

## Some Film Terms You Should Know (Rev. 9/5/25)

### SHOTS

- **Mise en scene:** Everything that is in the frame; refers to the composition.
- **Frame:** The rectangle formed by the edge of the screen. The basic unit of visual construction, it not only defines what an audience views, but also what it does not. The frame works physically and symbolically to construct narrative.
- **Depth of field:** The section of the shot that is in focus.
- **Deep focus:** Both foreground and background are in focus at the one time.
- **Pull/rack focus:** The depth of field changes from focussing one character or part of set to another.
- **Shot:** Single piece of film from 'action' to 'cut'.
- **Establishing shot:** Locates time and place.
- **Long shot (LS):** Shows whole location of action.
- **Medium shot (MS):** Chest to head. Establishes who is in the scene and who is talking. A basic tool for dialogue.
- **Close up (CU):** Head and shoulders. A subjective and expressive shot for the director.
- **Extreme Close up (ECU):** Usually eyes or mouth. The most intimate shot of all. Conveys emotion.
- **Camera Angles:**
  - **High Angle:** Camera is placed above the subject. Subject may appear small, insignificant or threatened.
  - **Low Angle:** Camera is placed lower than the subject. Gives the impression of looking up at the subject. Implies power resides in the subject.
  - **Dutch Angle:** The camera is tilted on an angle. Indicates discord, unsettles the audience.
- **Camera Movement:**
  - **Pan:** Camera swivels from one thing to another.
  - **Tilt:** Camera moves up and/or down.
  - **Tracking or dolly shot:** Camera moves from one place to another.
  - **Zoom:** Camera magnifies in or out to reveal more or less of the action.
  - **Steadicam (Sled & Vest):** A "handheld" use of camera, that utilized a camera stabilizer so as to not appear shaky.
  - **Point of View (POV):** Shot taken as if through a character's eyes.

### EDITING

- **Cut:** Change from one shot to another.
  - **Cut on Action:** Going to another shot on movement within the shot (like a car passing by, or punch or a kick)
  - **Match Cut:** The next shot matches the composition of the previous cut (also works for audio)
  - **Jump Cut:** An abrupt edit within a scene, usually to denote time passing
  - **Smash Cut:** An abrupt edit that goes to a completely different time and/or location (think of "waking from a dream")
  - **L Cut:** Audio from previous shot carries over to the current shot)
  - **J Cut:** Audience hears audio of the next shot before the cut)
- **Dissolve:** One scene dissolves into another. Often invisible without analysis. May indicate the passing of time. Advances the narrative visually.
- **Fade:** Shot fades to a solid color (usually black).
- **Wipe:** One shot is wiped from the screen by another.
- **Montage:** Rapid editing to create visual excitement using a variety of shots. Used to convey a lot of information in a short amount of time

- **Cross-cut or Parallel action:** Intercutting of two or more sets of action that are happening in separate locations at the same time.

## LIGHTING

- **High key:** Eliminates most shadows.
- **Low key:** Creates strong contrast and sharp and deep shadows.
- **Hard:** Lighting that is sharp and focused.
- **Soft:** Lighting that is fuzzy and almost creates a glow.
- **Backlight:** Lighting from behind a character, may be used to create silhouette or to make the subject glow.

## SOUND

- **Diagetic sound:** Sound coming from a character or object in the story world. It may be manipulated or exaggerated to emphasise meaning.
- **Non-diagetic sound:** Sounds added to the soundtrack which does not originate from the scene, eg narration, music or SFX. Used to add tension or emotion.
- **Dialogue:** The words spoken by characters.
- **Voice over (VO):** Narration originating from a source other than the on screen action.