

# Film Techniques - glossary and effects

## Camera shots

A shot is taken from when the camera is turned on, to when it is turned off. It could be one frame or a sequence of frames. Shots are defined by - distance from object, direction of object, how much of the object is in the frame.

### 1. Subjective/Point of view shot

These place you in the position of the person actually involved in the scene. The camera becomes the eye of one of the characters and sees things from his/her point of view. They are sometimes accompanied by voice over sound to create the illusion of involvement in the scene.

### 2. Establishing shot/Opening shot

Has lots of landscape and gives us important information about the setting, atmosphere or context in which the following events will take place.

### 3. Mid Shot [M.S.]

A middle distance shot which focuses our attention on a particular subject. With a mid shot the camera is close enough to pick up detail, though still far enough away to be able to follow the subject as he/she/it moves. The mid shot, therefore, is commonly used to show action eg. as in a fight or match scene.

### 4. Two person Mid Shot, 2MS

Similar to a mid-shot but shows two people from waist up. Also usually used for conversations.

### 5. Close-up

Focus on whole objects or a characters head - no background information given. Gives details and focuses attention on what is significant at that given moment. Can convey emotion or reveal private information. This shot is also used to add tension and excitement.

- 1 A close shot of an object or person, the aim being to focus our attention on a particular detail. Close ups of objects may serve as the in point to a new scene, depicting a new fact or location in the story. Close ups of a person have a number of different functions:
- 2 in an establishing sequence a close up of someone suggests that he/she is a main character

- 3 the first close up of a character (in a sequence of shots), establishes point of view eg. who is watching an event
- 4 a close up is most commonly used to show the reaction of a character, ie. a reaction shot.

6. Extreme close-up

Can only see part of a persons face, headline of a newspaper, symbols eg. Police I.D.

7. Full shot

Has the whole height of any figure in the frame.

8. Long Shot [L.S.]

A distance shot in which a setting, and not a character, is the emphasis. This is generally used to establish the place in which action will occur, hence the term establishing shot. Given its function, a long shot is often used at the beginning of a scene or sequence, and may be combined with a panning movement of the camera to show us a wider area.

9. Over the shoulder shot

Shot filmed from behind a character, over the shoulder, mostly used for conversations or interviews.

## **Camera Angles**

- 1 In filming a shot a decision is made about the angle at which the camera is to be directed at a subject.
- 2 High and Low angles may be used to influence our impression of a particular character.
- 3 A character filmed from a low angle will seem strong, powerful, tall, proud, etc...
- 4 if a high angle is used the subject will appear weak, insignificant, vulnerable, small etc... Our impression of a structure or object can be manipulated in a similar way.
- 5 A distorted angle may be used to make a scene more frightening, or to make the viewer feel anxious, or queasy (especially if fast or jerky camera movement is also used ).

10. Low angle

Camera is below and looks up. Can make subject look large, powerful, intimidating or dominating.

11. High angle

Camera is above looking down at the figure. Makes the character look small, insignificant, helpless, vulnerable.

12. Under shot

Camera is directly under the figure- can suggest extreme power or danger.

13. Overhead shot

Camera is directly above the figure.

14. Soft Focus

A slightly blurred shot to make the subject seem more attractive, romantic, nostalgic or dreamlike.

## **Camera Movement**

15. Zoom in

Shot moves closer in Camera movements

16. Zoom out

Shot moves further away

17. Pan Tilt

Camera stays on one place but moves horizontally from side to side. When the camera moves up and down to follow moving objects or to reveal a scene or object which is too big to fit the frame.

18. Track

Camera moves with the action or follows the subject. This is often used in a chase scene where the camera appears to be 'tracking' the object and the audience feels like they are alongside the action. The camera may run on a wheeled platform running along tracks or accompany the action from in front, beside, behind, above or below and may be mounted on cars, helicopters, cranes or hand carried or using a body harness with Steadicam to eliminate vibration and give a fluid movement.

## **Editing - Camera Transitions**

19. Cut

Instant change of shot without using an effect.

20. Gradual dissolve

One image slowly replacing another so that at the midpoint you can see both on the screen

21. Wipe

One shot is covered up or replaced by another shot moving horizontally across the screen.

22. Black out Fade

In a black out the character walks towards the camera, blocking out all the light. The next scene begins when the character walks away from the camera into a scene. Fade in is where the screen is black at the beginning then the image gradually appears or fade out which is the opposite.

23. Montage

The editing together of a large number of shots with no intention to create a continuous reality. A montage is often used to compress time (a number of facts are established in one sequence). Films may begin with a montage which establishes a particular time and place. With the absence of a visual relationship between them, the montage shots are linked through a unified sound - either a voiceover or a piece of music.

24. Pairing:

There are common instances of pairing:

- 1 A conversation or confrontation between two characters. The shots alternate from one to the other, angles may be used to suggest inferiority or superiority.
- 2 Shots of a character are alternated with shots of what he/she sees. The first shot of the character is the P.O.V. (It establishes point of view eg. who is looking).
- 3 Cross-cutting. A sequence of shots in which the alternation is between two different locations (eg . A burglar creeping into a house in which an unsuspecting victim lies sleeping). The sequence builds to a climax and ends with the two things coming together.

25. Editing Speed

The Editing Speed (or tempo) of a particular sequence is also an important consideration. Fast editing involves fast cutting. ie. The shots are 1 to 2 seconds long. Fast editing generates excitement and anticipation as for example in a chase sequence. Slow editing (ie. Shots are 3 to 10 seconds long), has the opposite effect, calming and relaxing the viewer. Accordingly slow editing is a characteristic of love scenes.