

Create a Family Movie Guide

Everybody loves the glamour and excitement of Hollywood movie award nights. But with a fourth-grade writer in the house, there's no need to wait until the next Oscars. In fact, if you're like lots of families, you'll see many films throughout the year, especially during the summer and on school holidays.

And, because not everyone in your family circle may be as aware of the latest blockbusters as your movie-going child, why not put their special knowledge and cinematic opinions to good use? By creating a Family Movie Guide, you can help them develop evaluative writing skills, which happen to be a key part of fourth-grade learning, and also keep track of some of their favorite (and not-so-favorite) movies.

In a few easy steps, you and your child can create a handy reference tool that everyone from grandparents to family and friends can consult. Not only will it be a cherished piece of memorabilia, but it will also help your children polish their writing skills.

What You Need:

- Paper and pens (or download our [Young Movie Lover's Guide Pages here](#))
- At least one movie (see it at a theater or watch one from home)
- An opinionated fourth grader
- Optional: a sample of a professional movie review from a newspaper or magazine

What You Do:

1. Before watching your first movie for this project, take a minute and discuss the concept of a “review” with your fourth grader. Reviewers provide “advanced notice” to readers about what to expect in a movie. A reviewer may love a movie—and help us love it too—or the reverse can happen. Bad reviews can be as amusing (and useful) as good ones. Read a sample review together to see how it’s written and what’s included.
2. Show your fourth grader the questions on the “Young Movie Lover’s Guide” page and set some expectations: it isn’t okay just to say “I hated that movie” or “I liked that movie.” Instead, your child should focus on how and why the movie disappointed her, or why it didn’t.
3. Watch a movie your child wants to see.
4. After the movie, have your child sit down and fill out the Movie Guide. In five lines or less, have her describe what happened in the movie. Who were the main characters? Have her come up with one to three words to describe each character. Then have your child describe, in a few lines or less, what they liked about the movie and why.
5. Now the really fun part: Choose nominees for the Academy Awards and give awards to Best Actors and Actresses. You can come up with other categories for your nominees as well, like Best Villain or Best Song or Best Movie. What movies are destined to make it to your family’s Academy Awards?
6. Repeat this process for several movies and assemble them into a booklet. It can be given as a gift for a relative, but be sure to keep a copy for yourself. When the “real” Academy Awards roll around, you and your child can compare your guide to the opinions of some of Hollywood’s biggest critics.

