Five Conventional Aesthetic Factors of Picture Composition

Framing: Refers to the inclusion (and exclusion) of various pictorial elements within the video space and how these elements are shown to the viewer.

How to Frame a Shot

The basic purpose of framing a shot is to show images as clearly as possible and to present them so that they convey meaning and energy for maximum visual impact.

What you do essentially is clarify and intensify the event.

The more you know about picture composition the more effective your clarification and intensification of the event will be.

You should be aware of:

1. Field of View - (Camera Shots/Cutoff Lines).
2. Headroom.
3. Noseroom & Leadroom.
4. Close-up Framing.
5. Background.

Field of View

Means how wide or how close the object appears relative to the camera, that is, how close it will appear to the viewer.

It is basically organized into five steps; Extreme Long Shot (ELS), Long Shot (LS), Medium Shot (MS), Close-up (CU), and Extreme Close-up (ECU).

Is the balance between the principle subject and his/her surrounding background area.

Five Basic Camera Shot Designations

Extreme Wide/Long Shot (EWS/ELS):

A very wide field of view

Takes a great deal of background.

Size of subject(s) is small.

Often referred to as a "cover or establishing shot".

Wide/Long Shot (W/LS):

Slightly closer field of view than the ELS.

Subject remains dominated by the much lager background area.

Often referred to as a "full shot".

Medium Shot (MS):

Subject becomes much larger and more dominant.

Background still important but now shares the video space with the subject(s).

Referred to as a "waist shot".

Close-up (CU):

Most prevalent shot in television.

Subject's head & shoulders make up the CU.

Subject becomes the primary focus of interest within the shot.

Only a small portion of the background is visible.

Extreme Close-up (ECU):

Subject virtually fills the screen and is clearly the central focus of interest.

Natural Cutoff Lines

- A convenient way to organize framing and to refer to shots is by using natural cutoff lines.

- These are lines that occur at various points of the body and produce aesthetically pleasing shots.

- This can help eliminate confusion, because a "medium shot" may be framed differently by different people.

- But a "waist shot" specifically describes the desired shot.

- The most common cutoff shots are the full shot (FS), knee shot (KS), waist shot (WS), bust shot (BS), and the head shot (HS).
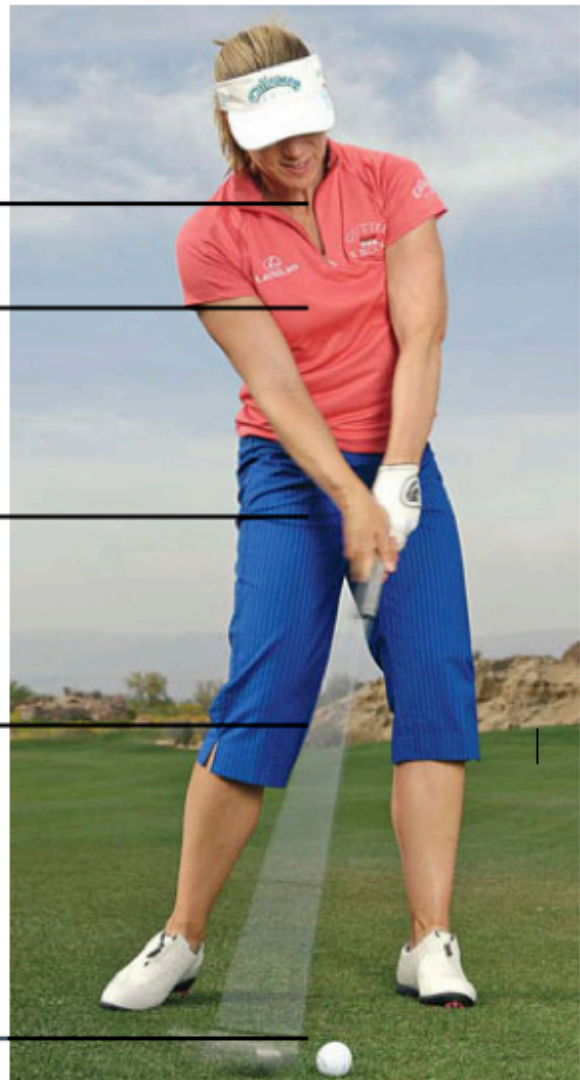
Head shot ————

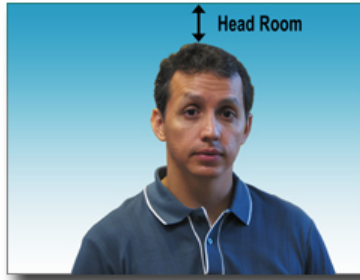**Bust shot** ————

Waist shot ————

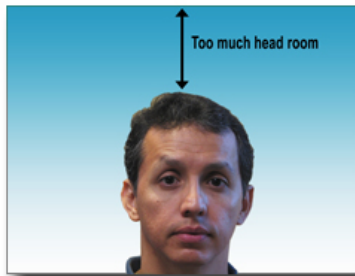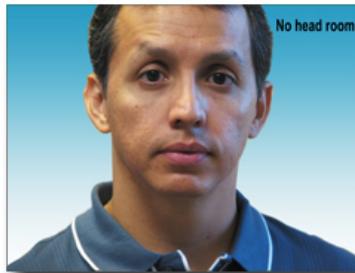**Knee shot** ————

Full shot ————

Head Room

Headroom is the space between the top of a subject's head and the top of the screen frame.

In the shot below, there is too much headroom. It gives a feeling that the subject is sinking, and it makes your subject look small.
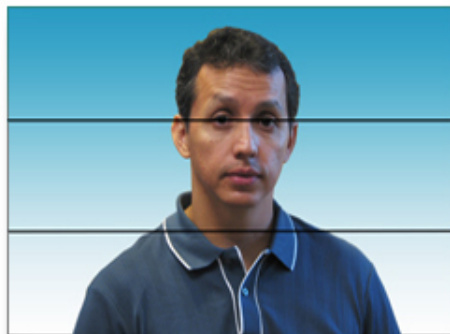

The shot below shows insufficient head room. The subject's head is cut off and is hitting the top of the screen frame.
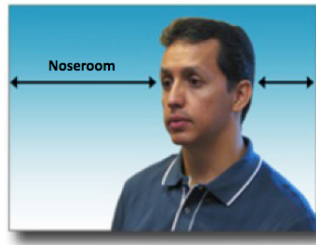

To determine proper headroom in a shot, you can apply the rule of thirds.

- Divide the screen into three equal sections.
- Place the subject's eye on or near the line of the upper third section.

Noseroom

Noseroom is the amount of space between the subject and the edge of the screen they are facing. You should have more room in front of the subject than behind.
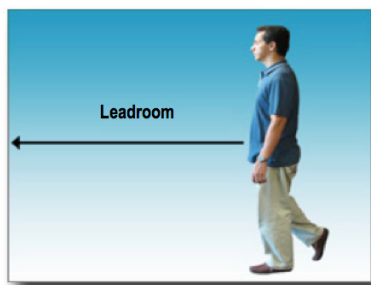

Below, there is too little room in front of the subject. The subject is placed too close to the frame's left edge. He looks odd and off-balance.

Leadroom

Leadroom is similar to noseroom, but it applies to moving objects. Moving objects need walking room or lead space to move into.

You should give more space in front of the subject in the direction the subject is moving. As the subject moves, you should pan the camera to maintain a constant amount of leadroom.

Below, there is not enough nose room or lead space in front of the subject. It looks like the subject is walking out of the screen frame.

Close-up Framing

Because close-ups (CUs) and extreme close-ups (ECUs) are common elements in the visual language, you need to pay special attention to their framing.

Normal Close-up Framing

The normal close-up shows the head of the person and part of the shoulders.

Extreme Close-up Framing

In an extreme close-up, you should cut the top of the head, while keeping the upper part of the shoulders in the shot.

Another way extreme close-ups are used is by focusing on a particular feature or detail of interest such as an actor's eyes, a hand, a doorknob turning, etc. These are great shots to use for added suspense or to basically draw your audience closer to a specific feature or to show extreme detail in a shot or scene. They may also be used to show specific reactions or emotion.

Distracting Backgrounds

When setting up your shots, pay very close attention to what's going on BEHIND your subject. A very busy background or poorly composed shot can ruin your filming. If necessary, remove or rearrange items in the background.
Keep the background simple and uncluttered to ensure audience attention is focused where it should be.

Clearly a little problem here. The cameraperson simply wasn't paying attention to what was going on behind the subject.

Poor shot composition - the tree in the background almost looks like it's growing out of the girl's head and it pulls attention away from the main subject.

With a small adjustment in camera position and shot composition, the tree no longer competes with the girl and now creates a nice frame for the shot. This is a far better shot.

Five Conventional Aesthetic Factors of Picture Composition – Questions

1. What are the five conventional aesthetic factors of picture composition?

2. What is the basic purpose of framing a shot?

3. What is field of view?

4. List and describe five basic camera shot designations?

5. What is one way to organize framing to produce aesthetically pleasing shots?

6. List five natural common cutoff shots?

7. What types of shots should you leave adequate space above a person's head?

8. What is noseroom and leadroom?

9. What is the difference between a normal close-up (CU) and an extreme close-up (ECU)?

10. When you have framed a shot to convey meaning and energy for maximum visual impact what is one thing you should pay very close attention to?