Playing Films, Television and Radio in Schools

Playing films, television and radio for educational purposes

Schools can play films, television and radio in the classroom (or another teaching venue) as part of a course of instruction under s 28 of the Copyright Act. This includes playing a film to students via distance education software or a reticulation system, ie playing the film from a central point into a number of classrooms.

Also, under the Part VA Statutory Broadcast Licence, teachers can copy off-air television programs and podcasts of previously broadcast free-to-air programs available on the broadcaster’s website to play to students as part of a course of instruction.


Playing films for non-educational purposes

There is no exception or licence in the Copyright Act which allows a school to play a film to its students for non-educational purposes, such as on bus excursions, during camps and for rainy day activities at lunchtime.

The Australian school sector has negotiated a voluntary blanket licence, called the Co-Curricular Licence, with Roadshow Public Performance Licensing (‘Roadshow’) for the playing of films by schools for non-educational purposes. This includes:

- At school for entertainment purposes (e.g. at lunchtime on a rainy day)
- On bus excursions, where the school provides the DVD (not the bus company)
- At school camps and excursions, including outdoor screenings at camp, where the school provides the DVD (not the camp)
- At after-school care and holiday programs conducted at and by the school

Not all schools in Australia are covered by the Co-Curricular Licence. Schools that are not covered by this Licence must seek permission from the non-theatrical distributor of the film to play the film for non-educational purposes.

To find out whether your school is covered by the Co-Curricular Licence, contact your local copyright advisor.

For further information on the Co-Curricular Licence, see information sheet “Playing Films for Non-Educational Purposes”.

Boarding Schools
Screening of a film, for example, on a DVD in a boarding school by students for their own private purposes is permitted. However, to ensure that the purpose of the screening is for private purposes the DVD should be obtained (from legitimate sources) in the name of the student rather than the school.

**Always Obtain DVD’s from Reputable Sources**

It is essential that films played in schools are obtained from legitimate sources. Film DVDs, for example, may be purchased or hired from non theatrical film distributors, licensed lending libraries or educational sources for screening on school premises. See Film Sources (below).

Playing pirated DVDs puts you, your school, your principal and your educational body at risk of serious civil penalties which include payment of compensation to the copyright owner as well as criminal penalties. For this reason schools should not accept donations or loans of DVDs or videos from students or parents. We recommend that schools source their own films to ensure that they are not pirated copies.

For further information see information sheet, 'Screening Pirated DVDs in Schools'.