

# Shot Types

There is a convention in the video, film and television industries which assigns names and guidelines to common types of shots, framing and picture composition. The list below briefly describes the most common shot types.

*Notes:*

- The exact terminology varies between production environments but the basic principles are the same.
- Shots are usually described in relation to a particular subject. In most of the examples below, the subject is the boy.

## EWS (Extreme Wide Shot)

In the *extreme wide shot*, the view is so far from the subject that s/he isn't even visible. The point of this shot is to show the subject's surroundings.

The EWS is often used as an "establishing shot" - the first shot of a new scene, designed to show the audience where the action is taking place.



It is also useful in scenes where

the action is very spread out. For example, in a war movie an extreme wide shot can show the scale of the action.

The EWS is also known as an *extra long shot* or *extreme long shot* (acronym XLS).

## VWS (Very Wide Shot)

The very wide shot is much closer to the subject than an extreme wide shot, but still much further away than a wide shot. The



subject is visible here but only just (in this case it's a boy leaning against the fence). The emphasis is very much on placing him in his environment.

This often works as an establishing shot, in which the audience is shown the whole setting so they can orient themselves.

The VWS also allows plenty of room for action to take place, or for multiple subjects to appear on screen.

## WS (Wide Shot)

In the wide shot, the subject takes up the full frame.

In this case, the boy's feet are almost at the bottom of frame and his head is almost at the top. Obviously

the subject doesn't take up the whole width and height of the frame, since this is as close as we can get without losing any part of him.

The small amount of room above and below the subject can be thought of as safety room —

you don't want to be cutting the top of the head off. It would also look uncomfortable if his feet and head were exactly at the top and bottom of frame.

As with many shot types, the wide shot means different things to different people. However the wide shot seems to suffer more from varying interpretations than other types. Many people take the WS to mean something much wider than our example, i.e. what we would call a very wide shot.



## MS (Mid Shot)

The mid shot shows some part of the subject in more detail, whilst still showing enough for the audience to feel as if they were looking at the whole subject. In fact, this is

an approximation of how you would see a person "in the flesh" if you were having a casual conversation. You wouldn't be paying any attention to their lower body, so that part of the picture is unnecessary.

The MS is appropriate when the subject is speaking without too much emotion or intense concentration. It also works well when the intent is to deliver information, which is why it is frequently used by television news presenters. You will often see a story begin with a MS of the reporter (providing information), followed by closer shots of interview subjects (providing reactions and emotion).



## MCU (Medium Close Up)

The medium close-up is half way between a mid-shot and a close up. This shot shows the face more clearly, without getting uncomfortably close.



## CU (Close Up)

In the close-up shot, a certain feature or part of the subject takes up most of the frame. A close up of a person usually means a close up of their face (unless specified otherwise).



Close-ups are obviously useful for showing detail and can also be used as a cut-in.

A close-up of a person emphasizes their emotional state. Whereas a mid-shot or wide-shot is more appropriate for delivering facts and general information, a close-up exaggerates facial expressions which convey emotion.

The viewer is drawn into the subject's personal space and shares their feelings. A variation is the choker shot which is typically framed on the subject's face from above the eyebrows to below the mouth.

## ECU (Extreme Close Up)

The ECU (also known as XCU) gets right in and shows extreme detail.



You would normally need a specific reason to get this close. It is too close to

show general reactions or emotion except in very dramatic scenes.

A variation of this shot is the choker. The ECU gets right in and shows extreme detail. For people, the ECU is used to convey emotion.

## Two-Shot

There are a few variations on this one, but the basic



idea is to have a comfortable shot of two people. Often used in interviews, or when two presenters are hosting a show.

A "One-Shot" could be a mid-shot of either of these subjects. A "Three-Shot", unsurprisingly, contains three people.

Two-shots are good for establishing a relationship between subjects. If you see two sports presenters standing side by side facing the camera, you get the idea that these people are going to be the show's co-hosts. As they have equal prominence in the frame, the implication is that they will provide equal input. Of course this doesn't always apply, for example, there are many instances in which it's obvious one of the people is a presenter and the other is a guest.

In any case, the two-shot is a natural way to introduce two people.

## (OSS) Over-the-Shoulder Shot

This shot is framed from behind a person who is looking at the subject. The person facing the subject should usually occupy about 1/3 of the frame.

This shot helps to establish the position of each person, and get the feel of looking at one person from the other's point of view.



It's common to cut between these shots during a conversation, alternating the view between the different speakers.

## Noddy Shot

Common in interviews, this is a shot of the person listening and reacting to the subject. In fact, when shooting interviews with one camera, the usual routine

is to shoot the subject (using [OSS](#) and one-shots) for the entire interview, then shoot some noddies of the interviewer once the interview is finished.



The noddies are edited into the interview later, the interviewer listening and reacting to the subject.

## Cutaway (CA)



A cutaway is a shot that's usually of something other than the current action. It could be a different subject (eg. this cat when the main subject is its owner), a close up of a different part of the subject (eg. the subject's hands), or just

about anything else.

The cutaway is used as a "buffer" between shots (to help the editing process), or to add interest/information.

## Cut-In (CI)

Like a cutaway, but specifically refers to showing some part of the subject in detail.

Can be used purely as an edit point, or to emphasise emotion etc. For example, hand movements can show enthusiasm, agitation, nervousness, etc.



## Weather Shot

In this type of shot the subject is the weather. The sky takes up at least 2/3 of the frame. This type of shot is common in television programs where the weather is of particular interest, e.g. sports shows.

Although the usual purpose of this shot is to show the weather, it is also useful as an establishing shot, for setting the general mood or for overlaying graphics.

A weather shot doesn't have to show the sky. Other shots often used to illustrate weather include:

- Puddles, drain spouts or any example of rainwater flow.
- Trees or anything else blowing in the wind.
- People sunbathing.
- Snowmen, snowball fights, snow sledding, etc.



## Point-of-View Shot (POV)

This shot shows a view from the subject's perspective. It is usually edited in such a way that it is obvious whose POV it is (see the example below).



# Additional Shots

## Pickup Shots

*Pickup shots* are shots or scenes recorded after principal photography has concluded.

In some cases pickup shots are specifically planned. For example, on a film set, a scene may be filmed one day with the major actors and then the next day is devoted to pick up shots which do not require the actors. These shots could include close-ups of props, different angles in which the actors are not recognizable, etc.

In other cases pickup shots are unplanned shots which are needed to fix editing problems, re-shoot scenes for better quality, etc. As a contingency, time is usually allocated for pickup shots as part of the production plan.

## Talking Head

*Talking head* is an informal term used to describe the very common shot of a television presenter or other personality talking directly to the audience, with only the upper body or head visible.



Talking head shots are usually a mid-shot or medium close-up. The most common talking head shots are in news, sports and documentary programs.

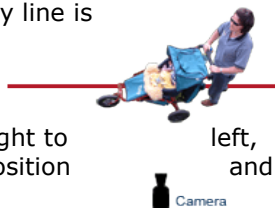
## Crossing the Line (Reverse Cut)

*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. For this reason, crossing the line is something to be avoided.

In this example the camera is located to the subject's left. The imaginary line is shown in red.



The resulting shot shows the subject walking from right to left, and establishing the viewer's position orientation relative to her.

"Crossing the line" means shooting consecutive shots from opposite sides of the line.

In this example the camera has crossed the line. As you can see in the resulting shot, the view of the subject is reversed and she appears to be walking from left to right.



When cut immediately after the preceding shot, the effect is quite confusing.



Because of the sudden reversal of viewpoint and action, this is known as a *reverse cut*.

To prevent reverse cuts, set up the scene so you can shoot it all from one side. If you are using multiple cameras, position them on the same side.

In some cases crossing the line is unavoidable, or at least desirable enough to be worth the awkward transition. In this case you can minimize confusion by using a shot taken on the line itself to go between the shots, as



illustrated below. This "buffer" shot guides the viewer to the new position so they know where they are. Although it's still not perfect, it's not such a severe jolt.

## Sports & Multi-Camera Action

In live-action situations such as sports coverage, crossing the line is often necessary to obtain the best views. Sometimes this isn't a problem, especially if it's a view the audience is used to, but sometimes it can be very confusing (for example, a team suddenly seems to be playing in the wrong direction). This can be alleviated by either a graphic key saying something like "Reverse Angle", or a word from the commentator such as

"Let's see that replay from a different angle".

## 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.

Notes:

- 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.
- The rules of framing video images are essentially the same as those for still photography.

## Some Rules of Framing

- Look for horizontal and vertical lines in the frame (e.g. the horizon, poles, etc.). Make sure the horizontals are level, and the verticals are straight up and down .

## Dutch Tilt

Dutch Tilt Shot



A *Dutch tilt* is a camera shot in which the camera angle is deliberately slanted to one side. This can be used for dramatic effect and helps portray unease, disorientation, frantic or desperate action, intoxication, madness, etc.

A Dutch tilt can be a static shot, or used with simultaneous **panning**, **tilting** and/or **zooming**.

## Other Terminology

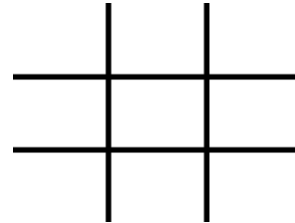
The Dutch tilt is also known as Dutch angle, German angle, oblique angle, canted angle and even the Batman angle.

## Etymology

The Dutch tilt was used a lot in German films of the 1930s and 1940s. This is where the name *German angle* came from. The *Dutch* term is said to have been a mistranslation of the German *Deutsch*.

## The Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds. This rule divides the frame into nine sections, as in the first frame below. Points (or lines) of interest should occur at 1/3 or 2/3 of the way up (or across) the frame, rather than in the center.



"Headroom", "looking room", and "leading room". These terms refer to the amount of room in the frame which is strategically left empty. The shot of the baby crawling has some leading room for him to crawl into, and the shot of

his mother has some looking room for her to look into. Without this empty space, the framing will look uncomfortable.

Headroom is the amount of space between the top of the subject's head and the top of the frame. A common mistake in amateur video is to have far too much headroom, which doesn't look good and wastes frame space. In any "person shot" tighter than a MS, there should be very little headroom.



Everything in your frame is important, not just the subject. What does the background look like? What's the lighting like? Is there anything in the frame which is going to be distracting, or disrupt the continuity of the video? Pay attention to the edges of your frame. Avoid having half objects in frame, especially people (showing half of someone's face is very unflattering). Also try not to cut people off at the joints — the bottom of the frame can cut across a person's stomach, but not their knees. It just doesn't look right.



Once you're comfortable with the do's and don'ts, you can become more creative. Think about the best way to convey the meaning of the shot. If it's a baby crawling, get down on the floor and see it from a baby's point-of-view (POV). If it's a football game, maybe you need to get up high to see all the action.



Look for interesting and unusual shots. Most of your shots will probably be quite "straight"; that is, normal shots from approximate adult eye-level. Try mixing in

a few variations. Different angles and different camera positions can make all the difference. For example; a shot can become much more dramatic if shot from a low point. On the other hand, a new and interesting perspective can be obtained by looking straight down on the scene. Be aware that looking up at a person can make them appear more imposing, whereas looking down at a person can diminish them.

Watch TV and movies, and notice the shots which stand out. There's a reason why they stand out — it's all about camera positioning and frame composition. Experiment all the time.