# Film Genres Explained

Know what each genre promises, so you can watch, rate and review with confidence.

A genre is a promise to the audience. Knowing the promise helps you judge whether a film delivers on it, which makes your ratings fairer and your reviews sharper.

| Genre | The promise | Look for | Classic example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Action | Thrills through physical conflict and spectacle | Clear choreography, rising stakes, a hero under pressure | Mad Max: Fury Road |
| Comedy | Laughter | Timing, character-driven jokes, a likeable lead | The Grand Budapest Hotel |
| Drama | Emotional truth about people | Performances, conflict, change in the characters | Moonlight |
| Horror | Fear and dread | Atmosphere, sound design, rules the monster follows | Get Out |
| Thriller | Suspense and tension | Ticking clocks, twists that are fair, high stakes | Parasite |
| Science fiction | Wonder and big ideas | A believable world, ideas that drive the plot | Arrival |
| Fantasy | Escape into magic | Consistent magic rules, world-building, myth | Pan's Labyrinth |
| Romance | Falling in love | Chemistry, obstacles, a satisfying emotional payoff | Past Lives |
| Animation | A medium, not a genre | Design, movement, voice work; any genre is possible | Spirited Away |
| Documentary | Real life, told truthfully | Access, fairness, a clear point of view | Softie |
| Musical | Story through song | Songs that move the plot forward | La La Land |
| Western | Frontier justice | Landscape, moral codes, showdowns | Django Unchained |
| Crime | The world of law-breakers | Moral complexity, realistic detail | Nairobi Half Life |

## Sub-genres and blends

Most modern films mix genres: horror-comedy, sci-fi thriller, romantic drama. When reviewing a blend, ask which genre leads. A horror-comedy that is very funny but never scary may still succeed if comedy was the main goal.

## Tone words to use in reviews

- **Light:** breezy, charming, feel-good, whimsical.
- **Dark:** bleak, unsettling, gritty, haunting.
- **Fast:** propulsive, relentless, tightly paced.
- **Slow:** contemplative, patient, slow-burn.