

Topic 91

5 C's of Cinematography- Camera Angles

Camera Angles

Camera angles and movements combine to create a sequence of images, just as words, word order and punctuation combine to make the meaning of a sentence. You need a straightforward set of key terms to describe them.

Describing Shots

When describing camera angles, or creating them yourself, you have to think about three important factors

— **The FRAMING or the LENGTH of shot**

— **The ANGLE of the shot**

— **If there is any MOVEMENT involved**

When describing different cinematic shots, different terms are used to indicate the amount of subject matter contained within a frame, how far away the camera is from the subject, and the perspective of the viewer. Each different shot has a different purpose and effect. A change between two different shots is called a CUT.

Framing or Shot Length

1 . Extreme long shot



Extreme Long Shot

This can be taken from as much as a quarter of a mile away, and is generally used as a scene-setting, establishing shot. It normally shows an EXTERIOR, eg the outside of a building, or a landscape, and is often used to show scenes of thrilling action eg in a war film or disaster movie.

There will be very little detail visible in the shot, it's meant to give a general impression rather than specific information.

The extreme long shot on the left is taken from a distance, but denotes a precise location - it might even connote all of the entertainment industry if used as the opening shot in a news story.

2. Long Shot

This is the most difficult to categorise precisely, but is generally one which shows the image as approximately "life" size ie corresponding to the real distance between the audience and the screen in a cinema (the figure of a man would appear as six feet tall). This category includes the FULL SHOT showing the entire human body, with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom. While the focus is on characters, plenty of background detail still emerges: we can tell the coffins on the right are in a Western-style setting, for instance.



Long Shot

3. Medium Shot

Contains a figure from the knees/waist up and is normally used for dialogue scenes, or to show some detail of action. Variations on this include the TWO SHOT (containing two figures from the waist up) and the THREE SHOT (contains 3 figures...). NB. Any more than three figures and the shot tends to become a long shot. Background detail is minimal, probably because location has been established earlier in the scene - the audience already know where they are and now want to focus on dialogue and character interaction. Another variation in this category is the OVER-THE-SHOULDER-SHOT, which positions the camera behind one figure, revealing the other figure, and part of the first figure's back, head and shoulder.



Medium Shot

4. Close-Up

This shows very little background, and concentrates on either a face, or a specific detail of mise en scène. Everything else is just a blur in the background. This shot magnifies the object (think of how big it looks on a cinema screen) and shows the importance of things, be it words written on paper, or the expression on someone's face. The close-up takes us into the mind of a character. In reality, we only let people that we really trust get THAT close to our face - mothers, children and lovers, usually - so a close up of a face is a very intimate shot. A film-maker may use this to make us feel extra comfortable or extremely uncomfortable about a character, and usually uses a zoom lens in order to get the required framing.



Close up

5. Extreme Close-Up

As its name suggests, an extreme version of the close up, generally magnifying beyond what the human eye would experience in reality. An extreme close-up of a face, for instance, would show

only the mouth or eyes, with no background detail whatsoever. This is a very artificial shot, and can be used for dramatic effect. The tight focus required means that extra care must be taken when setting up and lighting the shot - the slightest camera shake or error in focal length is very noticeable.



Extreme Close Up