

## **Glossary of film language terms**

### **Camera angle**

The viewpoint chosen to photograph a subject.

### **Close-up**

Usually defined as a shot framing the head from the neck up, sometimes with part of the shoulders.

### **Cut**

A clean break between consecutive shots.

### **Diegesis, diegetic**

The 'world' of a moving image text, as indicated not only by what can be seen, or by sounds generated from on-screen actions and objects (eg footsteps, explosions) but also by off-screen sounds that belong to the world being depicted (eg birdsong, church bells). **Non-diegetic** sound is typically music or sound effects not generated in the filmic world but added to indicate characters' state of mind or to generate audience response. Visual play with diegesis happens particularly in comedies, eg Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, *Ally McBeal*.

### **dissolve or mix**

This is when two shots are on screen at the same time, visible through each other. The first shot is faded out while the second is faded in.

### **Editing**

The process by which shots are put together into sequences or scenes. Usually described according to rhythm or pace (ie the varying lengths of the shots in the sequence) and type of transition (eg cut, fade, dissolve or mix, wipe). A **montage** sequence is a series of shots which summarise an action or build a mood, rather than playing it out in the equivalent of real time.

### **Establishing shot**

A shot which shows the environment in which the action will take place, usually early in the sequence.

### **Extreme close-up (ECU)**

A shot filled by part of someone's face (or other subject).

### **Extreme long shot (ELS)**

A shot showing the scene from a great distance.

### **Fade down (of sound)**

Gradual diminution of sound level.

### **Fade in (of pictures)**

Gradual appearance of the image.

### **Fade in (of sound)**

Gradual increase of sound level.

### **Fade out (of sound)**

Gradual diminution of sound level to silence.

### **Fade to black**

Gradual disappearance of image into black screen.

### **Fade up (of sound)**

Gradual increase of sound level.

**Frame**

Individual still image of a film or video, or the rectangle within which the image is composed or captured.

**High angle shot**

A shot looking down on the action.

**Jump cut**

A cut between two shots of the same object, character or scene where the angle of the camera is less than 45 degrees.

**Long shot (LS)**

Usually shows the entire human figure, from above the head to below the feet.

**Low angle shot**

A shot looking up at the action.

**Medium long shot (MLS)**

Normally shows the human figure from the knees up.

**Medium shot (MS)**

Normally shows the human figure from the waist up.

***Mise en scène***

French term from the theatre which literally means 'what's put in the scene'. In the cinema it refers to the elements of a shot – the set, the props, the actors, the use of colour and light - and the way these elements are composed or choreographed.

**Over-the-shoulder (OTS) shot**

A shot framed by the side of the head and shoulders of a character in the extreme foreground, who is looking at the same thing we are - usually another character in dialogue sequence.

**Pan**

When the camera pivots on its vertical axis; the shot that results from this. From panorama or panoramic.

**Point of View (POV) shot**

A shot where we appear to be looking through the character's eyes, from his or her point of view.

**Scene**

The basic dramatic unit, usually continuous in time and setting. A feature film will usually consist of 30-60 scenes, though there are wide variations.

**Sequence**

A group of shots showing a single piece of action, e.g. a chase sequence; often synonymous with 'scene'.

**Shot**

The basic unit of meaning in a moving image text. It can be described according to its length, or duration, the way it is framed (ie the camera distance and angle), and the arrangement of elements within it (often referred to as the ***mise en scène***).

**Shot/reverse shot**

Alternating shots, typically of two characters in a dialogue sequence.

**Shot size**

Refers to the size of the subject in the frame - close-up, long shot, wide shot etc.

**Shot transition**

The transition of one shot to another which can be achieved by a cut, a dissolve, a wipe etc.

**Soundtrack**

The audio components of a film - dialogue, sound effects, music.

**Standard angle**

Angle produced with a medium focal length which produces a standard angle of view.

**Storyboard** A stock outcome associated with film and media teaching. Typically a series of drawings which approximate to a sequence of moving images. Without careful attention, however, a storyboard can easily fail to differentiate between different types of shot (eg camera distances), shot transition and length, and use of soundtrack. Most usefully employed when a specific learning goal is being pursued, for example in how few shots can a particular setting from a novel be portrayed, or in how many different ways can a sequence of dialogue be represented or news item be edited. Where the exercise is primarily conceptual, or solving a problem, it might be better to use a shooting script – a written list of described shots, itemising camera position, shot length and transition, and soundtrack.

**Tracking shot**

A shot taken from a camera mounted on a dolly or other moving vehicle, in order to follow an action or reveal a scene.

**Two-shot**

A shot showing two characters in a frame.

**Wide shot (WS) or wide angle shot**

A shot taking in much or all of the action.

**Zoom**

The change of image size achieved when the focal length of the zoom lens is altered.