

## Demo Reels

A demo reel is a short video that shows potential employers or collaborators the best examples of your work. Employers or collaborators could include agents, casting directors, producers, editors, directors, clients, and other entertainment industry professionals. Since there are numerous professions that use a demo reel, there are some key similarities and differences to follow. In general, even though your resume is still important, the demo reel can offer work samples that can make a bigger difference to a potential employer.

### Professions That Use a Demo Reel:

- Acting
- Cinematography
- Editing
- Colorist
- Directing
- Producing
- Art Direction
- Sound Design
- Music Composition
- Animation
- Visual Effects
- Motion Graphics

### General Advice:

- Keep demo reels short: 90-120 seconds
- Begin and end with a slate that includes your name and contact information. Use a clear, easy to read font.
- Tailor the reel to the position you represent, not multiple positions.
- Use your strongest material in the first 20 seconds.
- All material should be relevant to the potential client.
- The reel should move along quickly with clip length ranging from 5 to 15 seconds.
- Demonstrate your versatility in the kinds of projects for which you can show proficiency, particularly in tone and content.
- Demonstrate visual mastery through a variety of shots: wide, medium, and close-up, as well as depth (foreground, middle-ground, background), still shots and tracking/handheld shots.
- Use the element of surprise as either a transition or unexpected content somewhere in the middle to reignite attention and excitement.
- Consider how the work you're showcasing impacts the viewer's emotions and use that to sharpen your focus on creating an emotional pull.
- Draw inspiration from reels you admire by noting the pacing, tone, and genre, but remain authentic to your own artistic voice.
- Demonstrate polished technical ability for professional visual and sound presentation.
- Aspect ratios should be a native 16:9 or framed within a 16:9 format.
- Do not use copyrighted music unless you've already purchased the rights.
- All demo reels should be available online for quality viewing through links, such as Vimeo or YouTube with no password, and not emailed due to high volume and format issues.
- Get feedback from industry professionals on what to improve before sending it out.

### Tips for Specific Types of Reels

#### Actors

- Your goal is to showcase your raw talent and create an emotional response to convince the viewer to cast you.
- Concentrate on 2-4 scenes of various lengths and mediums that showcase your range and dialogue.
- Use contrasting scenes to showcase mediums: comedy vs. drama, TV vs. Film, silent action vs. dialogue.
- Each scene should play in its original version but may need to be recut for brevity for the sake of the reel.
- Sound should only belong to each scene -- no background music for the sake of the reel.

## Directors

- Showcase 2 - 4 scenes that show directorial range with both action and dialogue.
- Contrast scenes with your best available work from a variety of genres.
- Emphasize visual styles with a variety of shots (wide, medium and close-ups) that represent your approach to storytelling.
- A mix of narrative, commercial, and musical or artistic projects can work depending on the potential client.

## Editors

- Reflect the genre you're working in.
- Use 10 - 20 seconds clips of narrative or doc work - OR - Create an extended video displaying a variety of cutting styles used in many creative projects
- For commercial work: show a variety of VFX, color, text, motion graphics, and other designs that show off technical skills
- Cutting should be rapidly timed within 1 - 3 seconds
- Frames of logos, celebrities, or popular locations should be exploited.

## Animators

- Use a diversity of different styles/looks of animation.
- Sometimes you are noticed because you have something on your reel that aligns with what the company produces.
- You can have multiple reels that foreground various talents. One reel can focus on motion graphics for corporations, one on character animation for narrative sources.
- Consider using no music or sound in order to emphasize the image (such as Pixar)

## Cinematographer/Director of Photography

- Show off a variety of looks that target desired employers.
- Locations and times should include outdoor and indoor, day and night.
- Perspectives should include aerial, time lapse, and slow motion.
- Special equipment highlights should include cranes, jibs, sliders, dollies or steadicam.
- Lenses should highlight your ability for wide, medium and close up shots.
- Composition abilities should include balance, contrast, rules of thirds, and dynamics.
- Sound should use a chosen music selection and not the original sound from its source.

## Documentary

- Show 2 - 4 scenes of your best work that are unrelated to each other.
- Scenes should highlight the ability for professional cinematography from multiple angles and a clean mix of sound
- Interviews with complementary B-roll should be shown in order to capture visual highlights of doc storytelling.
- Scenes may need to be re-edited for speed and highlights
- Content should be relevant for film, TV, or news media
- Location highlights and personal details will help emphasize human drama.

## Sound Design

- Showcase 3-5 examples that demonstrate a range of sound design work, whether for film, interactive media, installations, or standalone audio pieces.
- Highlight the ability to create immersive soundscapes, whether or not tied to a visual element.
- Include a mix of dynamic sound layering, creative use of sound effects, and spatial audio techniques to show versatility.
- For projects without visuals, focus on how sound alone can convey atmosphere, emotion, and narrative.
- Re-edit sound elements for clarity and feature moments that emphasize precision in technique.
- If applicable, demonstrate how sound interacts with visual media, but don't shy away from standalone audio projects.
- Show work relevant to industries like gaming, live performance, installations, or experimental sound design.