the competition weekend AND you have permission to use it. To be specific: Every frame of your film MUST contain footage shot or created in the Official Time Period. This is "core footage." "Supporting footage," or footage shot or created BEFORE the Official Time Period (including stock footage that is part of a special effect) may be placed over or under the core footage, as long as every frame of your film contains some amount of core footage and the assembling of the core footage with the supporting footage occurs during the Official Time Period. Animation, titles, and special effects can be considered core footage if it is created during the Official Time Period. No footage created using Artificial Intelligence is allowed. Still photos are permitted as core footage. The still photos do not need to be created during the Official Time Period. Note: Still photos created outside of the Official Time Period being used in a sequence to create the illusion of motion are not acceptable as core footage, but are acceptable as supporting footage. You must have rights to any footage or photos used in your film. An OOTC48 Materials Release is required for all materials, photos, and/or footage not created in the Official Time Period.

20. Is animation allowed?

Yes. However—while you may use still drawings created before the Project—you may not use sequences of drawings created before the Project to create the illusion of motion. Using existing images and 3D objects is permissible, provided that you have full rights to them. Again, only animation created during the 48 hour period is allowed. And, as with a live action film, you must have all rights to the animation you submit.

21. What about visual effects? What's allowed?

You may use visual effects and any visual effects software that you have the right to use. All visual effects are also subject to “Rule D: Footage” of the filmmaking rules. In other words, your visual effect must be used in conjunction with footage shot during the competition weekend.

22. May we include our logo that was made before the filmmaking weekend?

Yes, provided that it begins the film and is shorter than five seconds long. Note that the logo does count against the 7 minute running time of the film.

23. Do I need to subtitle my film during the Project weekend?

Subtitles are not required during the Project weekend, however, what you submit on Sunday night is what will be shown to the audiences and at your premiere screening.

If the audience cannot understand your film, they are less likely to give it awards. And, of course, the required line of dialogue must be clear.

NOTE: If you make a film in a language other than English, and you are selected to join the Anthology release, you must provide English subtitles in an .srt file. This may be done after the competition weekend.

24. Have any of the movies been shot on film?

This is our first Challenge, so no. Film is expensive, labs are time consuming and the project must be pre produced well to fit the 48 hour timeline, a luxury you just don't have given that you are going to receive required elements at the last minute.

25. Does every team member have to sign the Team Leader's Agreement?

No, only the team leader needs to sign it. However, everyone who works on the film must sign the Liability Waiver form. See the production documents page for more details.

26. What's a logline?

A logline is a very short, catchy summary of the story, usually not longer than one sentence. We ask you to provide a logline for your film on the Wrap Up Form.

EXAMPLE: Transported to a surreal landscape, a young girl seeks a way home to Kansas, befriending along the way a scarecrow without a brain, a tin woodsman without a heart, and a lion without courage.

27. How do we document public domain or royalty-free music and photos?

Have the person who has the rights to the music or materials sign the release form. In the case of royalty-free materials, this is the person who purchased them. In the case of public domain materials, this could be anyone on the team. Please also include

information that shows your rights to the music or materials, such as a license, a purchase receipt, or a statement by the author.

28. Do I need a Location Release to shoot on public property?

No, but you may need a permit. OOTC48 does not require you to prove to us that you received a permit, but you may be stopped from shooting or even fined if you do not have one. Please check with your local film commissioner.

29. Can the required character be heard instead of seen?

No, we must actually see the required character in some way on the screen. Just being audible off screen - like on the other end of a phone conversation - does not count. Remember, he/she need not be the star of the film, just make an appearance.

30. Does the required character have to say his name or wear a name tag?

As long as the audience can infer who the character is, he/she doesn't need to be further identified.

31. Can we make a poster and/or trailer to share on social media?

For sure! You are even encouraged to do so. It's a great way to promote your film and get audiences to your screening. Even though you are not allowed to share your film before the Awards, you ARE allowed to share a poster and/or trailer.

32. Will the film be sold to AI Entities for machine learning?

No. Rest assured, OOTC48 does not sell or license the films to any AI entities for machine learning or adding to their datasets.

33. What is the OOTC Horror Anthology?

Every film who wins an award at the Out Of The Cellar Horror Film Festival will be invited to participate in the Out Of The Cellar Horror Film Festival Anthology 2026. This is a compilation of all the winning films like "Best Blood Splatter" and "Best Non-Jump Scare" and of course "Best 48" and the overall judged winner "Best Short Film". This anthology will be distributed to various retail and online streaming services through Blood Pact Films.