I. TYPE OF SHOT

This category describes the camera’s proximity to the main focus of interest in the shot, which is usually—but not necessarily—a human figure. These definitions vary somewhat from glossary to glossary. The point is mainly to be consistent in your usage.

Close-up (CU): a shot taken very close to the subject so that it fills most of the frame. In the case of a person, it usually includes the head and the upper part of the shoulders. Alternately, a close-up might focus on just the hands or the feet of a person. In a close-up of a small animal (like a hamster) the entire body of the animal would fill the frame.

Extreme close-up (ECU): a shot that shows, in relation to a human face, just the face (without shoulders or hair) or a part of the face (only eyes, or only mouth). In relation to an object, the shot would show only a detail.

Medium close-up (MCU): a shot framing the human subject from the level of mid-chest.

Medium shot (MS): a shot framing the human figure from the waist up. When more than one person is in the shot, refer to it as a “medium two shot” (viz. “medium three shot,” etc.). This also applies to the next two definitions.

Medium long shot (MLS): frames the human figure from the knees up.

Full shot (FS): a person’s body appears in its entirety, approximately equal to the height of the screen.

Long shot (LS): the human figure appears less tall than the height of the screen.

Extreme long shot (ELS): the human subject is tiny in relation to the size of the screen.

Establishing shot: usually a LS or ELS near the beginning of a sequence, which establishes the setting or the position of people and objects when the sequence is later broken down into a series of closer shots.

II. CAMERA MOVEMENT

Pan: the camera rotates from a fixed position along a vertical plane: pan right / pan left / 360 degree pan.

Swish pan: a very fast pan that blurs the image with its speed.

Tilt: the camera rotates from a fixed position through a vertical plane: tilt up / tilt down.

Tracking shot: as opposed to the fixed position of the pan, in a tracking shot the camera and whatever it is mounted on (a dolly, a track, a car, etc.) moves as it photographs the action. In relation to the action, the camera can track forward, backward, left, right.

Crane shot: moving shot taken from a specially constructed vehicle with a long boom on which the camera is mounted. Permits high angle tracking and panning of what’s below.

III. CAMERA ANGLE

This category describes the viewpoint or angle from which the camera films the subject:

Straight-on or eye-level: camera is located at “normal” eye level of an average adult in relation to the subject.

High angle: camera is positioned above the subject and shoots down at it. An extreme form of this is the overhead shot, which is taken from directly above the subject.

Low angle: the camera is positioned below the subject it films.

Dutch angle: the camera is twisted so that the frame is not parallel to the horizon.

IV. CAMERA LENS

Lenses can alter the perceived magnification, depth, perspective, and scale of objects in the shot as follows:

Normal lens: produces an image with perspective that corresponds to that seen by the naked human eye.

Wide-angle lens: exaggerates depth and gives a wider angle of vision than is possible with the human eye. The movement of objects toward the camera is exaggerated; that is, someone moving from background to foreground would appear to approach more rapidly, to cover more ground than they would normally.

Fisheye lens: an extreme wide-angle lens that distorts the image so that straight lines appear bent or bowed at the edge of the frame.

Telephoto lens: enlarges or magnifies distant planes, making them seem closer than they really are to the foreground planes. Has the effect of flattening space between planes, foreshortening or squashing them together. Objects moving toward the camera appear to make little progress.

Zoom lens: a lens that can be changed gradually during a shot, moving in range from a wide angle to telephoto or vice versa.

Deep focus: all objects from foreground to distant background are kept in sharp focus.

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Soft focus: the foreground is in sharp focus while the background appears diffuse, hazy. Also refers to the blurred or hazy effect achieved by shooting slightly out of focus, or else through gauze or vaseline, to reduce the sharp definition of the film image. Can have a glamorizing effect, often used for CU of film’s heroine.

Rack focus: moving shot in which focus changes, bringing objects into and out of focus.

V. LIGHTING

Three-point lighting: a lighting style associated with Classical Hollywood cinema. The shot is lit with three different kinds of light: a key light, the brightest and primary source of lighting, which casts the dominant shadows; a fill light, which “fills in” to eliminate or soften shadows created by the key light; and a backlight which illuminates from behind the photographed objects, outlining or highlighting the contours of the figure.

High-key lighting: bright, even illumination with low contrast and few conspicuous shadows. Associated with comedies, musicals, and light entertainment.

Low-key lighting: general low level of illumination with high contrast, stark shadows, and atmospheric pools of light. Associated with mysteries, thrillers, Expressionism, and film noir.

Direction of light sources: overhead; side-lighting; underlighting; backlighting.

VI. COMPOSITION

A description of significant graphic characteristics of the shot: do horizontal, vertical, or diagonal lines dominate? Are there interesting combinations of such vectors? What is the location of the character to the ensemble of the shot? Are characters and objects arranged symmetrically or in unstable formations? Are there significant vertical or horizontal divisions of the frame? Significant framing within the frame? Does the shot use mattes or other framing devices to alter the configuration of the screen rectangle?

VII. TRANSITIONS

A transition refers to the relation of a given shot to the shot immediately preceding it. How is one shot connected to the next? The connection may be obtained through (1) matches; (2) optical devices; or (3) conventions of shot continuity or mental associations that cue the spectator to understand the relation between the adjacent images.

(1) Matches: this category applies primarily to classical film style (i.e., non-narrative, non-experimental films). When a scene is broken up into a sequence of shots for the purpose of greater dramatic emphasis, the shots must be reconnected smoothly so that the action appears to be continuous and the viewer doesn’t lose his/her orientation in relation to the screen space. This is achieved through a “match” or “match cut.”

Movement match: a movement (e.g., a gesture) begun in one shot appears to be seamlessly continued or complete in the next shot. If actions are duplicated, or if a portion of the action is omitted from one shot to the next, the effect will be noticeable and the action will lose its illusion of seamless continuity.

Direction match: the direction in which a person/object is moving is consistent across the splice. If, for example, a character exits frame right in shot one, he or she must enter frame left in shot two. If the direction is not matched, it will appear that the character has suddenly turned around and is moving in the opposite direction.

Eyeline match: in editing together close-ups of two characters who have been shown facing each other, the direction of their glances must be consistent (the character on the left looks in the direction of screen right; the character on the right looks in the direction of screen left) so that their eyelines seem to converge.

Shot-reverse shot: two characters who have been shown facing one another are presented in alternating close-ups. Imagine a line running between two characters. Alternating close-ups of each would be taken from opposite ends of the imaginary line, usually from over the shoulder of the character excluded from the current shot. These can also be called reverse-angle shots.

Position match: the position of an object or person remains in the same area of the frame from shot to shot. In a cut from pursuer to pursued, for example, the pursued person would appear in the same area of the frame as the pursuer.

Graphic match: any juxtaposition of graphically similar images: a cut from a spinning umbrella top to a spinning train wheel, for example. Vivid visual effects can be achieved by deliberately mis-matching the graphics from one shot to the next, so that, for example, a composition emphasizing vertical lines clashes in the next shot with a composition emphasizing horizontal lines.

Jump cut: a continuity mis-match in which the rules of continuity editing are deliberately violated in order to disorient the spectator. Often done to call attention to the cinematic medium. Classic examples can be found in Godard’s Breathless (1959).
(2) **Optical devices**: these devices are often employed to enhance the technical smoothness of the cut, but they may also determine the pacing of the film's action and can create symbolic or associative connections between the conjoined shots.

**Iris-in**: a shot, found most often in silent films, that opens from darkness in an expanding circle of light.

**Fade-out & fade-in**: the previous shot darkens to blackness which then gradually lightens to reveal next shot.

**Dissolve**: gradual merging of the end of one shot into the beginning of the next, so that the two images are briefly superimposed.

**Lap dissolve**: the superimposition of the two shots lingers, often to make some kind of point about the relation between the two images.

**Wipe**: in its simplest form, a vertical line appears to travel across the screen, removing, as it travels, the previous shot while gradually revealing the next. Wipes can also involve horizontal lines, diagonal lines, spirals, etc.

**Straight cut**: the splicing of one shot to another with no obvious optical continuity device. (Not to be confused with a jump cut, whose purpose is disorientation.)

(3) **Associative editing devices**: these cue the viewer mentally to construct or construe the action in a particular way.

**Point of view (pov) shot**: a cut from character looking off-screen to a shot of what the character sees. Here viewers are cued to "see" the shot as if from the viewpoint of the character in the film. The use of pov can be a powerful device for establishing identification between film protagonists and viewers: identifying with them visually, we also psychically "merge" with them.

**Cross-cut**: a cut to another scene or line of action that is usually (but not always) spatially remote from the first, but that gives the impression of happening simultaneously (meanwhile, back at the ranch...). A common use of the cross-cut entails alternating shots of an imperiled person with shots of another person coming to the rescue. A common purpose is to generate irony by giving viewers information that is pertinent to the characters’ current actions, but that the characters themselves lack.

**Reaction shot**: a shot, usually in close-up, of a character reacting to the event/information in the previous shot.

**Sound bridge**: shots linked together by a sound that either carries over from the first image to the next, or that "belongs" to the second image but begins early, before the first image has disappeared from the screen.

**Flashback**: a cut (usually as a dissolve) which takes the action to a prior time.

**VIII. SOUND**

Sound in film can be divided into three categories: speech, noise, and music. Each of these elements can be related to the image track in the following ways:

**Diegetic sound**: sound whose source comes from the imaginary world of the fiction represented.

**Non-diegetic sound**: sound coming from the space outside the narrative whose source is neither visible nor implied by the present action, and which cannot in principle be "heard" by any character in the film. Non-diegetic sound is added by the director for dramatic effect. Examples would be mood music or an omniscient narrator's voice.

**Internal-diegetic**: sound coming from the mind of a character (an interior monologue that gives us a character's inner thoughts) that we can hear but the characters in the film cannot. Internal diegetic sound can also refer to subjective distortions of sound: to sound heard by a given character in an unnatural way that reflects his/her state of mind.

**Meta-diegetic**: the source of the sound is diegetic but it is distorted to heighten the dramatic effect for the spectator and is not necessarily connected to the internal state of a character. For example: a scream that’s played back at unnaturally high volume and is electronically distorted in order to startle the audience.

**On-screen**: the source of the sound is present in the shot.

**Off-screen**: diegetic sound whose source lies beyond the frame of the shot but is implied to be present somewhere off-screen, even if no one in the shot is hearing it. (Non-diegetic sound is off-screen by definition, and thus does not come under this category.)

**Parallel**: sound which goes along with or complements the image: hands clapping to the sound of applause; romantic music during a love scene; scary music in an ominous scene.

**Counterpoint**: sound which, in contrast to parallel sound, goes counter to the image: hands clapping to the sound of gunshots; a merry tune played over a funeral procession; a man speaking with a woman’s voice dubbed in, etc.