Create wiggle room. Finding the films that you like and that fit you takes a little time. Give yourself a little room to wiggle into non-mainstream films. Don’t get turned off by a film you don’t like or don’t get. You’ll find goldmines, not landmines, if you spend a little time looking.

Start with an appetizer. If you don’t watch many independent and foreign films, start with a mainstream film that deals with subcultures to ease your way into the indie/foreign world. A few good starters:

- My Big Fat Greek Wedding: Details the life and wedding preparations of a Greek woman living in the suburbs of Chicago. (Comedy)
- Whalerider: A touching story of a Maori tribe’s struggle to hold on to traditions and redefine themselves in modern society. (Drama/Comedy)
- Tortilla Soup: A Mexican single-father in California runs his own restaurant and tries to run the lives of his three daughters. (Drama/Comedy)
- Run, Lola, Run: A German movie about a girl named Lola who must save her boyfriend from possible death. (Suspense)
- Abre Los Ojos: The Spanish film starring Penelope Cruz that Vanilla Sky was based on. (Action/Suspense)
- Spirited Away: Japanese animation which received accolades around the world. It tells the story of a young girl who gets separated from her parents in a world of ghosts. (Animation)

Choose movies that fit the world around you. Pick a flick that is linked to your life in some way. You will connect more with the film and take more away from it. A great way to do this is to learn about other cultures as they take center stage in world issues. If you recently watched a news report on Cuba, you can rent The Buena Vista Social Club to learn some of the struggles in the country in a roundabout way.

Choose movies that match your interests. Whether it’s a trip to Thailand, a new Brazilian neighbor, or a new resolution to refresh the French you learned in high school, there’s a movie to match that can entertain you and prepare you for future interactions and adventures. Like to cook? Rent Como Agua Para Chocolate or Tortilla Soup. Like soccer (football)? Rent Bend It Like Beckham or The Iron Ladies.

Make a night of it. Have fun with these movies. Invite over your most interesting friends, pull out the snacks, and have a movie night. Take advantage of the fact that there are other people around to start talking about these movies.

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