



# Revel-8 Film Fest

## Introduction

This short self-help guide is designed to provide some handy hints for the Revel-8 Super 8 film festival. There's no substitute for a bit of practice, whether you're a first-timer or coming back to the medium after a break. I totally recommend buying some test stock and getting some practice in before getting started on your single cartridge, edited-in-camera masterpiece.

Working on Super 8 is great fun and filming silent gives the director the chance to direct (loudly) during each shot. Get started now!

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For further advice contact Keith Smith, festival director - email [super8guru@gmail.com](mailto:super8guru@gmail.com)

## Competition Advice

1. **Theme:** “An Apple a Day...” – this theme sounds simple but we encourage you to be as creative as possible in your approach. One approach could be to think of an apple as a catalyst for some action – this can give your film momentum. Think about what other filmmakers might do and try something different - make your idea stand out!
2. **Editing in Camera:** This means you must shoot the film sequentially, one shot after the other. If you’re cross-cutting between locations, this could mean lots of travel! Planning is a good idea and so is a shot list which can be ticked off as you go. Don’t worry if you mess up a shot, keep going. It’s pretty likely that everyone is going to make a mistake somewhere along the line. Take note that unlike digital video, there’s no start-up time for a Super 8 camera. When the trigger is pressed, you’re filming immediately!
3. **Film 5 seconds of black at the beginning:** Blank off the lens with the lens cap or a piece of cardboard. Run 5 seconds of film (count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) before beginning the production. This is to make sure that the first images of your film come out for sure – the lab needs some front-end to work with. This will leave you with 3.5 minutes of useable footage – keep an eye on the camera footage counter as their accuracy varies – it’s normally touch and go after 47 feet.
4. **Use a Trusted Camera:** Make sure your camera is working properly. Do a test roll beforehand if in any doubt. An ‘unknown’ camera can mean a lot of work for nothing! Loan cameras are available for Perth filmmakers. Contact us for more details.
5. **Setting f-stops:** Use the guide supplied to set apertures (f-stops) manually for Tri-X black and white film. Never set the f-stop needle in the viewfinder to a point which is right off the scale (red zone at either end) – this might close the aperture completely so that you only get black! The automatic exposure setting can usually be trusted for colour film.
6. **Focus:** Don’t forget to set the eyepiece to your individual eyesight or the whole film could be out of focus. Filming on a wide angle but getting close to your subject gives the best depth of field i.e. range of focus.
7. **Lens:** Keep it clean and avoid scratching it!
8. **Filming for visual interest:** Be daring in your composition, camera movements and camera angles – give the audience a visual smorgasbord!
9. **Titles and credits:** Filming the computer screen is a bit chancy – you tend to get a lot of flicker. Be innovative – there are many ways to film titles.
10. **Safety:** Maintain safe shooting practices at all times. It’s easy to lose sight of what you’re doing when your eye is glued to the camera eyepiece.
11. **Film in sunlight:** Less important for black and white films, but sunshine really brings the colours up on Ektachrome film. Reap the benefits of a bright day.
12. **Don’t remove the film until you’re sure the cartridge is finished:** You will lose part of the film. When finished, the word “exposed” appears in the cartridge gate (white letters).
13. **Fun:** Don’t forget to enjoy yourselves. Revel-8 is about participation and exploration. Do some planning, take a moment to check the camera before each shot and it will all happen for you.

## Getting the Camera Ready

### 1. Load Batteries

Super 8 cameras usually use between 4 and 6 AA size mini-torch batteries. Be careful to load them the right way up (or down) - there is often a diagram inside the battery compartment or on the camera casing or grip.

### 2. Check Battery Condition

All Super 8 cameras are fitted with some kind of battery tester - either a warning light or a meter with a needle. Switch the camera on and check battery charge. A red zone means trouble on a meter with a needle, but paradoxically on cameras with test lights, both green and red lights can mean batteries are OK. Standard batteries should last for about 5 films - but check regularly for safety.

### 3. Set Eyepiece

*This is a critical adjustment for Super 8 cameras - otherwise your film will be out of focus!* Set the eyepiece by zooming in on a distant object using electric or manual zoom - *note that some cameras are electric zoom only and trying to move the zoom ring manually will cause damage!* Set focus to infinity on the lens barrel scale (maximum distance - the 'lazy 8'). Now adjust sharpness of viewfinder image by screwing the eyepiece in or out.

### 3. Set Shooting Speed at 18fps

Shooting speed is expressed in frames per second (fps). Set this to 18fps unless you are attempting special effects such as slow or fast motion. Films will be projected at 18fps.

### 4. Test Motor

We have already tested the electric zoom. Now press the trigger and listen to the motor run. It should be running quietly and evenly.

### 5. Load Film

Film cartridges are loaded in one of two ways - either angled in through a side door or slid in from the rear. Make sure the film door is firmly closed after loading.

### 6. Set Internal Filter

All Super 8 cameras are fitted with internal orange filters which compensate colour balance when using a 'tungsten' film in daylight. Follow the advice in the table below depending on the film you are using:

Film	Camera with sun/light bulb switch	Camera with filter key/screw
Tri-X B&W	No action required	No action required
Ektachrome 64T	Sun setting = outdoors Light bulb setting = artificial light	Insert filter key/screw to cancel orange filter under artificial lights
Ektachrome 100D	<b>Use 'light bulb' setting only!</b> Use 80A filter under artificial lights	No action required

## Shooting on Location

### 1. Check Lighting Conditions Using Auto-Exposure

Before doing a take, check light levels with the camera set to auto exposure. On most models, this means pressing the trigger lightly (not all the way!) and a needle inside the viewfinder will tell you what aperture (known as the "f"-stop) the camera wants to use. Generally, best results in image sharpness and colour saturation occur when the camera registers between f4 and f16. Note that the exposure meter cannot always be relied on in the case of black and white Tri-X film - see later in the guide.

### 2. Set F-Stop Using Manual Setting

Shooting on auto-exposure on a Super 8 camera is usually OK but be aware that meters are very sensitive to any change in light conditions. During pans, or when subjects pass close to the camera there could be a panic-change on the part of the camera which will cause the shot to fluctuate from light to dark. Alternatively, once you've seen what the camera wants as an f-stop on auto exposure, you can lock this manually by changing the exposure control to manual and adjusting until the needle rests on the right stop (or between the right stops). Don't forget to check for each new shot!

### 3. Use Lens Hood in Bright Sunlight

Especially important when you are forced to shoot against the sun. Avoids "light flares".

### 4. Keep Eye on Eyepiece

It is possible for light to leak back through the eyepiece onto the film when the camera is running. Keep your eye up to it at all times or blank it off if you are planning to make the shot without looking through the camera. Some cameras have a switch to perform this function. **NEVER LOOK AT THE SUN THROUGH THE EYEPIECE!**

### 5. Beware Of Mixed Lighting Or Low Light Conditions.

Unlike digital camcorders, film cameras do not perform well in extreme low-light conditions (although high-speed films like Tri-X and 100D assist this). They also cannot white balance for a variety of light conditions. Colour films work best in bright daylight or under full-strength artificial/studio lights. Reducing studio light intensity will cause colours to lose their correct hue and go "off". Having said this, with careful exposure it is possible to get great outdoor dawn and dusk shots - when the light has a special quality of warmth rather than being "flat".

### 6. Filters

It's a good idea to fit a clear filter to the front of your camera for lens protection. Filmmakers generally prefer UV (ultra violet) or Skylight filters. Colour and special effects filters are available - but experiment with them before committing important scenes to film.

## Camera Advice

### Using Kodak's Ektachrome 100D Colour Film

Kodak's latest colour film and some say even superior to the legendary (now deleted) Kodachrome. Ektachrome 100D is a brilliant film for shooting in daylight, see what Richard Tuohy at Australia's Nanolab has to say about it: [http://www.nanolab.com.au/which\\_stock.htm](http://www.nanolab.com.au/which_stock.htm)

As a 'fast' film however, it may be necessary to use a neutral density filter (I recommend ND2) in bright sunlight to bring the film into a safe operating range so that the camera will not overexpose it. There is a similar issue in using the Tri-X black and white film – see below.

This colour film is also balanced for daylight use – unusual in colour film stocks which are normally 'tungsten' balanced for use under artificial lights. You need to keep your wits about you when checking that the camera is set up correctly for either daylight or artificial light - see table at the base of page 3 for advice.

I would avoid using this stock for shooting indoors under artificial lights – with the required 80A blue filter in place, too much light is lost for effective shooting – although an alternative is to place blue gels on studio or location lights.

### Using Kodak's 7266 TRI-X black and white Super 8 film

This 'fast' film was originally designed for night sports in low light conditions. The grainy look of this film, together with its high contrast and sharp image, has made Tri-X a popular choice for Super 8 filmmakers in a variety of lighting conditions. Neutral density (ND) filters are usually fitted during bright daylight shooting. The reason for this is to cut down the amount of light entering the lens to allow the camera to use the normal f-stop range.



## Camera Advice

### Using Kodak's 7266 TRI-X black and white Super 8 film

A problem with using Tri-X is that the inbuilt meters in some Super 8 cameras are unable to deal with this film. A guide to manual daylight exposures follows - you can use this for shooting or as a rough check of your camera meter's accuracy:

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#### Guide to Setting Aperture in Daylight at 18fps

(Effective film speed 200ASA)

			<i>With ND4 Filter</i>	<i>Slow Motion (No filter)</i>
<b>Bright Sun</b>	<b>(Against sand or snow)</b>	<b>f45</b>	<b>f22</b>	<b>f32</b>
<b>Bright/Hazy Sun</b>	<b>(Distinct Shadows)</b>	<b>f22-32</b>	<b>f11-16</b>	<b>f16-22</b>
<b>Cloudy Bright</b>	<b>(No Shadows)</b>	<b>f22</b>	<b>f11</b>	<b>f16</b>
<b>Cloudy Dull</b>	<b>(or Subject in Shade)</b>	<b>f16</b>	<b>f8</b>	<b>f11</b>
<b>Heavy Overcast</b>	<b>(Low light)</b>	<b>f8 -11</b>	<b>f4 – 5.6</b>	<b>f5.6-8</b>

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#### At Night/Indoors under Artificial Lighting at 18fps

(Effective film speed 160ASA – no filter)

			<i>Slow Motion</i>
<b>Bright 3 point lighting</b>	<b>(Pro lighting kit)</b>	<b>f8</b>	<b>f5.6</b>
<b>Lighted signs</b>	<b>(Neon signs etc.)</b>	<b>f5.6</b>	<b>f4</b>
<b>Skylines</b>	<b>(10min after sunset)</b>	<b>f5.6</b>	<b>f4</b>
<b>Stage shows</b>	<b>(Under spotlights)</b>	<b>f4</b>	<b>f2.8</b>
<b>City streets/shop windows</b>	<b>(brightly lit)</b>	<b>f2.8-4</b>	<b>f2.8</b>

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## Where to get what you need

### Finding Cameras

Try garage sales, op-shops, swap meets, trash & treasure stalls. Check out the *Quokka* and *Sunday Times* classifieds. Ask relatives if they've got stuff hidden away or place a free wanted ad in the *Quokka*. Be wary of eBay – the best policy is to carry some batteries and try the camera out on the spot before buying.

### What should I pay?

This is a hard one. Prices are all about demand - how much do you really want that piece of equipment and will it come up again at a better price? \$20 - \$150 should cover it except for name brands like Beaulieu.

### What Brand should I buy?

This is an impossible question. There are untold numbers of brands and models of Super 8 equipment - most manufacturers have managed to get something right along the line. But here are some of my favourite cameras: *Canon 518SV, Canon 814 & 1014 Auto Zoom Electronic, Sankyo XL-40S and XL-60S*

### What Films are available?

Kodak Entertainment Imaging supplies two types of films which must be bought in *minimum lots of 5 cartridges*:

Colour: Ektachrome 100D (100 ASA daylight) – processing extra  
Black & White: Eastman Tri X Reversal (200 ASA daylight) - processing extra

Call 1300 139 795 and purchase your film direct – freighted to you free. Students receive a 40% discount – ask for details when you call. Register for the discount online at:

[http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Education/Discounts/Kodak\\_Educational\\_Allowance\\_Program/index.htm](http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Education/Discounts/Kodak_Educational_Allowance_Program/index.htm)

**Single cartridges are available by mail order from <http://nanolab.com.au/> and <http://www.vanbar.com.au>**

### Laboratory Processing

Australia - *Nanolab* <http://nanolab.com.au/> \$AUD 35.00 per cartridge

USA – Dwayne's Photo [www.dwaynesphoto.com](http://www.dwaynesphoto.com) \$USD 12.00 per roll (colour only)

Other labs – [http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Support/Laboratories\\_Directory/index.htm](http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Support/Laboratories_Directory/index.htm)

## Useful Resources

### **The Books:**

- Cheshire, D. (1980). *The Book of Movie Photography*. Melbourne: Nelson.
- Home Movies Made Easy*. (1970). New York: Kodak Publications.
- Lipton, L. (1975). *The Super 8 Book*. San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books.
- Lipton, L. (1976). *Independent Filmmaking*. London: Studio Vista.
- Malkiewicz, K. (1989). *Cinematography* (2nd Ed.). London: Columbus.
- Pincus, E. & Ascher, S. (1999). *The Filmmaker's Handbook*. New York: Plume.
- Samuelson, D. (1979). *Motion Picture Camera Data*. London: Focal Press.

### **The Magazines**

*Super 8 Today*: [www.super8today.net](http://www.super8today.net)

### **The Sites:**

- Filmshooting.com: <http://www.filmshooting.com/>
- Super 8 Forum: <http://www.cinematography.com>
- Super 8 Wiki: <http://www.super8wiki.com>
- Super 8 camera manuals: <http://www.apecity.com/manuals/>
- Professional Super 8 stocks & lab work: <http://pro8mm.com/>
- Cambridge Super 8 Film Festival: <http://www.cambridge-super8.org>
- Kodak Super 8 site: [http://motion.kodak.com/US/en/motion/Products/Production/Spotlight\\_on\\_Super\\_8/](http://motion.kodak.com/US/en/motion/Products/Production/Spotlight_on_Super_8/)