

It's PTA Showtime!

Movie Copyrights and Licensing



Many PTAs hold movie nights at their schools, not knowing that use of copyrighted materials outside of the privacy of a home setting has been a copyright law violation since 1970. Movie studios have had a royalty compliance procedure in place for many years. Most major studios have made copyright compliance less expensive and simpler by appointing a licensing agent to help with copyright enforcement.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) is dedicated to preventing film and video piracy in all its forms, including illegal downloading, and unauthorized public performances. The MPAA and its member companies can go to court to ensure copyrights are not violated, and fines can be imposed upon violators.

Unless the school itself has a license from an agency, the PTA cannot borrow movies from a public library, bring movies from home, or rent movies from a video store to show at school. Ownership of a movie and the right to use it publicly are two separate issues. The copyright holder retains exclusive public performance rights. Video stores cannot provide legal permission for showing movies outside the home. Also, public libraries cannot pass on copyright compliance to anyone. Only the licensing agency or the movie studios themselves can do so.

A Public Performance Site License is sometimes referred to as a “blanket license” and it gives the school the right to show copyrighted movies legally. Once licensed, the school and the PTA can exhibit any movies copyrighted by the studios represented by the licensing agency, as long as the movies are secured from a legal source such as a personal collection, library or video rental store.

There are limitations to the Public Performance Site License. No admission fees can be charged, except to cover costs. The license is for K-12 schools only.

The PTA can make additional funds beyond the cost of the license by charging for concessions, hosting a dinner with the movie and charging for the dinner, or holding a silent auction or bake sale during the evening. The cost of the license may be shared by many groups at the school site, including the before and after school care, the PTA, booster clubs, student council, or any community group that uses the building.

When advertising the movie by public media (PTA or other website, public radio or TV), the movie title and studio name should not be used. The PTA can say, “Join us at Sunshine Elementary for a Family Movie Night at 7:00 p.m.,” for example. The licensing agency may provide promotional material from its website, such as customized movie tickets, which can be handed out directly to students, staff and parents.

The major studios represented by Movie Licensing USA represents major studios including Paramount, Warner Brothers, Walt Disney Pictures, Metro Golden Mayer, Miramax, Dreamworks, NBC Universal, United Artists and more.

An **Indoor One-Time Performance Site License** can be obtained from *Movie Licensing USA* at www.movlic.com or by calling toll-free 1-877-321-1300. The license is limited to show only the agreed upon movie title and date provided on the license. The fee for the One-Time License is \$110.

An **Outdoor One-Time Performance Site License** range from \$175 to \$850 based on film title and number of guests. The license can be purchased from www.swank.com or by calling toll-free 1-800-876-5577.

Showing of a Copyrighted Movie is against the law; unlicensed showings are a federal crime and are subject to \$150,000 fine per showing. Federal Copyright Act Title 17 of the United States Code.