

Community Film Screening Guide

A simple, practical guide to hosting documentary nights that encourage kindness, conscious living, and respect for all life.

1. Working with Your Local Library

Public library meeting rooms are amazing spaces for hosting free, community-led events. Because they are shared civic spaces, they have a few strict rules that we need to follow. Treating library staff with total kindness and respect is a great way to put our values into practice.

1 Keep It Completely Free and Open

To use library rooms, your event must be non-commercial and non-transactional. You cannot charge for tickets, ask for required donations, or sell products inside the room. The doors must stay unlocked and open so anyone walking by can join.

2 Pad Your Booking Time

Most libraries let you reserve rooms online between 48 hours and 60 days in advance. Always book an extra 45 minutes before and after the movie so your team can set up technology and clean up afterward without feeling rushed.

Use Your Own Contact Info on Flyers

You are completely welcome to list the library name and room location on your flyers. However, **never put the library's phone number on your promotions**. Put your own name or email so people send questions to you instead of flooding library workers with calls.

2. Understanding Film Rights & Rules

To show a copyrighted movie in public, you need a legal agreement called Public Performance Rights (PPR). Standard home streaming accounts (like personal Netflix) or home DVDs don't legally cover public screenings. Here is a quick breakdown of how to legally show popular documentaries:

FREE COMMUNITY LICENSE

Dominion & Earthlings

These powerful documentaries look closely at our relationship with animals and are meant for grassroots education.

How to screen: You can apply for a free community screening license directly on their official websites. They will send you high-quality download links for your event.

SLIDING-SCALE LICENSE

Cowspiracy & Eco-Films

Documentaries that focus on environment and sustainability issues usually require a modest fee to screen publicly.

How to screen: You can buy a one-time community screening license right on their website. The price is usually based on how many people you expect to attend.

STANDARD SCREENING LICENSE

The Game Changers

Films focused on athletic performance and plant-based health are usually managed by commercial distributors.

How to screen: Reach out through their official website to request a community or educational screening license package, which covers your public event legally.

A Helpful Library Workaround (Kanopy & Hoopla)

Organizing Tip: Most public library systems have free video platforms for cardholders called Kanopy or Hoopla. Hundreds of great documentaries on Kanopy actually include free public screening rights (PPR) as long as you show the film inside a library room. Ask your local library staff if they have Kanopy, and you might be able to screen the movie legally for free just by logging in with a library card.

3. Serving Simple, Kind Snacks

Offering simple food is a great way to welcome people, but library rules almost always ban cooking equipment like hot plates, crockpots, or open flames. We can easily work around this by keeping our menu simple, fresh, and entirely plant-based.

- ✦ **Serve Cold or Room-Temp Vegan Snacks:** Since you can't heat food up, focus on easy finger foods. Things like artisan hummus and fresh veggies, pita chips, fruit skewers, and vegan cookies are delicious and require zero cooking.
- ✦ **Label All Ingredients Clearly:** Set up small handwritten or typed index cards next to each snack dish. List every ingredient so people with food sensitivities or allergies (like gluten, nuts, or soy) feel safe and cared for.
- ✦ **Leave No Trace:** Bring your own trash bags and compostable napkins. Don't overfill the tiny trash cans in the library room. Bag up all waste at the end of the night and take it out to the library's large commercial dumpster outside or recycle or compost if possible. Always leave the room cleaner than you found it.

4. Hosting a Welcoming, Kind Discussion

Movies about ethics and changing our habits can bring up big emotions. Your job as a host isn't to judge or argue, but to make sure the room feels completely safe, supportive, and open to honest conversation.

1 Set Friendly Ground Rules

Before the discussion starts, share three basic guidelines: 1) Speak from your own personal experience using "I" statements (like "I felt..." or "I noticed..."). 2) Listen to understand other points of view rather than waiting for your turn to debate. 3) Talk about big food systems and cultural ideas without attacking any individuals.

2

Share the Conversation Space

Don't let one or two very talkative people dominate the whole room. If someone starts taking over, you can gently steer the conversation back: *"Thank you so much for sharing that. I want to make sure we leave enough quiet space for others who haven't had a chance to speak yet."*

3

Handle Defensiveness with Warmth

When people hear information that challenges how they live, they often get defensive. This is a totally normal human reaction. Don't push back with anger. Instead, validate their feelings: *"It is completely normal to feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed seeing this information. Let's look together at how communities are working to make these changes easier."*

5. Simple Questions to Get People Talking

Avoid trick questions or putting people on the spot. Instead, offer gentle, open-ended questions that invite everyone to reflect on their own habits and choices.

Pets vs. Products

- Why do you think our culture draws such a strong line between animals we treat as part of our families and animals we treat as food or products?

Making Food Affordable

- The film showed how government subsidies make certain foods cheap. How do you think those massive systems affect what regular families can afford to buy?

Overcoming Challenges

- What do you think is the biggest practical challenge holding people back from eating a more compassionate, plant-based diet, and how can we support each other?

"Our goal isn't to win an argument or prove that we are right. We are simply trying to open a kind, welcoming space where harming others becomes something we naturally want to leave behind."

6. Getting the Word Out Locally

To reach regular neighbors who might not normally go to environmental or animal rights meetings, try weaving your invitations into everyday local community spaces.

- ◆ **Use Broad, Welcoming Event Tags:** When listing your event online (like on Facebook Events or local boards), use inviting, general terms like: *Healthy Living, Green Lifestyle, Sustainability, Community Discussion, and Philosophy Nights*.
- ◆ **Partner with Neighboring Groups:** Reach out to people who run local yoga studios, meditation groups, community gardens, or book clubs. Offer to host the movie as a free, pre-planned educational night that their members can enjoy together.
- ◆ **Use Physical Community Bulletin Boards:** Print out clean, friendly flyers and pin them to the library's main public notice board (always ask the front desk first). You can also drop them off at neighborhood coffee shops, local food co-ops, and student lounges.