

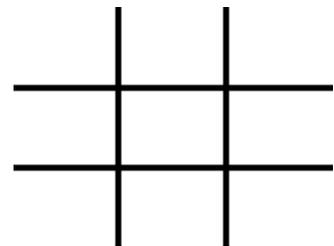
Framing

Shots are all about composition. Rather than *pointing* the camera at the subject, you need to *compose* an image. As mentioned previously, framing is the process of creating composition. Consider:

- a. Framing technique is very subjective. What one person finds dramatic, another may find pointless. What we're looking at here are a few accepted industry guidelines which you should use as rules of thumb.
- b. The rules of framing video images are essentially the same as those for still photograph
- c. The language of framing is the identification of Basic Shot Types

The Rule of Thirds

The *rule of thirds* is a concept in video and film production in which the frame is divided into nine imaginary sections, as illustrated on the right. This creates reference points which act as guides for framing the image.



Points and lines of interest should occur at 1/3 or 2/3 of the way up (or across) the frame, rather than in the center. Like many rules of framing, this is not always necessary (or desirable) but it is one of those rules you should understand well before you break it.

In most "people shots", the main line of interest is the line going through the eyes. In this shot, the eyes are placed approximately 1/3 of the way down the frame.

Depending on the type of shot, it's not always possible to place the eyes like this.

The 180° Rule

180° is half of a circle. The rule of line-crossing is sometimes called the "180° rule." This refers to keeping the camera position within a field of 180°. When you break the 180° rule, you are "Crossing the line."

Crossing the line means shooting consecutive shots from opposite sides of the 180° field.

Crossing the line is a very important concept in video and film production. It refers to an imaginary line which cuts through the middle of the scene, from side to side with respect to the camera. Crossing the line changes the viewer's perspective in such a way that it causes disorientation and confusion.

If a subject is moving across the frame from left to right, it means that the camera is on one side of the 180° line. If the next shot shows the subject still moving, but now they are shot with the camera on the other side of the 180° line, they are then moving right to left across the frame, even though their goal is the same (i.e. going to the same end point of the shot), it is confusing to the audience and looks as though they have done an about face and are now moving in the opposite direction. If you want to cross the line, do it with artful discretion.

A way to change your camera shot and cross the line without causing confusion is to track the shot and then move the camera in an arc around the subject so they are then facing the camera for a few moments, and then as the camera moves to the other side of the line, the shot continues, the direction of the subject's movement is now reversed, but it makes sense because the audience has been following the shot. The POV is one of an observer, either another character, or the audience.

Shot Types

There is a convention in video and filmmaking that assign names and guidelines to common types of shots, framing and picture composition. The list below briefly describes the most common shot types. The exact terminology often varies between production environments but the basic principles are the same.

Shots are usually described in relation to a particular SUBJECT.

1. EWS (Extreme Wide Shot) / Establishing Shot / Wide Angle Shot

The shot shows the entire landscape. The view is far enough away from a human subject, for example, that s/he isn't even visible. An establishing shot shows the landscape of the action to follow, establishing the location of the action or the location of the scenes to follow, giving the audience a grounding reference point for the narrative. If there's a human subject in the shot, they are visible, but barely noticeable in the frame. The emphasis is on placing him/her in context/environment.

2. WS (Wide Shot) or LS (Long Shot) or FS (Full Shot)

The subject takes up the full frame, or at least as much as comfortably possible, and is shown from head to toe whether seated or standing.

3. MS (Medium Shot, or Mid Shot)

Usually shows the subject from the hips or waist to the top of the head. The purpose is to show some part of the subject in more detail that you would get in a long shot while still giving an impression of the whole subject.

4. MCU (Medium Close Up)

Half way between a MS and a CU. From the waist up, or from just above the waist up.

5. CU (Close Up)

Usually refers to a shot of the subject's head, either their entire face, or their head from the neck up. Some sources would call a CU shot of just the face an Extreme Close Up, but it's really just another kind of CU.

6. ECU (Extreme Close Up)

The ECU gets right in and shows a part of the subject's face in extreme detail, e.g. eyes only, mouth only. An ECU shot could also be of an object, e.g. a small object like a coin taking up the entire frame.

7. Cut-In

Shows some (other) part of the subject in detail. A cut-in refers directly to the action. This is often a shot of the subject's hands or feet, and represents narrative detail.

8. CA (Cutaway)

A shot of something other than the subject. This shot is used in editing to show another detail of the scene such as a clock, a window or doorway – something in the scene but not directly related to the subject. A cutaway shot is often used as filler by the editor when the action or dialogue needs to be broken up a little or when there is not enough useable footage of the actors. Good practice is to always shoot details of the set because you may want these shots as cutaway shots.

9. Two-Shot

A shot of two people, framed similarly as a medium shot (from just below the waist) of both subjects. A three-shot, similarly, is a shot of three people in the frame.

10. (OSS) Over-the-Shoulder Shot

Looking from behind one person in the shot, over their shoulder, at the subject. Used in dialogue, cross-cutting OSS shots between speakers.

11. Over-the-Head Shot

Camera is placed above the subject and facing the same direction as the subject giving a view of the back of their head, shoulders, and the scene in front of them. This indicates where they are going, where the next action is taking place.

12. Point-of-View Shot (POV)

Shows a view from the subject's perspective. The POV may be of the camera itself, i.e. no one's POV, but serving as general narrative information for the audience. OTSS do *not* provide a character's POV – they merely provide CUs of dialogue and reaction shots.

Camera Angle

The term camera angle means slightly different things to different people but it always refers to the way a shot is composed. Some people use it to include all camera shot types, others use it to specifically mean the angle between the camera and the subject. We will concentrate on the literal interpretation of camera angles, that is, the angle of the camera relative to the subject.

1. Eye-Level

This is the most common view, being the so-called real-world angle that we are all used to. It shows subjects as we would expect to see them in real life. It is a fairly neutral shot.

2. High Angle

A high angle shows the subject from above, i.e. the camera is angled down towards the subject. This often has the effect of diminishing the subject, making them appear less powerful, less significant or even submissive. Or it may include an over-the-head shot and refer to something less tangible, such as an idea of the direction of the narrative.

3. Low Angle

This shows the subject from below, giving them the impression of being more powerful or dominant. Or it may indicate the POV of a child, for example.

4. Bird's Eye

The scene is shown from directly above. This is a completely different and somewhat unnatural point of view, which can be used for dramatic effect or for showing a different spatial perspective. It can be used to show the positions and motions of different characters and objects, enabling the viewer to see things the characters can't.

5. Dutch Angel, Slanted

This is where the camera is purposely tilted to one side so the horizon is on an angle. This creates an interesting and dramatic effect and indicates a turn of events in the narrative.

Camera Movement

1. Arc Shot

An arc shot is a camera move around the subject, somewhat like a tracking shot. In mathematics, an arc is a segment of the circumference of a circle. A camera arc is similar — the camera moves in a rough semi-circle around the subject. (See 180° rule + crossing the line, above.)

2. Dolly Shot

A dolly is a cart that travels along tracks, or is mounted on wheels and pushed or pulled through a shot. The camera is mounted on the dolly and records the shot as it moves. Dolly shots have a

number of applications and can provide dramatic footage, or can make an ordinary place look interesting.

In many circles a dolly shot is also known as a tracking shot. However, some professionals prefer the more rigid terminology that defines dolly as in-and-out movement (i.e. closer/further away from the subject), while tracking means side-to-side movement. A tracking shot is more easily compared to a camera pan, which moves the camera from side to side, as the camera is stationary and pivots from a central point. A tracking shot moves with the subject.

Many dollies have a lever to allow for vertical movement as well, known as a pedestal move. In some cases, a crane is mounted on the dolly for additional height and flexibility. A shot that moves vertically while simultaneously tracking is called a compound shot.

As mentioned, some dollies operate without tracks. This provides the greatest degree of movement, assuming of course that a suitable smooth surface is available.

The dolly faced serious competition when the Steadicam was invented. Most shots previously only possible with a dolly could now be done with the more versatile Steadicam. However, dollies are still preferred for many shots, especially those that require a high degree of precision. A Steadicam can weigh more than 10 pounds when a camera is mounted, putting stress on the camera person's back if used for prolonged shots.

3. Follow Shot

The Follow shot is fairly self-explanatory. It simply means that the camera follows the subject of the action. The following distance is usually kept more or less constant.

Dollying or tracking can achieve the movement of a follow shot, although in many cases a Steadicam is the most practical option. Hand-held follow-shots are also quite achievable in many situations but are not generally suited to feature film cinematography.

If your camera is lightweight and you have a steady grip, following a subject with a hand-held camera can be effective in terms of providing a POV shot or communicating a documentary sense or a sense of immediacy to the audience. Practice walking with the camera so that you do not record your own back-and-forth/left-right walking movements. Use your body as a way to secure the camera and keep the shot smooth.

4. Camera Pan

A pan is a horizontal camera movement in which the camera moves left and right on a central axis. This is a swiveling movement, i.e. mounted in a fixed location on a tripod or shoulder, for example, rather than a dolly-like movement in which the entire mounting system moves.

To create a smooth pan, it's a good idea to practice the movement first. If you need to move or stretch your body during the move, it helps to position yourself so you end up in the more

comfortable position. In other words, you should become more comfortable as the move progresses rather than less comfortable.

The speed of a pan shot is directly related to the shutter speed, and therefore to the speed with which the camera's pickup device is recording each frame. Panning too quickly creates a blur. Pan more slowly than you think you should in order to prevent blurring and give the audience a good view of what is included in your pan shot. Practice and record your practice shot first so you know the best speed for the action and the location.

5. Camera Tilt

A tilt is a vertical camera movement in which the camera points up or down from a stationary location. For example, if you mount a camera on your shoulder and nod it up and down, you are tilting the camera.

Tilting is less common than panning because that's the way humans work — we look left and right more often than we look up and down.

6. Tracking Shot

The term tracking shot is widely considered to be synonymous with dolly shot; that is, a shot in which the camera is mounted on a cart which travels along tracks. However, there are a few variations of both definitions. Tracking is often more narrowly defined as movement parallel to the action, or at least at a constant distance (e.g. the camera which travels alongside the race track in track & field events). Dollying is often defined as moving closer to or further away from the action.

Some definitions specify that tracking shots use physical tracks; others consider tracking to include hand-held walking shots, Steadicam shots, etc. You can use anything on wheels, including a wheelchair, a shopping cart (very bumpy ride), any cart on wheels, or you can walk with the camera beside the subject.

7. Zoom Shot

A zoom is technically not a camera movement, as it does not require the camera itself to move at all. Zooming means altering the focal length of the lens to give the illusion of moving closer to or further away from the action.

The effect is not quite the same as actually moving into or away from the scene, however. Zooming effectively magnifies a part of the image, while moving the camera creates a difference in perspective — background objects appear to change in relation to foreground objects. This is sometimes used for creative effect in the dolly zoom, which is using the zoom in one direction while dollying in the opposite direction. Zooming is an easy-to-use but hard-to-get-right feature of most cameras. It is arguably the most misused of all camera functions.

So, the zoom is the function that moves your point of view closer to, or further away from, the subject. The effect is similar to moving the camera closer or further away.

The two most common zoom mechanisms on the camera are:

a. Manual zoom (ring)

This is a zoom ring on the lens housing, which is rotated manually, typically by the left thumb and index finger.

Advantages: Speed (you can do super-fast zooms); doesn't require power (so no drain on your battery).

Disadvantages: More difficult to control, harder to get smooth zooms.

b. Servo zoom (lever)

This is a lever that sits on the lens housing. It's usually positioned so that when you slide your right hand into the grip belt, the servo zoom will be sitting under your first two fingers. Pressing the front part of the lever zooms in, while pressing the rear part zooms out. Cheaper cameras usually have a constant zoom speed, whereas a good servo zoom will have variable speed -- the further/harder you depress the lever, the faster the zoom. The lever may have labels such as T and W (telephoto and wide angle).

Advantages: Easy to use in most situations; nice smooth zooming.

Disadvantages: Uses battery power; may be limited to fixed speeds.

The further you zoom in, the more difficult it is to keep the picture steady. At very long zooms, a tripod is essential. If you're having trouble keeping your shot steady, it may be possible to move yourself closer to the subject and then zoom out. This way you'll have essentially the same framing, but much steadier.

Zooming is the function everyone loves. It's easy and you can do lots with it, which is why it's so over-used. The most common advice we give on using the zoom is to use it less. It's a great tool in moderation, but when most of your shots are zooming in and out, your audience will feel nauseous.

As a rule, don't zoom unless there is a reason to. If you want to show both the whole scene as well as some close-up details, you don't need to have a zoom in. Instead, shoot a wide shot, stop recording, zoom in to a close up, and then start recording again. The result is one shot which cuts cleanly and quickly to another, portraying the same information as a zoom, but more efficiently
