

# HOW TO GET FOOTAGE BACK FROM DIRECTORS MUCH SOONER



**CITY HEADSHOTS**  
IT'S ALL ABOUT EXPRESSION

**MARTIN BENTSEN**

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## INTRODUCTION

It's inevitable that you're going to need to ask a director for footage at some point in your career, unless you stay in theater.

Many independent film directors and producers get caught up in post-production for years, and most actors feel uncomfortable asking to get their footage over and over again because they don't want to annoy the director.

Well, the truth of the matter is that as an actor, it's purely on you to get your footage, and you need to begin hounding the director for it.

If you're worried that a director will get annoyed with you and won't ever want to work with you again, that's fine!

Why? Because a director who stays stuck in post-production for years and doesn't want to give his actors their footage is someone you DON'T want to work with again anyway.

## GENERAL STRATEGY

The general strategy here is that you'll be using a system called [FollowUpThen.com](https://followupthen.com) to remember to follow up to your emails.

You're going to start off by sending a very friendly email to the film producer or director asking them to send you your footage.

If they direct you to someone else on the project, that's fine, and just send them the same email!

Then, if they don't respond, you'll keep emailing them a few more times, and then eventually you'll call them.

The point is, you are well within your rights to request your footage, especially because section 22 of this submissions guide by *Sundance* proves that festivals do NOT make films ineligible if they give out footage for the purposes of reels!

[http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018\\_Submissions\\_FAQ.pdf](http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018_Submissions_FAQ.pdf)

Here is the text from that section:

*22) Can I post trailers, clips, and/or scenes of my project online?*

*Yes. Posting minimal footage or scenes from your project does not affect its eligibility for any submission category. It is also acceptable for cast and crew to use scenes from your project for the purposes of a public or private exhibition reel.*

## EMAIL 1

Start off by sending this friendly email to the director first. You don't want to be nasty because then they'll never give you your footage!

Make sure to BCC [1week@followupthen.com](mailto:1week@followupthen.com) so you remind yourself to follow up with them in one week.

To: [name@email.com](mailto:name@email.com)

CC:

BCC: [1week@followupthen.com](mailto:1week@followupthen.com)

Subject: Quick question for you

Body:

Hi NAME,

*It was great having the opportunity to work with you on PROJECT NAME a few (WEEKS/MONTHS/YEARS) ago, and I just wanted to follow up.*

*I know you're probably wanting to keep the footage private until the film releases, and that's completely understandable, but I was just wondering if it's at all possible to get about 20-30 seconds of footage of myself from X scene.*

*I don't mind at all if the footage isn't perfect (I don't even care if you just film the computer screen with your phone) - I just need about 30 seconds or so because it will really help me out for an upcoming opportunity.*

*Please let me know as soon as you can, thanks so much!*

*Your Email Signature*

Now, if they respond to this email saying no, be sure to ask them why.

If they tell you it's because they can't release any footage until the film is in festivals, tell them that generally, footage posted online for the purposes of demo reels is not a problem. Let them know you're just going to be using the clip for your reel.

If they still say no, it's time to send them an email like this to let them see with their own eyes that it's not a problem. That should shut down their argument immediately and they'll send you the footage. Again, make sure to stay super friendly the whole time!

*Hi NAME,*

*Thanks so much for getting back to me! I completely understand your perspective.*

*I was doing some research online however, and found that it's actually not a problem for directors to send footage to actors for use in their reel.*

*Check out this link from Sundance Film Festival, in section 22:*

*[http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018\\_Submissions\\_FAQ.pdf](http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018_Submissions_FAQ.pdf)*

*22) Can I post trailers, clips, and/or scenes of my project online?*

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*Please let me know. I really appreciate your help with this!*

*Your Email Signature*

## EMAIL 2

If they never respond from your first email, one week later, you'll send out this second email:

To: [name@email.com](mailto:name@email.com)

CC:

BCC: [4days@followupthen.com](mailto:4days@followupthen.com)

Subject: *Re: Quick question for you*

*Hi NAME,*

*I hope you're well.*

*I just wanted to follow up on my last email to see if it's possible to get 20-30 seconds of footage of myself from scene X.*

*Even if you need to just film the computer screen with your phone or something, it's fine - I just really need the footage for an opportunity I have.*

*Would really appreciate your help. Thanks so much and I hope you're doing well*

*Email Signature*

## EMAIL 3

Four days later, if they STILL haven't responded, it's time to try one more email before getting out the big guns and calling them.

To: [name@email.com](mailto:name@email.com)

CC:

BCC: [4days@followupthen.com](mailto:4days@followupthen.com)

Subject: *Re: Quick question for you*

*Hi NAME,*

*Just wanted to follow up again on this - I haven't heard back and want to be sure my email didn't accidentally wind up in a spam folder.*

*Thanks so much!*

*Your Email Signature*



## CALL THEM

If they have still not responded to any of your emails, you are completely within your rights to call them to ask for the footage.

When you call, be sure to state that you were unsure if they had received your emails, and that you just wanted to follow up to see if you could get the footage from the film.

Try to keep the conversation friendly, and if they say no, again feel free to mention that you're not planning to use anything more than the 30 seconds in your reel, and you can email them the link, again referencing Section 22:

[http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018\\_Submissions\\_FAQ.pdf](http://dotorg-prd-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/submissions/2018_Submissions_FAQ.pdf)

As long as you're easy-going and relaxed and keep the conversation friendly, chances are they will give in and offer to send you the footage.

## IN SUMMARY

Nothing is perfect and completely failsafe, but this 4-step process should significantly increase your chances of getting back your footage so you can use it in your reel sooner.

Make sure to stay as friendly and nice as possible (read *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie) if you want to increase your chances of getting a YES.

And remember - even if they refuse, there is nothing you can do. You can't SUE them for your footage unless you signed a contract stating that they would send you the footage within a certain time frame.

If they do flat out refuse, just move on to the next director and make sure to never make the mistake of working with that person again.

If you are ever looking to shoot a high-end scene for your reel (and get the footage back within a week), check us out at [www.actorscreenershoot.com](http://www.actorscreenershoot.com).

We wish you the best of luck and hope to one day  
work with you!

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